MANAGE THE IMPACT

Understanding Protective Responses

Under stress, you might argue, withdraw, freeze, appease, or seek connection. These may be protective responses. Understanding them does not remove anyone's responsibility for harmful actions.

OPTIONAL CHECK-IN - MARK ANYTHING THAT FITS

- [ ] I argue or become highly alert.
- [ ] I want to escape, avoid, or distract myself.
- [ ] I go quiet or feel frozen.
- [ ] I agree quickly to prevent tension.
- [ ] I urgently seek reassurance or closeness.
- [ ] I can notice my response without judging myself.

REFLECT AT YOUR OWN PACE

Which protective response tends to appear when I feel threatened?

What might that response be trying to protect or preserve?

You may skip any prompt. If someone monitors your device or papers, consider whether keeping this worksheet is safe.

Concepts informed by: 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.

MANAGE THE IMPACT

Understanding Protective Responses

These questions are for you, not for proving anything to someone else. You can write a few words, discuss them in therapy, or simply think about them.

EXPLORE WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

What signals tell me I am returning to the present?

What would I like to do when I have more choice?

Which skills feel appropriate to explore with a qualified therapist?

OPTIONAL GENTLE PRACTICE

Try naming a response gently: “Part of me feels alarmed.” Then notice one present-moment cue. Stop if observing inward feels unsettling.

Concepts informed by: 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.