

The Advocate's SHIFT: From Survival to Sustainable Strength

Regulating Ourselves to
Sustain the Work

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From Awareness ➤ To Practice

In the keynote, we explored how trauma impacts the nervous system...

Now we explore what we do with that awareness.



This Space

- You have choice
- You can opt in or out at any time
- Awareness over perfection
- You are not here to “fix” yourself



Check In

BREATH

Notice Witness Observe

AWARENESS

What state are you in?



Advocacy + Nervous System Load

A woman with dark curly hair is sitting on a light-colored tufted sofa. She is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. She has her head buried in her hand, looking down with a distressed expression. In the background, another person is blurred, suggesting movement or a busy environment. The setting appears to be a living room with a white paneled wall.

Compassion without regulation
becomes depletion.



HYPERVIGILANCE

OVERDRIVE MODE: FIGHT OR FLIGHT

Your nervous system is on high alert, scanning for danger. It's trying to protect you—but it can keep you stuck in overdrive.



IN EVERYDAY LIFE

You may be in hypervigilance when you:

- **Race your thoughts** and can't slow down
- **Feel irritable, on edge,** or easily frustrated
- **Speak quickly** or feel the need to rush
- **Experience tightness in your chest,** jaw, or shoulders
- **Have trouble sleeping** or stay alert at night
- **Overthink decisions** or struggle to relax, even in safe spaces
- **Feel like you must always be "on"** and in control
- **Take on too much** and feel guilty saying no
- **Believe "If I don't do it,** it won't get done."
- **Find it hard to trust others**
- **Anticipate the worst** or jump to conclusions



WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

Anxiety, tension, anger, overwhelm, urgency, restlessness, exhaustion.



AT ITS CORE

Your system is trying to keep you safe by scanning for threats—real or perceived.



IN ADVOCACY WORK

You may be in hypervigilance at work when you:

- **Constantly check email, messages,** or notifications
- **Feel responsible for everyone's needs** or outcomes
- **Feel urgency to fix everything now**
- **Struggle to delegate** or trust others
- **React strongly to feedback** or setbacks
- **Take on more cases, tasks,** or projects than you can handle
- **Have a hard time letting go** of a case or situation
- **Feel on edge** in meetings, calls, or difficult conversations
- **Struggle to unplug** after work
- **Seek perfection** and are hard on yourself
- **Burn out** from pushing beyond your limits
- **Celebrate wins** but never feel satisfied



WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

Burnout, stress, reactivity, compassion fatigue, frustration, strained relationships.



WHY IT MATTERS

Hypervigilance can help you survive a threat—but living in it long-term can drain your energy, impact your health, and make it harder to think clearly, connect, and lead with compassion.



HYPOVIGILANCE

SHUTDOWN MODE: FREEZE OR FAWN

Your nervous system is under-responsive, trying to protect you by disconnecting. It can leave you feeling numb, unmotivated, and disconnected.



IN EVERYDAY LIFE

You may be in hypovigilance when you:

- **Feel numb, empty,** or emotionally flat
- **Experience brain fog** or trouble concentrating
- **Feel low energy** or chronic fatigue
- **Lose interest** in things you once enjoyed
- **Avoid tasks** or responsibilities
- **Procrastinate** or feel stuck
- **Feel disconnected** from yourself or others
- **Struggle** to make decisions
- **Sleep too much** or never feel rested
- **Feel unmotivated** or “what’s the point?”
- **Scroll, zone out,** or dissociate for long periods
- **Feel heavy, hopeless,** or withdrawn
- **Find it hard** to show up for yourself
- **Go through the motions** of daily life without feeling present



WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

Numbness, emptiness, sadness, hopelessness, disconnection, apathy, exhaustion.



AT ITS CORE

Your system is trying to protect you from feeling overwhelmed, unsafe, or unable to cope.



IN ADVOCACY WORK

You may be in hypovigilance at work when you:

- **Feel overwhelmed** and shut down
- **Avoid** opening emails or important tasks
- **Disengage** in meetings or collaboration
- **Have difficulty** focusing on cases or projects
- **Feel disconnected** from your purpose or the mission
- **Feel cynical** or like “nothing will change”
- **Call in sick** or isolate more often
- **Struggle** to care or feel emotionally detached
- **Miss deadlines** or lose track of time
- **Use distractions** to avoid hard emotions
- **Feel invisible,** unappreciated, or depleted
- **Have a hard time** celebrating wins or impact
- **Feel like** you’re just surviving the workday, not leading it
- **Lose motivation** to keep advocating for change



WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

Disengagement, missed opportunities, isolation, depression, exhaustion, decreased effectiveness.



WHY IT MATTERS

Hypovigilance may feel safer in the short term, but staying disconnected can drain your energy, impact your well-being, and make it harder to connect, lead, and create change.



REFLECTION PROMPT

Pause. Notice. Reflect.



*Awareness is the first step, Regulation is the next. Choice is the goal.
Take a few minutes to check in with yourself honestly and without judgment.*



1. WHAT DO YOU DEFAULT TO?

Which patterns or habits show up most for you when you're stressed?

POSSIBLE PATTERNS:

- Overdrive (pushing, controlling, overthinking)
- Avoidance (procrastinating, withdrawing, distracting)
- People-pleasing (over-giving, saying yes, over-responsible)



2. WHAT DOES STRESS FEEL LIKE IN YOUR BODY?

Where do you feel it? What sensations show up most often?

COMMON PLACES WE HOLD STRESS:

- Shoulders, neck, or upper back
- Jaw, face, or temples
- Chest or tightness in your breath
- Stomach or digestive system



3. WHAT DOES STRESS LOOK LIKE IN YOUR LEADERSHIP OR WORK?

How does it impact how you show up for your team, clients, and the mission?

COMMON EXAMPLES:

- Shorter temper, less patience, or reactivity
- Difficulty focusing, making decisions, or delegating
- Withdrawing, overworking, or taking on too much

*You can't pour from an empty cup.
Your regulation is your leadership.*



Bridge to Regulation

We cannot THINK our way out.
We must regulate our way
back to CHOICE.





TWO BREATHING TECHNIQUES

Simple tools to regulate your nervous system.



1. 4-7-8 BREATH

A calming breath that helps reduce anxiety, quiet the mind, and promote rest. Best used when you're feeling overwhelmed, racing, or having trouble sleeping.

HOW TO PRACTICE

-  **Inhale** through your nose for a count of 4.
-  **Hold** your breath for a count of 7.
-  **Exhale** slowly through your mouth for a count of 8.
-  **Repeat** 4 cycles or as needed.

BENEFITS

- Activates the body's relaxation response
- Lowers heart rate and blood pressure
- Calms the mind and reduces stress
- Supports better sleep
- Creates space between stimulus and response



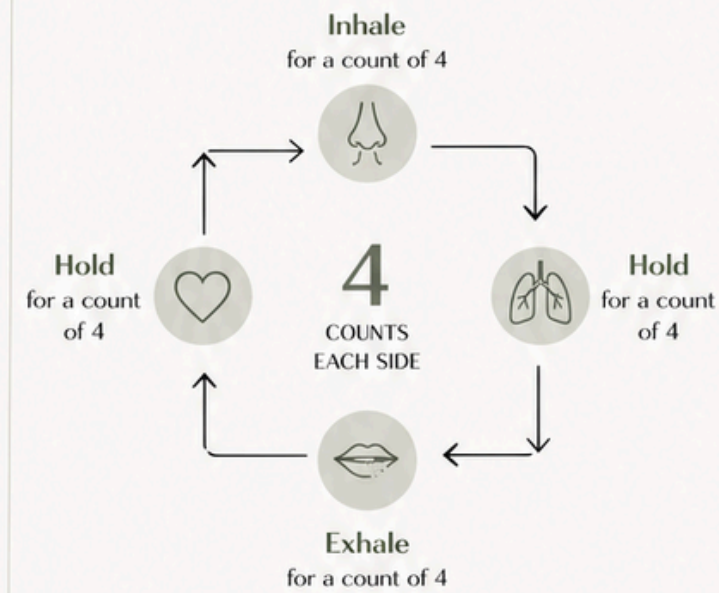
WHEN TO USE

Before bed, during moments of anxiety, or anytime you need to reset and come back to center.

2. BOX BREATH (COUNT OF 4)

A grounding breath that builds focus, balance, and calm. Great for resetting, staying present, or before important conversations.

HOW TO PRACTICE



BENEFITS

- Brings balance to the nervous system
- Improves focus and concentration
- Reduces stress and emotional reactivity
- Enhances self-control and presence
- Easy to use anywhere, anytime



WHEN TO USE

Before meetings, during stressful moments, or anytime you want to feel grounded, steady, and in control.



TIPS FOR BOTH PRACTICES

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Keep your spine tall but relaxed.
- Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly.
- Breathe through your nose unless directed otherwise.
- Practice with patience—consistency creates change.

“

*Your breath is always with you.
It's your anchor, your reset,
and your way back home to yourself.* ”

S·H·I·F·T

5 steps to reset your reaction.

S Slow it down

– *Pause + breathe = nervous system check-in.*

H Hold awareness

– *Notice sensations and emotions without fixing.*

I Identify the pattern

– *Recognize old stories, habits, and triggers.*

F Find choice

– *Create space between stimulus and response
+ your PIVOT moment.*

T Take intentional action

– *Respond consciously with intention.*

Don't react to triggers – SHIFT how you handle them.

How it feels when you SHIFT

*A felt progression when you integrate
the SHIFT framework:*

NOURISHED → *“I can soften...
I feel supported from within.”*

CLEAR → *“I understand what’s happening
instead of being lost in it.”*

EMPOWERED → *“I have a tool.”*

CAPABLE → *“I can actually use this in real life.”*

STEADY → *“I trust myself to handle what comes next.”*

**From feeling lost and stuck to feeling
clear, empowered, and capable.**

SOULSCAPE

A Whole-Life Check-In

Rate each area of your life from 1-10.

1 = Depleted 5 = Neutral
10 = Thriving

Where are you feeling most regulated, aligned, and supported? Where is your nervous system under the most pressure?

HOW TO USE



1. Rate each area from 1-10.
2. Notice where you feel most aligned and most depleted.
3. Identify one area to focus on and one small step you can take.



Where do you feel most aligned?



Where are you feeling depleted?



What area needs your attention most?

KOLLECTIVE SHIFT

TRANSFORMATIONAL LIVING



INTEGRATION COMMITMENTS

From Awareness to Action.



*Real change happens in the small, consistent choices we make.
Use this space to commit to what matters most for your growth and well-being.*



NAME: _____



DATE: _____

1

WHAT I'M COMMITTED TO

*What matters most for me right now?
What do I want to create more of in my life?*



2

MY DAILY PRACTICES

*What small actions will I take daily
to support my nervous system,
growth, and purpose?*



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

3

MY WEEKLY COMMITMENTS

*What will I do each week to stay
aligned and keep growing?*



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4

WHEN I GET OFF TRACK

*What will help me reset and return
to what matters?*



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5

MY WHY

*Why is this commitment important
to me? What's possible when I
invest in myself?*





REMEMBER

*You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be committed.
Awareness is the first step. Integration is where transformation happens.*



INTEGRATION COMMITMENTS

FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION



*Small, intentional choices create lasting change.
Use this space to commit to what will support your regulation, growth, and purpose.*



NAME: _____



DATE: _____



ONE HYPER SIGN

*What's one way
hypervigilance
shows up for you?*



ONE HYPO SIGN

*What's one way
hypovigilance
shows up for you?*



ONE SHIFT TOOL

*What is one tool you
will use to help
you shift and
regulate?*



ONE BOUNDARY

*What boundary
will you commit
to honoring?*



ONE SOULSCAPE FOCUS

*Which part of your
SOULSCAPE will
you nurture most
right now?*



REMEMBER

*You don't have to be perfect.
You just have to be present and committed.
Awareness is the first step. Integration is where transformation happens.*



*I choose to lead myself with compassion,
so I can lead others with presence.*





THE CHOICE IS YOURS.
THE POWER HAS ALWAYS BEEN WITHIN YOU.

“

*The patterns we develop
are adaptations.
They are not who we are.*

— GABOR MATÉ

YOU ARE
NOT YOUR PATTERNS.



YOU ARE THE ONE WHO CAN

*interrupt them,
rewire them,
and lead beyond them.*



Your brain changes based on what you repeatedly do and experience. Which means your patterns are not fixed—
THEY ARE TRAINED.



Awareness creates choice. Choice creates change. Change creates **freedom.**



SEE IT
Notice without judgment.



FEEL IT
Regulate your nervous system.



SHIFT IT
Use tools that create change.



BOUND IT
Protect your energy and your priorities.



NURTURE IT
Return to what feeds your soulscape.



YOU ARE NOT BROKEN. YOU ARE BECOMING.

Keep choosing you.

KEEP LEADING.

