

Reading a Compensation

Read the article first. This worksheet accompanies *The Architecture of Human Systems: Twelve Intelligences Behind Mental Health* at ThoughtsFromATherapist.com, which defines the twelve intelligences and describes what happens when one goes partially offline. Search “architecture of human systems” on the site to find it.

When an intelligence goes partially offline, the system does not simply lose the function. It reorganizes to survive the loss, usually by overworking other intelligences. The result is a compensation, and every compensation is competent. The thinking really works. The responding really works. The caring is real. That is why it is invisible from the inside: its texture is effort, sacrifice, and skill, and it feels like who we are. The work is never to attack the compensation. It is to restore what it covers for, so the overworked intelligences can go back to carrying their share. This sheet reads one compensation. We describe it; we do not name ourselves.

THE PATTERN Something I keep doing that works and costs	A repeated move that reliably produces results and takes something each time. It will feel like effort, sacrifice, or skill, and it is usually the thing other people thank us for. <i>What do I do, again and again, that gets praised and leaves me depleted?</i>
WHAT IT PRODUCES The function it delivers	A compensation produces the function without the texture. We name what it reliably delivers: order, calm in the room, a solved problem, a decision made, someone cared for.
WHAT IT COSTS And where the cost lands	In the body, in a relationship, in time and attention, or in what does not get felt. The cost rarely lands where the effort is spent, so we look in more than one place.
THE OVERWORK Which intelligence is doing more than its share	One of the twelve is carrying work that is not its own. For instance, thinking that arrives where feeling was supposed to, or responding fast where a plan was supposed to be. We check one or two and describe how.
UNDERNEATH Which intelligence may be partially offline	The capacity whose absence the pattern makes unnecessary to notice. Without the body settled, thinking narrows; without clear thinking, strategy drifts; without strategy, will has nowhere to go. We ask what the overwork is standing in for.
RESTORING What giving it back would look like, in small moves	Not removing the pattern. Small moves that hand the offline capacity a little of its own work: a sensation noticed before it is explained, a feeling named before it is solved, one plan made before the next fire.
TOLERATING What I would have to tolerate for that	Restoring a capacity means the compensation gets less to do, and for a while something gets less competent. We name what we would have to feel, risk, or let be unfinished.

A few words per space is enough.

The pattern and what it does

Directions: one pattern, described from the outside, as someone who lives with us would see it.

THE PATTERN I KEEP REPEATING THAT WORKS AND COSTS

What I do, when it starts, and how it usually ends. The thing people count on me for.

PRODUCES

What it produces

The function it reliably delivers, for me and for the people around me.

COSTS

What it costs, and where

The cost rarely lands where the effort is spent. Look in more than one place.

IN MY BODY, MY TIME, OR MY ATTENTION

IN MY RELATIONSHIPS, OR IN WHAT GOES UNFELT

THE OVERWORK

Which intelligence is doing the overwork

The one carrying work that is not its own. Check one or two, then describe how it shows up in the pattern.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Identity | ☐ Relational |
| ☐ Somatic | ☐ Emotional |
| ☐ Cognitive | ☐ Kinetic |
| ☐ Volitional | ☐ Strategic |
| ☐ Ecological | ☐ Existential |
| ☐ Spiritual | ☐ Creative and Playful |

What it covers for, and what restoring it asks

Directions: the capacity underneath, small moves that return some of its work, and what that would cost us for a while.

UNDERNEATH

Which intelligence may be offline underneath

What the overwork is standing in for. Check one or two, then write what that capacity would be doing if it had its work back.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Identity | ☐ Relational |
| ☐ Somatic | ☐ Emotional |
| ☐ Cognitive | ☐ Kinetic |
| ☐ Volitional | ☐ Strategic |
| ☐ Ecological | ☐ Existential |
| ☐ Spiritual | ☐ Creative and Playful |

RESTORING

What restoring it would look like, in small moves

Not removing the pattern. Moves small enough to make this week that hand the offline capacity a little of its own work.

ONE MOVE IN THE NEXT DAY

ONE MOVE IN THE NEXT WEEK

WHAT I WOULD NOTICE IF IT WERE WORKING

WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO TOLERATE FOR THAT

When a capacity gets its work back, the compensation has less to do, and for a while something gets less competent.

WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO FEEL:

WHAT I WOULD RISK, AND WITH WHOM:

WHAT WOULD GET LESS COMPETENT FOR A WHILE:

The work is never to attack the compensation. It is to restore what it is compensating for, so the overworked intelligences can go back to carrying their share.