

THE WHOLENESS METHOD

Phase One Participant Workbook | Mastering Self-Awareness

PHASE ONE COMMITMENT See clearly without condemnation. Observe honestly without immediately reacting.

Participant name:	Date begun:
Guide / facilitator:	Completion date:

Suggested time: approximately 2½ hours, including a 10-minute break

Phase One: Mastering Self-Awareness

Taking an honest look in the mirror

Wholeness begins with awareness. We cannot take ownership of a pattern we cannot see, release something we cannot name, or choose a new way of living while our reactions remain unconscious. Self-awareness is the practice of noticing what is happening within us—our bodily sensations, thoughts, desires, emotions, beliefs, protective strategies, and relational responses—without immediately defending, condemning, or obeying them.

Many of our strongest reactions began as attempts to secure attachment, safety, belonging, significance, or control. Those protective responses may once have helped us survive emotionally, yet they can continue operating long after the original danger has passed. The goal is not to hate or destroy these parts of ourselves. It is to bring them into the light, understand what they are trying to accomplish, and recover the freedom to choose our response.

During this phase, curiosity is more useful than accusation. You are not trying to diagnose yourself or manufacture a perfect explanation of your past. You are learning to observe recurring patterns accurately enough that you can begin making responsible, life-giving choices.

CORE IDEA Awareness says: “Something is happening within me. I can observe it before I decide what it means or what I will do.”

How to Use This Workbook

- Move slowly. Honest answers are more valuable than impressive answers.
- Write what is true now, even when the answer feels incomplete.
- Pause and regulate if an exercise becomes overwhelming.
- Share only what feels appropriate within the boundaries of your helping relationship.
- Return later to questions that need more time; awareness often develops in layers.

Educational note: This workbook offers a pastoral and coaching framework. It is not a diagnosis or a substitute for medical or licensed mental-health care. Seek qualified support for trauma, severe depression or anxiety, suicidality, addiction, abuse, or concerning physical symptoms.

Phase Map and Suggested Timing

Exercise	Suggested time
1. Begin With Intention	10 minutes
2. The Three Levels of Consciousness	20 minutes
3. The Foundational Lie of Separation	20 minutes
4. The Inner Child and Core Needs	15 minutes
5. The Ego and Protective Self	20 minutes

Exercise	Suggested time
6. Observing the Soul	15 minutes
Break	10 minutes
7. Mapping the Nervous System	15 minutes
8. Build Your Inner Sequence	20 minutes
9. Practice the Observing Pause	10 minutes
10. Recognize the Relational Pattern	15 minutes
Closing Integration	10 minutes

EXERCISE 1 | APPROX. 10 MINUTES

Begin With Intention

PURPOSE Establish what you hope to understand and create a non-condemning posture for the work ahead.

Self-awareness becomes fruitful when it is guided by honesty, compassion, and purpose. If you approach yourself as a prosecutor, you may hide. If you approach yourself as a victim, you may blame. If you approach yourself as a curious and responsible witness, you can discover what is true and decide what to do with it.

What has led you to begin this journey at this time?

What recurring pattern, reaction, or relationship difficulty do you most want to understand?

If this self-awareness phase were genuinely helpful, what would you be able to see more clearly by the end?

Practicing the Divine Exchange

Take a moment to reflect on each exchange below. Consider how it might apply to a current situation, relationship, or internal struggle. Then personalize it by writing what you will choose to practice instead of your usual protective reaction.

Example: Curiosity instead of accusation

When I feel criticized by my wife, instead of immediately accusing her of disrespecting me, I will become curious and ask, "Can you help me understand what you are feeling and what I may be missing?"

☐ **Curiosity instead of accusation**

When this happens: _____

instead of _____

I will _____

☐ **Honesty instead of image management**

When this happens: _____

instead of _____

I will _____

☐ **Compassion instead of condemnation**

When this happens: _____

instead of _____

I will _____

☐ **Responsibility instead of blame**

When this happens: _____

instead of _____

I will _____

☐ **Patience instead of forcing an answer**

When this happens: _____

instead of _____

I will _____

EXERCISE 2 | APPROX. 20 MINUTES

The Three Levels of Consciousness

PURPOSE Look beneath visible behavior to uncover the inner experience and governing belief system producing it.

Human experience can be understood through three connected levels. The Surface is what becomes visible through our words, attitudes, and actions. Beneath the Surface, the Subconscious contains the thoughts, desires, and emotions moving within the soul. Behind these reactions, the Unconscious contains the deeper attachments, beliefs, and judgments that determine what experiences mean to us.

This model helps us move beyond asking only, “What did I do?” We also ask, “What was I thinking, wanting, and feeling?” and finally, “What attachment, belief, or judgment was governing that inner experience?” The deeper we look, the closer we come to the root system producing the visible fruit.

Level	Primary content
1. SURFACE — What becomes visible	My words, attitudes, expressions, reactions, choices, and actions.
2. SUBCONSCIOUS — What is happening beneath	My thoughts, desires, and emotions beneath the visible response.
3. UNCONSCIOUS — What is governing from behind	My deeper attachments, beliefs, and judgments about myself, others, God, and life.

LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE SURFACE: Words, attitudes and actions → SUBCONSCIOUS: Thoughts, desires and emotions → UNCONSCIOUS: Attachments, beliefs and judgments

Two Fundamentally Opposed Unconscious Belief Systems

At the deepest level, our attachments, beliefs, and judgments tend to organize around one of two opposing orientations. We may experience ourselves as separated and insecure, or as attached and secure. Most people move between these orientations, but one may become dominant when stress, conflict, shame, or uncertainty activates the nervous system.

SEPARATED AND INSECURE	ATTACHED AND SECURE
Separated	Attached
Insecure	Secure
Betrayed	Wanted
Lost	Loved
Alone	Worthy

SEPARATED AND INSECURE	ATTACHED AND SECURE
Abandoned	Connected
Afraid	Bold
Victim	Victor
Worthless	Overcomer

SURFACE: Think of one recent difficult situation. What words, attitudes, expressions, and actions were visible?

SUBCONSCIOUS: Beneath that response, what were you thinking, desiring, and feeling?

UNCONSCIOUS: What attachment, belief, or judgment was giving the experience its meaning?

Which belief system was governing you: separated and insecure, or attached and secure? Which specific words describe your experience?

If you had experienced yourself as connected, secure, wanted, loved, and worthy, how might your surface response have changed?

EXERCISE 3 | APPROX. 20 MINUTES

The Foundational Lie of Separation

PURPOSE Identify the fear-based conclusion that organizes many of your protective reactions.

At the center of many unhealthy patterns is some form of separation: the belief or felt experience that we are alone, abandoned, rejected, unwanted, unsafe, powerless, defective, or forced to compete for scarce love and significance. This may operate as an emotional conclusion even when we intellectually reject it.

The lie is not necessarily that rejection, loss, or harm never occurred. The lie is the conclusion that the event permanently defines your identity, determines your future, or proves that love, belonging, and security are unavailable to you.

Circle or check the statements that feel emotionally familiar:

- ☐ I am alone and must handle everything myself.
- ☐ I am unwanted, unlovable, or easily replaced.
- ☐ People eventually reject, betray, or abandon me.
- ☐ There is not enough love, attention, success, security, or opportunity for me.
- ☐ I am powerless unless I control the situation.
- ☐ My needs do not matter—or they are too much.
- ☐ If people see the real me, I will be rejected.
- ☐ I must perform, please, achieve, or appear strong to belong.
- ☐ Something is fundamentally wrong with me.
- ☐ I am the victim of other people and have no meaningful choices.

Which one or two statements carry the strongest emotional charge for you?

What experiences may have taught you this conclusion? Describe what happened without forcing certainty.

When this lie feels true, what do you tend to think, feel, want, and do?

What relationships or opportunities has this belief affected most?

EXERCISE 4 | APPROX. 15 MINUTES

The Inner Child and Core Needs

PURPOSE Meet the vulnerable and innocent part of yourself beneath the protective reaction.

The Inner Child represents the vulnerable, receptive part of us that seeks attachment, safety, belonging, affection, appreciation, delight, exploration, and freedom. It carries both original openness and the emotional memory of needs that were ignored, violated, or inconsistently met.

This exercise is not about blaming caregivers or reducing every adult problem to childhood. It is about recognizing the vulnerable need underneath your present reaction so that you can respond with mature care rather than automatic protection.

When the vulnerable part fears...	It may deeply need...
Abandonment	Reliable presence and reassurance
Rejection	Belonging and acceptance
Humiliation	Dignity and compassionate truth
Powerlessness	Agency, choice and healthy boundaries
Invisibility	Attention, recognition and appreciation
Chaos or danger	Predictability, protection and safety

Think of a recent strong reaction. What did the vulnerable part of you fear was happening?

What did that part of you need or long for in that moment?

What age, memory, image, or earlier experience does this feeling resemble, if any?

What could your Responsible Adult Self say to this vulnerable part now?

EXERCISE 5 | APPROX. 20 MINUTES

The Ego and Protective Self

PURPOSE Identify the strategies you developed to prevent shame, rejection, powerlessness, or emotional pain.

The ego or protective self is the collection of identities and strategies we developed to secure belonging, avoid pain, preserve control, and manage how others see us. The protector is not necessarily evil; it often began as an intelligent attempt to survive. Yet a strategy that once protected us can later damage our relationships and keep us separated from truth.

Check the protectors you recognize. Then mark your three most common patterns with a star.

- ☐ The Controller: Manages people or outcomes to prevent uncertainty and powerlessness.
- ☐ The Performer: Achieves, impresses, or appears exceptional to secure worth and approval.
- ☐ The Pleaser: Suppresses needs and agrees to avoid rejection or conflict.
- ☐ The Defender: Explains, argues, minimizes, or counterattacks to escape shame or blame.
- ☐ The Avoider: Withdraws, procrastinates, distracts, or disappears from discomfort.
- ☐ The Rescuer: Fixes others to feel needed and avoid facing personal needs.
- ☐ The Judge: Criticizes or devalues others to establish distance, superiority, or safety.
- ☐ The Victim: Emphasizes powerlessness to avoid agency, responsibility, or risk.
- ☐ The Chameleon: Changes identity, opinions, or presentation to gain acceptance.
- ☐ The Secret-Keeper: Uses omission, compartmentalization, or deception to preserve image or access.

My three strongest protectors are...

What is each protector trying to prevent you from feeling or losing?

How has each strategy helped you? How has it harmed you or others?

Which protector becomes strongest when someone tells you an uncomfortable truth?

EXERCISE 6 | APPROX. 15 MINUTES

Observing the Soul

PURPOSE Separate your thoughts, wants, and feelings so they can be understood rather than fused into one reaction.

In this framework, the soul is the inner arena of thoughts, desires, emotions, memories, and choices. When activated, these experiences can blend together and feel like one unquestionable reality. Separating them helps us see that a thought is not automatically a fact, a desire is not automatically a right, and an emotion is not automatically an instruction.

Dimension of the soul	Question
Thoughts	What am I telling myself happened, and what do I believe it means?
Wants	What do I want from this person, situation, or outcome?
Feelings	What emotions are present—especially beneath anger, numbness, or urgency?
Will	What am I tempted to choose, and what choice reflects my values?

Choose one recent emotionally charged event and complete the inventory.

What happened? Describe observable facts before interpreting motives.

THOUGHTS: What story did you tell yourself about what happened?

WANTS: What did you want the other person to think, feel, do, or stop doing?

FEELINGS: What did you feel on the surface? What was underneath that feeling?

WILL: What did you choose? What choice would have represented your deepest values?

PAUSE Take a 10-minute break. Move your body, drink water, look outside, and let your mind rest. Avoid using the break to analyze or criticize yourself.

EXERCISE 7 | APPROX. 15 MINUTES

Mapping Your Nervous-System States

PURPOSE Recognize the bodily state that shapes what you can perceive and how you are likely to respond.

The autonomic nervous system continually adjusts the body in response to perceived safety, challenge, and danger. A simple three-state model can help us notice when we are socially engaged and flexible, mobilized for fight or flight, or moving toward shutdown. These are whole-body patterns—not moral failures and not merely locations in the brain.

Polyvagal language is used here as a practical organizing framework. Some of its detailed anatomical and evolutionary claims remain debated; the worksheet is intended to build body awareness, not diagnose a neurological condition.

SECURE / CONNECTED	MOBILIZED / PROTECTIVE	SHUTDOWN / WITHDRAWN
Calm alertness Curiosity Flexible thinking Open expression Ability to listen and connect	Racing heart Tension or heat Urgency Argument, control or escape Hypervigilance	Numbness Low energy Disconnection Collapsed posture Difficulty speaking or engaging

SECURE / CONNECTED: How do you know when you feel safe, present, and relationally open?

MOBILIZED: What sensations, thoughts, and behaviors signal fight-or-flight activation for you?

SHUTDOWN: What signals withdrawal, numbness, collapse, or disconnection for you?

What reliably helps you return toward enough safety and connection to choose well?

EXERCISE 8 | APPROX. 20 MINUTES

Build Your Inner Sequence

PURPOSE Trace one complete episode from trigger through consequence so the pattern becomes visible and interruptible.

Strong reactions often appear instantaneous, but they contain a sequence. Mapping that sequence helps you discover where intervention is possible. Use one specific event—not a general description of your personality.

TRIGGER	BODY	SOUL	CORE FEAR	PROTECTOR	CHOICE	IMPACT
What happened?	What alarm sounded?	What did I think, want and feel?	What did I fear it meant?	What strategy appeared?	What did I do?	What did it produce?

1. TRIGGER: What observable event began the sequence?

2. BODY: What sensations or nervous-system changes occurred?

3. SOUL: What did you think, want, and feel?

4. CORE FEAR: What did you fear the event meant about you, the other person, or your future?

5. PROTECTOR: What did your ego urge you to do to regain safety, power, approval, or control?

6. CHOICE: What did you actually say or do?

7. IMPACT: What did your response produce in you, the other person, and the relationship?

EXERCISE 9 | APPROX. 10 MINUTES

Practice the Observing Pause

PURPOSE Experience the difference between having a reaction and becoming obedient to it.

Awareness creates a small but powerful space between stimulus and response. In that space, the Observing Self can notice the body, soul, and protector without becoming identical to any of them. The goal is not to suppress the reaction; it is to hear it without surrendering your authority to it.

THE INNER SEQUENCE The Body sounds the alarm. The Soul experiences thoughts, wants, and feelings. The Ego proposes a strategy. The Observing Self notices. The Responsible Self chooses.

Practice the following process with a mild—not overwhelming—recent trigger:

- ☐ NOTICE: “My internal alarm is activating.”
- ☐ OBSERVE: “What am I thinking, wanting, and feeling?”
- ☐ SEPARATE: “What is my protector urging me to do?”
- ☐ NAME: “I feel threatened, and part of me wants to defend, control, or leave.”
- ☐ REGULATE: Take three slow breaths, relax the body, and orient to the present.
- ☐ CLARIFY: “This is what I heard. Is that what was meant?”
- ☐ CHOOSE: “I can understand my protector without automatically obeying it.”

What did you notice in your body, soul, and protector during this practice?

Which step felt easiest? Which felt most difficult?

Write the one sentence you want to remember when you become activated.

EXERCISE 10 | APPROX. 15 MINUTES

Recognize the Relational Pattern

PURPOSE See how your inner system interacts with another person’s inner system and creates a repeating relational loop.

Relationships often become trapped in reciprocal protection. One person’s fear activates a strategy; that strategy threatens the other person; the other person protects themselves; and their protection appears to confirm the first person’s fear. Awareness means seeing your contribution to the loop without assuming total responsibility for the other person’s choices.

My protective movement	The response it may invite
I control or pressure	The other person resists, conceals, or withdraws
I criticize or disqualify	The other person defends or counterattacks
I pursue reassurance urgently	The other person feels overwhelmed and distances
I withdraw or shut down	The other person pursues, protests, or gives up
I please and hide my needs	The other person assumes everything is fine until resentment erupts

Describe one repeating relational conflict in two or three sentences.

What fear or need is activated within you?

What protector do you use, and how does it affect the other person?

How does the other person’s reaction appear to confirm your original fear?

What could you do differently at the earliest point in the cycle?

Closing Integration: Your Personal Awareness Map

Complete these statements using what you discovered. Keep the answers concise enough that you can review them before your next session.

The recurring situation I most need to notice is...

The foundational lie or core fear that becomes activated is...

The vulnerable need beneath my reaction is...

My most common ego or protective strategy is...

In my soul, I usually think..., want..., and feel...

My body tells me I am becoming activated when...

My protective reaction usually produces...

The earliest place I can interrupt the sequence is...

My most effective regulation practices are...

The new response I want to practice is...

Seven-Day Awareness Practice

For the next seven days, do not attempt to repair your entire life. Complete one brief awareness check each day.

Daily question	Brief response
What activated me today?	
What happened in my body?	
What did my soul think, want, and feel?	
What did my protector urge me to do?	
What did I choose, and what happened next?	

MY PHASE ONE COMMITMENT I will see myself honestly without blame, hiding, pretending, or condemnation. I will observe my reactions before obeying them.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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