

WHY AM I SO HARD ON MYSELF? (TATA, Your Adaptation Voice)

The Deep Dive Worksheet: The Need to Belong

This worksheet goes with the blog. It has 7 short activities. Each one tells you exactly what to do, and shows you a filled-in example first, so you always know what your answer should look like.

Take your time. There are no wrong answers here.

1. CATCH THE EDIT

Instructions: TATA does her best work in the half-second before you speak, post, or answer. This week, catch her mid-edit, the moment you soften something, delete it, rephrase it, or hold it back before it ever leaves your mouth. Write it down as soon as it happens, while it's still fresh.

EXAMPLE ENTRY

What I was about to say or do: *Tell my group that I actually don't like the restaurant everyone picked.*

What I edited it down to: *"Sounds good to me!" (then quietly hoped someone else would suggest a different spot.)*

What TATA whispered right before: *"Don't be the difficult one. Just go along with it."*

What blending in actually got me: *Nobody noticed I went along with it. I just felt a little more invisible.*

MOMENT 1

What I was about to say or do: _____

What I edited it down to: _____

What TATA whispered right before: _____

What blending in actually got me: _____

MOMENT 2

What I was about to say or do: _____

What I edited it down to: _____

What TATA whispered right before: _____

What blending in actually got me: _____

MOMENT 3

What I was about to say or do: _____

What I edited it down to: _____

What TATA whispered right before: _____

What blending in actually got me: _____

2. THE ROOM OR THE RULE

Instructions: TATA treats almost every room like it has the same strict dress code: blend in, or get pushed out. Most of the time, that's not the room talking. It's an old rule she's still enforcing, long after it stopped being true. This activity helps you tell the two apart.

EXAMPLE

What actually happened: *I gave an answer in a meeting that didn't match the tone of the two answers before mine.*

What this room actually required: *An honest answer. That's it. Nobody's job depended on matching everyone else's tone.*

What TATA assumed it required: *"Sound exactly like everyone else, or you'll get flagged as difficult."*

Circled: *This is an old rule, not this room.*

What actually happened? Describe it the way a stranger would, with no story added.

What did this room actually require of you, if you're honest about it?

What did TATA assume it required?

Now circle whichever one feels true.

THIS ROOM ASKED ME TO BLEND IN THIS IS AN OLD RULE, NOT THIS ROOM A LITTLE OF BOTH

3. WHERE THE RULE GOT WRITTEN

Instructions: TATA didn't invent the blending-in strategy out of nowhere. She picked it up somewhere it actually worked. This activity traces it back to the room where standing out first came with a cost, so you can see the rule for what it is: something you learned, not something you are.

EXAMPLE

Where standing out came with a cost: *Middle school. My accent was different from everyone else's, and I got teased for it every single day.*

What I learned to do instead: *Study how everyone else talked, and match it exactly, until nobody could tell I was ever different.*

How old I was: *About 11.*

The rule, in one sentence: *"If I sound and act like everyone else, nobody gets a reason to single me out."*

Where I'm still running this rule today: *In client calls, where I still mirror people's exact tone instead of just talking like myself.*

Where did standing out first come with a real cost for you? (a family, a school, a friend group, a culture)

What did you learn to do instead, to make sure that never happened again?

About how old were you when you learned this rule?

Put the rule you learned into one sentence.

Where in your life today are you still running that exact rule, even though the room has changed?

4. NAME YOUR GO-TO MOVE

Instructions: When TATA starts auditing how well you're blending in, you default to one of two moves: *smoothing yourself out completely, or performing that you don't care what anyone thinks. Circle the one you reach for most, then look at what it's really doing for you, and to you.*

I SMOOTH MYSELF OUT

I PERFORM NOT CARING

EXAMPLE

Circled: *I smooth myself out.*

What this move protects me from: *Being the one person in the room who sticks out or gets talked about.*

What it's actually cost me: *A friendship where I agreed with everything for two years, then blew up over something small because I'd never once said what I actually thought.*

Where I do this the most: *Family group texts. I never disagree there, not even a little.*

What might happen if I dropped it for one day: *Honestly? Probably nothing dramatic. Someone might just learn what I actually think, for once.*

What is this move trying to protect you from?

What has it actually cost you? (a relationship, an opinion, a version of you nobody's met yet)

Where do you reach for this move the most?

What do you think would happen if you dropped it, just for one day?

5. THE BELONGING PROOF FILE

Instructions: *TATA is convinced that the unedited version of you costs you the room. This activity builds a file of proof against her: real moments when someone got the real, un-smoothed version of you, and wanted you around anyway.*

EXAMPLE

Someone who's seen the unedited me and stayed: *My roommate has watched me be blunt, weird, and opinionated for three years straight, and still wants to live with me.*

A moment being different actually landed well: *I disagreed with my manager in a meeting, carefully but clearly. She thanked me afterward for saying it.*

What I'd tell TATA about these two moments: *"See? Different didn't cost me the room. It's part of why people stay."*

Someone who's seen the real, unedited you, and stayed anyway. What did they see?

A moment your different opinion, reaction, or choice was actually welcomed, not punished.

Based on these two moments, what would you tell TATA?

Tip: keep this list somewhere you'll see it again, and add to it every time you catch TATA being wrong.

6. A LETTER FROM AKO TO TATA

Instructions: AKO is your higher self, the part of you that already knows fitting in and belonging were never the same thing. In this activity, AKO writes TATA a short letter: thanking her for the strategy she built, and telling her exactly what's changed since she first decided blending in was the price of admission.

EXAMPLE

"Dear TATA, thank you for figuring out how to keep me safe in rooms where being different actually cost me something. That strategy worked, back then. But I'm not in that room anymore, and the people around me now aren't keeping score the way that room did. I don't need to disappear to keep my seat. I'm allowed to take up the space I actually take up."

Now write your own letter, in your own words.

Dear TATA,

7. THIS WEEK'S SMALL DEFIANCE

Instructions: Pick one small, specific way to let the unedited version of you show up this week. Before you try it, predict what you think will happen. Afterward, come back and write what actually happened.

EXAMPLE

Small defiance I'll try: Tell my friend group the real restaurant I'd rather go to, instead of just agreeing with the group pick.

I predict: *I'll feel awkward for about two minutes and worry I sounded picky.*

What actually happened: *Two people said they were secretly hoping someone would suggest something else. We went with my idea.*

Small defiance I'll try this week:

I predict:

What actually happened, after I tried it:

CLOSING LINE

Nothing here proves you have to be flawless to belong. It proves you've been running an old rule about blending in, and now you have real proof that you're allowed to write a different one.

You got this! Nobody is coming to save you... you have to save yourself!

HAPPYISH HUMANS