

Relationships with Another

How This Work Shapes Your Closest Connections

Resilience Intensives · Personal

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About this program

The Resilience Intensives program is designed specifically for substance use disorder clinicians and staff who face unique challenges in their daily work. This comprehensive program addresses personal resilience, professional career sustainability, intimate relationships, and community connections.

Through evidence-based assessments, reflective exercises, and practical tools, you'll build sustainable practices that honor both the demands of this vital work and your own wellbeing. Choose a module below to begin your journey from depletion to growth.

Getting started

Each module contains comprehensive reading materials, evidence-based self-assessments, and practical exercises. Your progress is automatically saved as you work through the content. Start with Time Management if you feel depleted and overwhelmed.

Part 1 · Reading · The Hidden Cost: How SUD Treatment Work Shapes Your Closest Relationships

The Hidden Cost: How SUD Treatment Work Shapes Your Closest Relationships

There is a conversation that almost never happens in clinical training programs, supervision sessions, or professional development workshops: the conversation about what this work does to your relationships. Not your therapeutic relationships — those receive endless attention. Your personal relationships. The ones that existed before you became a clinician. The ones you are trying to build or maintain while simultaneously holding space for other people's pain for a living. The ones that suffer in silence while you pour your best emotional energy into clients who may never know the cost.

The substance use disorder treatment field extracts a specific relational toll that is different from most other professions. It is not simply that the work is demanding or time-consuming — many careers demand long hours without necessarily damaging the quality of intimate connection. The toll is emotional in nature. Every day, you are asked to be attuned, empathic, present, patient, emotionally regulated, and therapeutically generous with people in crisis.

Then you drive home. And the person who loves you — who has been waiting for you, who needs you, who wants the version of you that is warm and present and emotionally available — gets whatever is left. And what is left, after a day of sustained emotional output, is often not very much.

Reflection Questions

1. When you read about the "clinician's relational paradox" — giving your best emotional energy to clients and bringing the leftovers home — how accurately does this describe your current experience?

2. Has anyone close to you expressed frustration, sadness, or resignation about your emotional availability? What did they say, and how did you respond?

3. Can you identify the gradual erosion in a specific relationship? When did you first notice it, and what did you attribute it to at the time?

Part 2 • Reading • The Clinician's Relational Patterns: When Professional Skills Become Personal Liabilities

The Clinician's Relational Patterns: When Professional Skills Become Personal Liabilities

Clinical training gives you extraordinary relational skills — and it also gives you extraordinarily sophisticated ways of avoiding genuine intimacy. This is one of the most uncomfortable truths about working in the helping professions: the same skills that make you a gifted clinician can become defensive maneuvers in your personal relationships when they are deployed without awareness.

The first pattern is Therapist Mode at Home. Instead of saying "That really hurts me too," you say "It sounds like you're feeling frustrated." Your partner does not need a therapist. They need a human being who is willing to be affected, to react, to be messy and imperfect.

The second pattern is Emotional Rationing. After a day of sustained empathic engagement, you have developed a system for rationing whatever emotional energy remains. Client needs come first, professional obligations come second, and personal relationships get whatever scraps are left.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of the five patterns — Therapist Mode, Emotional Rationing, Rescuer Identity Bleed, Clinical Weaponization, or Intimacy Avoidance — do you recognize most clearly in yourself?

2. Has a partner, friend, or family member ever told you that you were being "too clinical" or treating them "like a client"?

3. If you are honest about your emotional rationing, who consistently gets the most of your emotional energy? Who consistently gets the least?

Part 3 · Reading · Attachment, Vulnerability & the Helper's Dilemma

Attachment, Vulnerability & the Helper's Dilemma

Attachment theory — the framework you may use to understand your clients' relational patterns — applies to you with the same force and relevance. Many people who enter the caring professions developed what attachment researchers describe as a "compulsive caregiving" style — an adaptation in which giving care to others becomes the primary strategy for maintaining connection.

The helper's dilemma is this: vulnerability is the currency of intimacy, and vulnerability is exactly what your professional training and your attachment history have taught you to manage rather than express. In the therapy room, you create conditions for other people's vulnerability. But who creates those conditions for you? And more importantly, do you let them?

Reflection Questions

1. What is your honest attachment style in your closest current relationship? Not what you would diagnose it as clinically, but how it actually feels from the inside.

2. Do you recognize the "compulsive caregiving" pattern in yourself? Where did it originate?

3. When was the last time you allowed yourself to be genuinely vulnerable with someone who loves you?

Part 4 • Reading • Repair & Renewal: Building Relationships That Can Hold the Weight of This Work

Repair & Renewal: Building Relationships That Can Hold the Weight of This Work

Relationships that survive and thrive alongside a career in SUD treatment are not relationships that never experience strain. They are relationships that have developed the capacity for repair — the ability to recognize when damage has occurred, to name it honestly, to take responsibility, and to actively rebuild what was broken.

The first principle of relational repair is Radical Honesty About the Impact. The second principle is Presence Over Performance. The third principle is Differentiated Availability. The fourth principle is Shared Language for the Impact. The fifth principle is Reciprocal Investment.

Reflection Questions

1. Of the five principles — Radical Honesty, Presence Over Performance, Differentiated Availability, Shared Language, and Reciprocal Investment — which does your most important relationship most need right now?

2. Have you ever responded to relational concerns with some version of "But I'm doing important work"? How did that land?

3. If you invested in your most important personal relationship with the same intentionality you bring to your clinical work, what would change in the next 90 days?

Part 5 · Self-Assessment

Relational Health & Impact Assessment

Rate each statement: 1 (Not at all like me) to 5 (Very much like me)

Your Relational Health Profile

Work-Relationship Impact Awareness ____ %

Attachment & Trust Patterns ____ %

Communication & Emotional Honesty ____ %

Relational Boundary Navigation ____ %

Relational Resilience & Growth ____ %

Reading Your Scores

For Domain 1 (Work-Relationship Impact), higher scores indicate greater awareness of how your work affects your relationships. For Domains 2-4, higher scores indicate relational health strengths. For Domain 5, higher scores indicate active investment in relational resilience.

Work-Relationship Impact Awareness

I am aware of how my clinical work emotionally affects my partner, family, and close relationships

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I carry the emotional weight of client stories home more often than I would like to admit

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My partner or close people have expressed frustration about my emotional unavailability after work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I sometimes struggle to be emotionally present at home because I have "used up" my empathy at work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The vicarious trauma I absorb in sessions has changed how I experience intimacy and vulnerability

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have noticed my closest relationships deteriorating as my career demands have increased

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I sometimes use clinical language or therapeutic distance with people who need me to just be human

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am more patient and compassionate with my clients than I am with the people closest to me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Attachment & Trust Patterns

I feel safe being truly vulnerable with at least one person in my life outside of work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can ask for help, support, or comfort without feeling weak or burdensome

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I trust that the important people in my life will not abandon me if I show my struggles

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am comfortable with emotional closeness and do not need excessive distance to feel safe

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can tolerate conflict in relationships without catastrophizing, withdrawing, or becoming aggressive

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I do not use emotional caretaking of others as a substitute for receiving care myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am able to receive love, praise, and support without deflecting, minimizing, or feeling undeserving

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My attachment patterns in relationships have been positively influenced by my recovery or personal growth

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Communication & Emotional Honesty

I express my needs, feelings, and boundaries clearly and directly to the people closest to me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am able to listen to feedback from a partner or loved one without becoming defensive or shutting down

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can have difficult conversations without reverting to "clinician mode" — analyzing rather than feeling

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I communicate when I am struggling rather than performing wellness for the people around me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I do not use my clinical training as a weapon in personal conflicts — diagnosing or interpreting my partner

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I allow myself to be imperfect in communication rather than demanding therapeutic-level dialogue at home

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can apologize genuinely without over-explaining, rationalizing, or turning the focus to the other person

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am as honest about my emotional life with loved ones as I expect my clients to be in session

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Relational Boundary Navigation

I maintain clear boundaries between my professional relationships and my personal relationships

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I do not become the "therapist" in my friendships, family, or romantic partnership

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can say no to social or relational demands without excessive guilt or people-pleasing

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I maintain my own identity, interests, and friendships within my closest relationship

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I recognize when I am rescuing, enabling, or over-functioning in personal relationships

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am comfortable allowing loved ones to struggle without needing to fix or manage their experience

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I do not avoid closeness by staying perpetually busy with work obligations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I regularly check whether my relationship boundaries are serving connection or creating isolation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Relational Resilience & Growth

I actively invest time and energy into my most important personal relationships

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can navigate relationship disappointments without losing hope in connection itself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I model healthy relationships for my clients by practicing relational health in my own life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I seek support — therapy, couples work, honest conversation — when my relationships are struggling

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I celebrate the good in my relationships rather than only noticing what needs to be fixed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have grown as a partner, friend, or family member through my work in the SUD treatment field

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I believe I deserve the same quality of relationship care that I provide to my clients

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am committed to ongoing relational growth — not perfection, but genuine investment in the people I love

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Not at all · Very much

Assessment Reflection

1. Which domain revealed the most vulnerability in your relational life?

Your reflection...

2. How does your Relational Resilience score compare to your Impact Awareness score?

Your reflection...

3. Which specific items did you rate lowest?

Your reflection...

4. Were any of your answers surprising?

Your reflection...

5. Based on this assessment, what is the single most important thing you need to do for your most important personal relationship?

Your reflection...

Part 6 · Exercise 1: Relational Impact Audit

Relational Impact Audit

Who Gets What Is Left

Why This Matters

You cannot repair what you cannot see. The reading describes a toll that is emotional, not just a matter of hours: all day you are attuned, patient and regulated for people in crisis, and then you drive home, and the person who loves you gets whatever is left. That erosion is gradual, which is why it hides. This audit slows it down so you can see it clearly — who is closest to you, what they actually receive from you, what they have tried to tell you, and what has been protected. It is an accounting, not a verdict.

Who Gets What Is Left

Think of the three to five people closest to you outside work.

1. Name them, and the role you play in each of their lives.

Be specific and honest...

2. Describe the first thirty minutes after you walk in the door on an ordinary workday. What do you do, and what do they see?

Be specific and honest...

3. After a hard clinical day, what is actually left for them? Be concrete — patience, words, touch, attention, curiosity.

Be specific and honest...

4. How emotionally present are you at home on an ordinary workday evening?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

What They Have Told You

1. What has someone close to you said about your availability? Use their exact words if you remember them.

Be specific and honest...

2. How did you respond in the moment — explain, defend, agree, go quiet, change the subject?

Be specific and honest...

3. What do you suspect they have stopped saying, because saying it did not change anything?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much have you truly taken in what they told you?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

What Comes Home With You

1. Which sessions or client stories followed you home this past month, and how did they show up — preoccupation, irritability, silence, numbness?

Be specific and honest...

2. How has absorbing other people's trauma changed how you experience closeness, touch, vulnerability or safety at home?

Be specific and honest...

3. When did you last use clinical language or therapeutic distance with someone who needed you to just be human?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much more patience and compassion do you give clients than the people closest to you?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Tracing the Erosion

Choose the one relationship where the change is clearest.

1. What did this relationship look like before the work began to weigh on it?

Be specific and honest...

2. When did you first notice the change, and what did you put it down to at the time?

Be specific and honest...

3. Name two or three turning points — a new role, a bigger caseload, a client death, a stretch of short staffing.

Be specific and honest...

4. What does the relationship look like now, in an ordinary week?

Be specific and honest...

5. How much has this relationship eroded?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Honest Accounting

1. In a short paragraph: what has this work cost the people who love you?

Be specific and honest...

2. What has been protected — what is still warm, still good, still working between you?

Be specific and honest...

3. What one sign, next week, would tell you that you are bringing home more than leftovers?

Be specific and honest...

4. How willing are you to look at this with the people involved, not only on paper?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 7 · Exercise 2: Clinician Relational Pattern Identifier

Clinician Relational Pattern Identifier

When Professional Skills Become Personal Defenses

Skills vs. Defenses

Your clinical skills are strengths. Deployed without awareness, they become sophisticated ways of avoiding intimacy. The reading names five: Therapist Mode at Home, Emotional Rationing, Rescuer Identity Bleed, Clinical Weaponization, and Intimacy Avoidance. Your partner does not need a therapist. They need a human being who is willing to be affected. This exercise finds the pattern you lean on most, catches it in a real moment, asks what it protects you from, and gives you a way to step out of it while it is happening.

The Five Patterns, Rated

Rate how often each shows up in your closest relationships, not how often you would like it to.

1. Therapist Mode at Home — reflecting and validating ("It sounds like you're frustrated") instead of reacting as someone who is affected.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. Emotional Rationing — clients first, work second, the people you love get the scraps.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

3. Rescuer Identity Bleed — fixing, managing and caretaking the people you love as if they were on your caseload.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. Clinical Weaponization — interpreting, diagnosing or labeling a loved one in the middle of a conflict.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

5. Intimacy Avoidance — using busyness, tiredness or competence to keep real closeness at a safe distance.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

6. Which one is strongest for you, and which one would the person closest to you pick?

Be specific and honest...

The Pattern in Action

1. Describe a recent moment at home when your strongest pattern showed up. What was said, and what did you say?

Be specific and honest...

2. Write the clinical sentence you used or thought in that moment.

Be specific and honest...

3. Now write what a person who was hurt, tired, or affected would have said instead.

Be specific and honest...

4. How did the other person respond, and what did you notice in yourself?

Be specific and honest...

What Others Have Named

1. Has anyone told you that you were being "too clinical" or treating them "like a client"? What happened?

Be specific and honest...

2. Have you ever interpreted or labeled someone you love during an argument? What did it win you, and what did it cost?

Be specific and honest...

3. Who in your personal life are you unable to let struggle without stepping in to fix it?

Be specific and honest...

What the Pattern Protects

1. What feeling does your strongest pattern keep you from having?

Be specific and honest...

2. Where did you first learn that it was safer to help, analyze or manage than to be affected?

Be specific and honest...

3. What does the pattern give you — control, safety, competence, distance, the high ground?

Be specific and honest...

4. What does it cost the relationship?

Be specific and honest...

5. How quickly do you notice the pattern while it is happening?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Stepping Out of It

1. The earliest sign — in your body, your voice, your word choice — that you have switched into clinician mode.

Be specific and honest...

2. A short phrase you can say out loud to step out, such as "That's my work voice. Let me try again."

Be specific and honest...

3. Who could you tell about this pattern, and invite to name it gently when they see it?

Be specific and honest...

4. One situation this week where you will use the human line instead.

Be specific and honest...

Part 8 · Exercise 3: Emotional Energy Distribution Map

Emotional Energy Distribution Map

Where Your Warmth Goes, and Who Is Left Without It

Why This Matters

Attention, patience, warmth and curiosity are not endless. After a day of sustained empathic work, most clinicians build a quiet rationing system — clients first, professional obligations second, personal relationships last. Nobody decides this on purpose; it simply happens, day after day. This map makes the system visible: what you start with, where it goes, what refills it, what happens on the drive home, and what a fairer distribution could look like. You will not create more energy. You can decide where more of it goes.

Your Daily Budget

1. Describe what you have emotionally at the start of a workday — before the first session.

Be specific and honest...

2. Walk through a typical workday. Where does your emotional energy go — sessions, crises, colleagues, documentation, meetings, the commute?

Be specific and honest...

3. Estimate the share: clients __%, colleagues and admin __%, partner __%, children or family __%, friends __%, yourself __%.

Be specific and honest...

4. How much emotional energy is left when you get home?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Most and Least

1. Who consistently gets the most of your emotional energy?

Be specific and honest...

2. Who consistently gets the least? What would they say about that if you asked?

Be specific and honest...

3. Where do you yourself fall on that list?

Be specific and honest...

4. How fair would this distribution feel to the people who love you?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Drains and Refills

1. The three biggest drains in your working week — specific sessions, tasks or dynamics.

Be specific and honest...

2. What actually restores you? Not what should — what does.

Be specific and honest...

3. What at home drains you further — and how much of that is really work stress landing in the wrong place?

Be specific and honest...

4. How often in a week do you get real restoration?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Drive Home

The space between the last session and the front door is where the day is either set down or carried in.

1. What happens inside you between your last session and your front door?

Be specific and honest...

2. What, if anything, marks the end of your workday — and does it work?

Be specific and honest...

3. What would the people at home most want from your first ten minutes back?

Be specific and honest...

4. Design a transition ritual of ten minutes or less you could try: where, what, and how long.

Be specific and honest...

5. How well do you currently leave work at work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Redistribution

1. One place at work where you can spend less emotional energy without harming clinical care.

Be specific and honest...

2. What you will reserve for home — a time, an activity, a kind of attention — and how you will protect it.

Be specific and honest...

3. How will someone close to you notice that the distribution has shifted?

Be specific and honest...

4. Write the percentages you want for a sustainable week.

Be specific and honest...

5. How committed are you to trying this for the next two weeks?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 9 • Exercise 4: Attachment History & Current Connection

Attachment History & Current Connection

The Helper's Dilemma, From the Inside

Why This Matters

Attachment theory applies to you with the same force it applies to your clients. Many people in the caring professions learned early that giving care was the safest way to stay connected — the reading calls it compulsive caregiving. Vulnerability is the currency of intimacy, and it is exactly what your history and your training taught you to manage rather than express. In the therapy room you create the conditions for other people's vulnerability. This exercise asks who creates them for you, and whether you let them.

The Early Blueprint

This section can stir up old pain. Go at your own pace, skip what is too much today, and bring anything heavy to your own therapist or a trusted support rather than carrying it alone.

1. When you were upset as a child, who comforted you, and how? If no one did, what did you do instead?

Be specific and honest...

2. What role did you play in your family — caretaker, peacemaker, the strong one, the invisible one, the one who held it together?

Be specific and honest...

3. What rule about needing people did you learn? For example: "Don't be a burden," or "Take care of everyone and you'll be kept."

Be specific and honest...

4. How strongly does that rule still run your closest relationship?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Compulsive Caregiving

1. Where do you see giving care standing in for receiving it — at home, with friends, in your family?

Be specific and honest...

2. How did this pattern shape your choice of this career?

Be specific and honest...

3. What happens inside you when someone tries to take care of you?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much does caring for others substitute for being cared for in your life?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Closeness From the Inside

Not the clinical label you would give yourself. How it feels.

1. What does closeness feel like in your closest relationship right now? What do you do when it gets too close, or too far?

Be specific and honest...

2. When the relationship feels threatened, what do you do — pursue, withdraw, placate, go cold, get busy?

Be specific and honest...

3. How much do you trust that the people closest to you will stay if they see you struggling?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. How safe do you feel being fully vulnerable with at least one person outside work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Helper's Dilemma

1. When did you last let someone who loves you see you struggling, without tidying it up first?

Be specific and honest...

2. What stops you? Name the fear underneath, not the reason you usually give.

Be specific and honest...

3. Who has tried to create space for your vulnerability, and what did you do when they did?

Be specific and honest...

4. One thing you have not told the person closest to you about how this work affects you.

Be specific and honest...

Toward Earned Security

Attachment patterns are not a life sentence. Recovery, therapy and good relationships change them — this is sometimes called earned security.

1. Where has your pattern already shifted — through recovery, therapy, a good friendship or partnership?

Be specific and honest...

2. One small act of letting yourself be cared for this week: ask for help, accept comfort, or say "I'm not okay."

Be specific and honest...

3. Who could help you keep working on this — a therapist, sponsor, partner or friend?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much do you believe your pattern can still change?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 10 • Exercise 5: Letter to the Person Who Waits

Letter to the Person Who Waits

Words for the One Who Gets What Is Left

Why This Matters

Somewhere, someone has been waiting for the warm, present version of you — a partner, a child, a parent, a friend. The reading describes them plainly: the person who needs you, and gets whatever is left. This letter is written to them. It is not an explanation of your job and it is not a defense of the hours. It is an acknowledgment of what they have lived with, and an honest word about what you want to give them. Whether you share it is your choice. Writing it honestly is the exercise.

Who Waits

1. Who are you writing to, and what has their waiting looked like?

Be specific and honest...

2. Describe the version of you they get at the end of a hard day — the way they would describe it.

Be specific and honest...

3. What do they miss about you? What did they used to get that they rarely get now?

Be specific and honest...

Their Side of the Door

1. Imagine their day while you are at work. What are they carrying that you may not ask about?

Be specific and honest...

2. What might waiting for you feel like — hope, loneliness, resentment, resignation, pride?

Be specific and honest...

3. What might they have stopped asking you for?

Be specific and honest...

4. How well do you understand what your work costs them?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Letter

Write as though they will read it, whether or not they will. Plain words. No client details, no clinical language, and no "but I'm doing important work."

1. Open by acknowledging what they have lived with.

Be specific and honest...

2. Name specifically what you have given them less of, and take responsibility for it.

Be specific and honest...

3. Tell them what their patience, waiting or presence has meant to you.

Be specific and honest...

4. Tell them one true thing about your inner life that you usually keep to yourself.

Be specific and honest...

5. Close with one thing you want to offer them — small, specific and possible. An offer, not a vow.

Be specific and honest...

Reading It Back

1. Read the letter aloud. What did you feel, and where did your voice catch?

Be specific and honest...

2. Which sentence was hardest to write, and why?

Be specific and honest...

3. Find the sentence where you slipped into explaining, defending or sounding like a clinician. Rewrite it.

Be specific and honest...

4. How honest is this letter?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

What Happens Next

Some letters are handed over, some are read aloud, some become a conversation, and some are kept. Every choice is valid. Choose on purpose.

1. What will you do with this letter, and why?

Be specific and honest...

2. If you are sharing it or talking about it, when and where? Choose a time that is not the end of a hard shift.

Be specific and honest...

3. What will you do in the next week so the letter is more than words?

Be specific and honest...

4. How ready are you to let this person see what you wrote?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 11 · Exercise 6: The Partner Test — Reversing the Lens

The Partner Test — Reversing the Lens

Would You Accept What You Give?

Why This Matters

From your side of the relationship, the tiredness is understandable and the reasons are good. From the other side, it may simply feel like absence. This exercise turns the lens around three ways: you imagine being the one who waits, you hear your relationship described as if a client were telling you about it, and you write in the voice of the person closest to you. Clinicians are skilled at seeing other people's relationships clearly. This is a chance to use that skill on your own.

Swap Places

Imagine the person closest to you does your job, on your schedule, and you are the one waiting at home.

1. Describe their typical evening if they came home the way you do.

Be specific and honest...

2. How would you feel waiting for them? What would you want to say?

Be specific and honest...

3. What would you put up with, and for how long, before you raised it?

Be specific and honest...

4. How fair would this arrangement feel from the receiving end?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

If a Client Described It

Imagine a client describing your home life to you in session, word for word.

1. Write your relationship the way that client would describe it — plain facts, third person, no excuses.

Be specific and honest...

2. What would you notice clinically — the pattern, the risk, what is missing?

Be specific and honest...

3. What would you gently recommend to that client?

Be specific and honest...

4. How likely are you to follow your own recommendation?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Standard You Hold Clients To

1. What do you ask of clients in their relationships — honesty, showing up, repair, asking for help?

Be specific and honest...

2. Which of those do you currently practice at home, and which do you not?

Be specific and honest...

3. What reason do you give yourself that you would gently challenge if a client said it?

Be specific and honest...

4. How closely do you meet the relational standard you hold for clients?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

In Their Voice

Write as the person closest to you, in the first person. Be fair to them, not to yourself.

1 "The hardest thing about loving someone who does this work is..."

Be specific and honest...

2 "What I wish you knew is..."

Be specific and honest...

3 "What I still love about you is..."

Be specific and honest...

4 "What I need from you, starting now, is..."

Be specific and honest...

What the Lens Shows

1. What did reversing the lens show you that you could not see from your own side?

Be specific and honest...

2. The one change they would notice most.

Be specific and honest...

3. A question you could ask them this week to find out whether what you imagined is true.

Be specific and honest...

4. How open are you to hearing their real answer?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 12 · Exercise 7: Personal Relationship Boundary Inventory

Personal Relationship Boundary Inventory

Boundaries That Serve Connection, Not Isolation

Why This Matters

Clinicians are taught to hold careful boundaries at work, and then often have almost none at home — or have walls where there should be doors. Work reaches into evenings. Family calls you when there is a crisis. Friends come to you for free therapy. And busyness quietly becomes a way to avoid closeness. This inventory looks at four places boundaries live in your personal life, asks whether each one protects connection or creates distance, and ends with one boundary you will say out loud this week.

Work and Home

1. How did work reach into home last week — calls, messages, notes, thinking about cases? Be specific.

Be specific and honest...

2. Where do you use work obligations to avoid closeness or a hard conversation?

Be specific and honest...

3. Where do professional and personal lives blur — colleagues as your only friends, clients in your community, overlap in recovery circles?

Be specific and honest...

4. How clearly do you keep work out of your home time?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Not the Therapist

1. Who in your personal life comes to you for free therapy, and what does it take from you?

Be specific and honest...

2. What role do you play in your family's crises — counselor, mediator, fixer, the one who handles it?

Be specific and honest...

3. Where are you rescuing, enabling or over-functioning with someone you love?

Be specific and honest...

4. How comfortable are you letting a loved one struggle without fixing it for them?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Saying No

1. To whom is it hardest to say no, and what happens inside you when you try?

Be specific and honest...

2. What does the guilt say?

Be specific and honest...

3. A recent yes that should have been a no — and what it cost you and the relationship.

Be specific and honest...

4. How able are you to say no without excessive guilt?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Walls and Doors

1. What interests, friendships or parts of yourself have faded inside your closest relationship?

Be specific and honest...

2. Which of your boundaries have become walls — protecting you, but creating isolation?

Be specific and honest...

3. Which are too loose — letting in more than you can carry?

Be specific and honest...

4. How well do your personal boundaries serve connection rather than distance?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

One Boundary, Said Out Loud

1. The one boundary that would most help your closest relationship right now.

Be specific and honest...

2. The exact words you will use — kind, clear, and free of clinical language.

Be specific and honest...

3. With whom, and when?

Be specific and honest...

4. The reaction you expect, and how you will stay steady without over-explaining.

Be specific and honest...

5. How confident are you that you will say it this week?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 13 · Exercise 8: Seven-Day Relational Presence Practice

Seven-Day Relational Presence Practice

One Deliberate Act of Presence, Every Day for a Week

Why This Matters

The reading's second principle of repair is Presence Over Performance. The people who love you do not need a perfect partner, parent or friend. They need you to actually be there. For seven days you will practice one small, deliberate act of presence and take two minutes to notice what happened. Each day has a suggestion; swap in your own if it fits better. Days six and seven are written for days off, because days off show whether you ever fully come home.

Before You Start

1. Who is this week of practice mainly for?

Be specific and honest...

2. What does presence look like to them — not to you? If you are not sure, ask.

Be specific and honest...

3. What is most likely to get in the way this week, and what will you do when it does?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present are you at home right now?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 1 — Phone Down

Put your phone in another room for the first thirty minutes after you get home.

1. What did you do, and with whom?

Be specific and honest...

2. What did you notice in them, and in yourself?

Be specific and honest...

3. What pulled you out of presence — a thought about work, the phone, tiredness?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present were you today?☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 2 — Just Listen

Ask one real question and listen to the answer without fixing, advising or reflecting it back like a clinician.

1. What did you ask, and what did you hear?

Be specific and honest...

2. What did you notice in them, and in yourself?

Be specific and honest...

3. Where did the urge to fix or reflect show up, and what did you do with it?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present were you today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 3 — One True Thing

Tell them one true thing about how your day felt — the feeling, not the case. No client details.

1. What did you share?

Be specific and honest...

2. How did they respond, and how did it feel to be the one sharing?

Be specific and honest...

3. What almost stopped you from saying it?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present were you today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 4 — No Agenda

Spend twenty minutes together with no agenda — a walk, a meal without screens, sitting close, a game.

1. What did you do together?

Be specific and honest...

2. What did you notice in them, and in yourself?

Be specific and honest...

3. What pulled you out of presence?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present were you today?☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 5 — Receive

Let someone give you something — help, comfort, a compliment, a cup of tea — without deflecting or paying it back straight away.

1. What did you receive, and from whom?

Be specific and honest...

2. What happened inside you as you received it?

Be specific and honest...

3. What was your urge to deflect, minimize or return the favor?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present were you today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 6 — A Day Off, Fully Off

Take a longer stretch — half a day or more — with no email, no notes and no checking in on work.

1. How did you spend the time, and with whom?

Be specific and honest...

2. What did you notice in them, and in yourself, as the hours went on?

Be specific and honest...

3. When did work come back into your mind or your hand, and what did you do?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present were you today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 7 — Ask Them

Ask: "What is one thing that would help you feel more connected to me?" Listen, and do not defend.

1. What did they say?

Be specific and honest...

2. What did you feel as you heard it?

Be specific and honest...

3. Where did you want to explain or defend, and what did you do instead?

Be specific and honest...

4. How present were you today?☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Week in Review**1. Looking across the seven days, what pattern do you see?**

Be specific and honest...

2. Which day was easiest and which was hardest, and why?

Be specific and honest...

3. What did the people closest to you notice or say this week?

Be specific and honest...

4. Which practice will you keep, and how often?

Be specific and honest...

5. How present do you feel at home now, compared with Day 1?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 14 • Exercise 9: The Repair Conversation Blueprint

The Repair Conversation Blueprint

Naming the Damage, Owning Your Part, Rebuilding

Why This Matters

Relationships that survive this career are not the ones that never feel the strain. They are the ones that can repair — recognize the damage, name it honestly, take responsibility and rebuild. The reading gives five principles: Radical Honesty About the Impact, Presence Over Performance, Differentiated Availability, Shared Language for the Impact, and Reciprocal Investment. This blueprint uses them to prepare one real conversation. You already know how to hold this kind of conversation for clients. This time you are not the facilitator. You are the one who owes the repair.

Name the Rupture

A repair conversation is for a relationship that is safe. If you are afraid of the other person, or there has been violence, threats or controlling behavior, this is not the right tool — reach out for support first. In the US, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788.

1. What happened — the event or pattern, described as facts rather than interpretations?
Be specific and honest...

2. How has it most likely felt from their side?
Be specific and honest...

3. What is your part, fully — with no "but"?
Be specific and honest...

4. How much has this strained the relationship?
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Five Principles

Rate how well each principle is alive in this relationship right now.

1. Radical Honesty About the Impact — how openly do you name what your work does to the relationship?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. Presence Over Performance — how much do you show up as yourself, rather than performing being fine?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

3. Differentiated Availability — how clearly do you say what you can and cannot give, instead of promising everything or disappearing?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. Shared Language for the Impact — how much do you have simple words together for a hard day, such as "I'm running on empty tonight"?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

5. Reciprocal Investment — how evenly do care and effort flow in both directions?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

6. Which principle does this relationship most need right now, and why?

Be specific and honest...

Preparing Yourself

1. When and where? Not at the end of a hard shift, not in the car, not in front of children.

Be specific and honest...

2. What state do you need to be in, and how will you get there beforehand?

Be specific and honest...

3. Which of your patterns is most likely to show up — therapist mode, explaining, defending, over-apologizing — and how will you catch it?

Be specific and honest...

4. What are you afraid will happen?

Be specific and honest...

5. How ready are you to have this conversation?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Conversation

Short is better than polished. Say it simply, then listen for longer than you speak.

1. Your opening sentence — plain, human, and owning.

Be specific and honest...

2. How you will name the impact on them, in their terms rather than yours.

Be specific and honest...

3. Your apology — no over-explaining, no rationalizing, no turning the focus back to you.

Be specific and honest...

4. What you will do if they respond with anger, tears or silence.

Be specific and honest...

5. What you will ask them — what they need, and what would help.

Be specific and honest...

6. What you can concretely offer, and what you honestly cannot.

Be specific and honest...

After the Conversation

Repair is not one conversation. It is what you do in the weeks after it.

1. How did it go — what did they say, and what did you feel?

Be specific and honest...

2. The concrete change you will make, and how they will see it within a week.

Be specific and honest...

3. When you will check back with them about how it is going.

Be specific and honest...

4. If the conversation stalls or the old pattern returns, what support will you seek — couples counseling, your own therapist, a trusted friend?

Be specific and honest...

5. How hopeful do you feel about this relationship now?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 15 · Exercise 10: Relationships & Resilience Connection Map

Relationships & Resilience Connection Map

Putting the Module Together — Work, Love, and What Holds Both

Why This Matters

Your relationships and your resilience at work are not separate systems. A strained home makes every session heavier, and an emptying career leaves less for the people you love. This map gathers what the module showed you, rates the five domains as they stand today, traces how work and love feed each other, and ends with a plan. The reading closes with a question worth carrying forward: if you invested in your most important relationship with the same intention you bring to your clinical work, what would change in the next ninety days?

What the Module Showed You

Look back over your self-assessment and any exercises you completed.

1. Your lowest-scoring assessment domain, and what that score reflects in your relationships.

Be specific and honest...

2. What your pattern and your energy map told you, together, in a sentence or two.

Be specific and honest...

3. What surprised you most in this module?

Be specific and honest...

Five Domains, Today

1. Work-relationship impact awareness: how clearly do you see what your work does to the people you love?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. Attachment and trust: how safe do you feel being vulnerable and receiving care?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

3. Communication and emotional honesty: how honestly do you share your inner life at home?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. Relational boundaries: how well do your boundaries serve connection?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

5. Relational resilience and growth: how actively are you investing in your closest relationships?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

How Work and Love Connect

1. How does your resilience at work affect your relationships? Trace one real example.

Be specific and honest...

2. How do your relationships affect your capacity at work, on a good week and on a bad one?

Be specific and honest...

3. One relational change that would strengthen both your home life and your work.

Be specific and honest...

Your Circle

1. The people in your inner circle, and what each relationship most needs from you.

Be specific and honest...

2. What you most need from them, said plainly.

Be specific and honest...

3. Who outside your home supports your relationships — friends, a couples counselor, a sponsor, a community?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much do you believe you deserve the same quality of relational care you give your clients?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Map Forward

1. In the next month, you will:

Be specific and honest...

2. Within ninety days, you want your closest relationship to feel like this:

Be specific and honest...

3. Within a year, you want your relationships to look like this:

Be specific and honest...

4. A regular rhythm for asking, together, "How are we doing, and how is my work affecting us?" — and the date of the first one.

Be specific and honest...

5. One present-tense sentence about the partner, parent or friend you are choosing to be.

Be specific and honest...
