UNDERSTAND

Stuck on autopilot. *The Noticing Pause.*

Four breaths to get a choice back.

Your brain predicts before it reacts, and years of surviving turn those predictions into autopilot: you freeze, race, mask or fix before you've noticed anything. **You don't notice the moment it begins. You notice when you're already overwhelmed.** A pause interrupts the prediction long enough to look.

THE NOTICING PAUSE: FOUR STEPS, ONE BREATH EACH

STOP
One breath. Don't change anything yet. You're interrupting, not fixing.

LOOK
What do I notice? Body, emotions, environment, behavior, not just thoughts.

NAME
"I notice..." Be specific. "My jaw is tight" says more than "I'm fine."

STAY
One more breath. No fixing. No solving. Just noticing.

THE LADDER OF AWARENESS: WHERE AM I RIGHT NOW?

- **Autopilot.** Reacting before I realize I have a choice
- **Notice.** Something is happening
- **Pause.** I don't have to respond yet
- **Curiosity.** What do I know? What am I assuming?
- **Acceptance.** This is what's true right now
- **Understanding.** Why might this make sense?
- **Choice.** What response fits who I'm becoming?

FACTS BEFORE STORIES

- *Fact:* I forgot another appointment. *Story:* I'm irresponsible. Everyone else manages this.
- *Fact:* my shoulders just tensed. *Story:* I'm failing.
- *Fact:* I've been masking for six hours. *Story:* I shouldn't be this tired.
- The story arrives so fast it feels like the fact. Compassion for the feeling, curiosity for the story.

Awareness creates choice. Choice creates change.

- What do I know for certain? Those are the facts.
- What meaning is my brain making from them? Those are the stories.
- What am I feeling right now? Information, not evidence.
- There is no rung called "Fix it." Four breaths instead of zero.