PSYCHOEDUCATION / CLIENT HANDOUT

Why Relationship Stress Can Affect the Body

Understanding stress signals without requiring a trauma narrative

Stress can be experienced physically. People sometimes describe tension, disrupted sleep, a racing heart, numbness, difficulty concentrating, or an urge to withdraw, appease, or confront.

These reactions are not proof of a particular diagnosis. They are useful signals to bring to a qualified clinician, particularly if they are persistent, intense, or interfering with everyday life. Medical causes should also be considered when indicated.

Supportive grounding involves choice: you may look around the room, feel contact with a chair, or orient to a neutral sound. No exercise should be forced, and you can stop if it increases distress.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO CONSIDER

- [ ] What signals tell me I need a break?
- [ ] Which environments feel more settled?
- [ ] What practices help without intensifying symptoms?

NEXT RESOURCE: Start with Worksheet 03: Stress Signals & Grounding. Worksheet 13 explores protective responses.

Suggested reading: Fisher, J. (2023). Trauma and Narcissism: Personality Disorders as Trauma-Related Disorders. PESI training materials. | Durvasula, R. (2023). Working with Clients Experiencing NA/ARS: An Antagonism-Informed Treatment Approach. PESI training materials.