

WHY DO I CARE SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE THINK? (TATA, Your Adaptation Voice)

The Deep Dive Worksheet: Recalibrating the Gauge

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. THE GAUGE LOG

Instructions: This week, catch the moment TATA starts checking the social gauge, big or small. As soon as you notice it, come back and log it: what triggered the check, what the gauge read, and the feeling underneath it.

What kind of moments usually set off the gauge for you? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Rereading a text before or after sending it
- ☐ A room going quiet or a joke not landing
- ☐ Replaying a normal interaction at night
- ☐ Someone seeming a little off with me, for no clear reason
- ☐ Other: _____

EXAMPLE ENTRY

What triggered it: I sent a slightly joking text and they didn't respond for two hours.

What the gauge read: "That landed wrong. They probably think I'm annoying now."

The feeling underneath it: Exposed. A specific kind of unsettled that made me reread the text six more times.

What actually happened: They replied with a laughing emoji and mentioned they'd been in a meeting.

ENTRY 1 — What triggered it:

What the gauge read:

The feeling underneath it:

What actually happened:

ENTRY 2 — What triggered it:

What the gauge read:

The feeling underneath it:

What actually happened:

ENTRY 3 — What triggered it:

What the gauge read:

The feeling underneath it:

What actually happened:

2. CHECK THE STAKES

Instructions: Pick one current worry about what someone thinks of you. Rate how sure you actually are that something's wrong, then check the gauge's reading against what's actually at risk.

VERY SURE — SOMEWHAT SURE — NOT REALLY SURE — NO IDEA, HONESTLY

EXAMPLE

What the gauge is reacting to: I made a comment in a meeting that got a slightly delayed laugh.

Circled: Somewhat sure.

Is there real evidence of rejection, or is this the gauge's default high-alert setting?: No real evidence. Nobody said anything, nobody's acted differently since.

If nobody noticed or cared, would this threaten anything real in my life?: No. My job, my friendships, and my standing on the team would all be exactly the same.

The actual gap between the alarm and the real stakes: Enormous. This is nowhere close to the kind of exclusion the gauge is built to prevent.

What the gauge is reacting to:

Circle one above, then write it here:

Is there real evidence of rejection, or is this the gauge's default high-alert setting?:

If nobody noticed or cared, would this threaten anything real in your life?:

The actual gap between the alarm and the real stakes:

3. WHERE THE GAUGE GOT CALIBRATED

Instructions: Nobody's born checking a social gauge this closely. This activity traces back where belonging first felt conditional, so you can see the sensitivity as something that got calibrated, not a personal flaw.

EXAMPLE

Where the gauge got calibrated: Approval at home depended on grades and being easy to manage. Being liked wasn't a given, it had to be earned every day.

What I concluded from it: "Belonging isn't guaranteed. I have to keep proving I deserve it, or it can disappear."

About how old I was: Around 10.

Where I'm still applying that lesson today: I over-monitor how I'm coming across at work, even with people who've never once given me a reason to.

Where the gauge got calibrated:

What you concluded from it:

About how old you were:

Where you're still applying that lesson today:

4. NAME YOUR MOVE

Instructions: When the caring gets overwhelming, you default to one of two moves: letting the gauge run the whole show, or forcing yourself to act like you don't care at all. Circle the one you reach for most.

I LET THE GAUGE RUN THE SHOW — I FORCE MYSELF NOT TO CARE AT ALL

EXAMPLE

Circled: I let the gauge run the show.

What this move protects me from: The risk of being genuinely disliked and not seeing it coming.

What it's actually cost me: An hour tonight replaying one slightly awkward pause in a totally normal conversation.

One thing I might do differently if I dropped it for a day: Send the text without rereading it four times first, and see what actually happens.

Circle one above, then write it here:

What this move protects you from:

What it's actually cost you:

One thing you might do differently if you dropped it for a day:

5. THE PROOF OF SAFE BELONGING FILE

Instructions: The gauge is convinced belonging is conditional everywhere, all the time. This activity builds a file of proof against that: real people or moments that have already shown you their acceptance doesn't hinge on you performing perfectly.

EXAMPLE

"My sister has seen me at my most annoying and awkward more times than I can count, and she still calls me first with good news. That's not conditional."

1.

2.

3.

Tip: keep this list somewhere you'll see it again, and add to it every time someone's acceptance of you holds steady through an imperfect moment.

6. A LETTER FROM AKO TO TATA

Instructions: AKO is your Higher Self, the part of you that can read the actual room, not just scan it for danger. Let AKO write TATA, your Adaptation Voice, a short letter, thanking her for building a gauge that once mattered for survival, and telling her what's changed since she first calibrated it.

EXAMPLE

"Dear TATA, thank you for building a gauge to keep me safely connected. I know belonging used to be a lot less guaranteed than it is now. But most rooms I walk into today aren't measuring my worth the way you're bracing for. Let's turn the sensitivity down, just a little, and see what's actually true."

Dear TATA,

7. THIS WEEK'S UNMANAGED MOMENT

Instructions: Pick one small thing this week and let it go unaddressed and unoptimized, an unanswered "did that sound weird" worry, an honest opinion you don't soften first. Predict what you think will happen. Then do it, and come back and write what actually happened.

EXAMPLE

The unmanaged moment I'll try: Wearing the outfit I actually like instead of the "safe" one, without asking anyone what they think first.

I predict: I'll feel exposed all day and keep checking people's faces for a reaction.

What actually happened: Nobody said anything at all, and by the afternoon I'd completely forgotten to check.

The unmanaged moment you'll try:

I predict:

What actually happened:

Nothing here proves you don't matter to people, or that connection isn't worth caring about. It proves the gauge's sensitivity setting is overdue for an update, and every unmanaged moment gives it new data to work with.

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

HAPPYISH HUMANS