The Three Selves Workbook

Find the version of you that shows up under pressure, and how to see it coming

A companion to S.T.A.T.E.: The Operating System You Never Knew You Had

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Before You Begin

You already know the feeling. You said something in a hard moment that did not sound like you. You went quiet in a meeting when you meant to speak up. You snapped at someone you love over something small. Afterward, you thought: that was not really me.

You were right. It was not the version of you that shows up when things are calm. It was a different self, one that only appears under a specific condition: your nervous system state.

This workbook is built on a simple idea from S.T.A.T.E.: you do not have one personality that occasionally has a bad moment. You have at least three versions of yourself, each one activated by a different nervous system state, each with its own thoughts, its own body sensations, and its own behavior. Most people never map these three selves. They just experience the confusion of becoming someone else and blaming their character for what was actually a state.

> **WHAT YOU WILL DO IN THIS WORKBOOK**
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> Map the three states your body moves through: Safe and Social, Threat Response, and Shutdown. For each one, you will identify what it feels like in your body, what it sounds like in your head, what it looks like to other people, and what tends to trigger it. In the final section, you will turn what you learned into a one-page personal reference you can actually use the next time a state starts to shift.

Work through this slowly. There is no correct answer, only your honest answer. The goal is recognition, not judgment.

The Three States, Briefly

Your autonomic nervous system moves through these states automatically, based on what it perceives as safe or threatening. You do not choose which one you are in by deciding to. You influence it by changing what your body reports, which is the entire premise of S.T.A.T.E.

SAFE AND SOCIAL *(Ventral Vagal)*
Full access to thinking, creativity, connection, and choice. Deep breathing, steady heart rate, relaxed muscles, expressive face, warm voice.

THREAT RESPONSE *(Sympathetic)*
Mobilized for survival. Access narrows to whatever feels urgent. Rapid heart rate, shallow breathing, tense muscles, tunnel vision, a reactive edge.

SHUTDOWN *(Dorsal Vagal)*
Conservation mode. Minimal access to thought or feeling. Low energy, flat affect, a sense of being far away, foggy thinking.

THE POINT OF MAPPING THIS

None of these three selves is the real you and none is a flaw. They are what your body produces under three different conditions. Once you can name which self is present, you can stop mistaking a state for a character trait, and start noticing the moment one state is about to become another.

Part One: Your Safe and Social Self

Start here, because this self is your baseline, the version of you that everything else is a departure from.

Think of a specific recent moment when you felt clear, capable, and at ease. Not perfect, just regulated. Where were you? What was happening?

Describe the moment.

In that moment, what did your body feel like? Notice breath, muscles, posture, face, voice.

Body sensations.

What did your thinking sound like? What kind of thoughts come easily to you in this state?

Thought patterns.

What do other people notice about you when you are here? How do they describe you, or how do they respond to you?

What others notice.

What tends to help you get here, or stay here, once you notice you have arrived?

What supports this state.

Part Two: Your Threat Self

This is the self that shows up when your body reads danger, even when the danger is a deadline, a tone of voice, or a difficult email. Be honest here. This is not about a moment you are proud of.

Think of a recent moment when you reacted in a way that did not match the actual size of the situation. What happened?

Describe the moment.

What did your body feel like right before you reacted? Look for the earliest signal, not just the peak.

Body sensations, especially the earliest one.

What did your thinking sound like? What did the urgent, narrowed voice in your head say?

Thought patterns.

What did other people see? What did this self look like or sound like from the outside?

What others notice.

Looking back, what usually triggers this self for you? Is there a pattern (a type of comment, a type of pressure, a type of person)?

Common triggers.

Part Three: Your Shutdown Self

This is the self that appears when your body decides that neither fighting nor fleeing will help, and conserves energy instead. It can look like withdrawal, flatness, or simply going quiet.

Think of a recent moment when you went quiet, checked out, or felt far away from a situation you were actually in. What happened?

Describe the moment.

What did your body feel like? Energy, posture, face, the quality of your attention.

Body sensations.

What did your thinking sound like, if there was thinking at all? What was the internal experience?

Thought patterns.

What did other people notice? How might someone have read your silence or distance?

What others notice.

What tends to bring you back from this state? What has worked before, even a little?

What supports recovery.

Part Four: Your Pattern

Now that you have mapped all three, look across them. The goal is not to eliminate the Threat Self or the Shutdown Self. They exist for a reason. The goal is to catch the earliest signal that one of them has arrived, before it runs the moment for you.

Across all three sections, what is the single earliest body signal that tells you a shift is starting, before you are fully in the new state?

Your earliest signal.

Which self do you spend the most time in during a typical week? Which one do you spend the least time in?

Your distribution across the week.

If you could change one thing about how quickly you notice a state shift, what would it be?

What you want to change.

Part Five: Your Reference Card

This is the payoff. Pull your own answers from Parts One through Four into one page you can actually use. Fill this in last, once everything above is written.

> **HOW TO USE THIS CARD**
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> The next time you notice your earliest signal, this is what you turn to. It is short on purpose. In a real moment, you will not read a paragraph. You will glance at a line.

My earliest signal (from Part Four):

When I notice it, the state I am most likely entering is:

[ ] Threat Response [ ] Shutdown

One thing that has worked before to support my Safe and Social state (from Part One):

One thing that has helped me recover from Threat Response (from Part Two):

One thing that has helped me recover from Shutdown (from Part Three):

The one sentence I want to remember:

(Write something short enough to actually recall in the moment. Example: "Tight jaw means I am already in it. Breathe out longer, then decide.")

What Comes Next

You now have something most people never build: a personal map of your own states, written in your own words, from your own recent experience, and a reference card you can actually use. This is Sense and Track, the first two operations of S.T.A.T.E., applied directly to your life.

The book goes further into how to use this map in the moment, how to shift a state on purpose rather than wait it out, and how to recognize these same three selves in the people you lead. Keep this card somewhere you will see it: your phone, your desk, the inside cover of a notebook. Revisit the full workbook in a month. The map will likely have changed, because you will have started to catch the shift earlier.

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