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Rebuilding Self-Trust

From self-criticism to self-leadership in 7 modules and 35 days of small, kept promises.

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Welcome

Welcome. If you're here, you probably keep your word to almost everyone except yourself. You show up for your team, your family, your friends. But the promises you make to you, the run, the early night, the project you said you'd finally start, quietly slide. Over time your brain learns one lesson from that pattern: don't believe you.

This course is built on a simple idea. **Self-trust isn't a feeling you wait for. It's a track record you build.** It works the way trust works between two people: small promises, kept visibly, repaired honestly when broken.

How the course is structured

- **7 modules across 35 days.** Each module covers five days of practice. You'll see the day range at the top of every module, and the full day-by-day plan is on the 35-Day Roadmap page of your workbook.
- **24 lessons.** Read each lesson on the day it's assigned (most take 8 to 12 minutes), then do its Action Step.
- **The workbook.** Every Action Step points to a matching worksheet. The workbook also holds the Broken-Promise Inventory, the Inner Critic Audit and Reframe pages, the Inner Critic Protocol response cards, the Micro-Promise Tracker, the Daily Self-Trust Log, and the Repair Ritual one-pager. Print it or fill it in digitally.
- **The daily practice.** Plan on 15 to 20 minutes a day. Some days are mostly reading; some are mostly doing. The doing matters more.

How to get the most from it

1. **Start with the Start-Here Self-Assessment** in the workbook before Lesson 1.1. You'll retake it on Day 35.
2. **Go in order.** Each module assumes the skills from the one before it.
3. **Expect to miss a day.** The course is designed for that. Module 6 exists precisely for the day after a broken promise. A miss is data, not a verdict.
4. **Keep it small.** Almost everyone who struggles with this material struggles because they make the promises too big. When in doubt, shrink.

An important note

This course is educational self-help. It is not therapy, medical care, or psychological treatment, and it is not a substitute for any of them. Some of this work touches on mood, shame, and anxiety. If you're dealing with depression, anxiety, trauma, or anything that feels bigger than a self-guided course, please work with a licensed professional; this

material pairs well with that support. **If you're in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, call or text 988 (US) or your local emergency number.**

Ready? Open your workbook to the Start-Here page, and let's make the first small promise.

Module 1: The Broken-Promise Inventory

Days 1 to 5. Before you can build new trust, you need an honest look at the old debt. In this module you'll map the commitments you've abandoned and close them out with a structured audit, not a shame spiral.

Lesson 1.1: Self-Trust Is a Track Record

Most people treat self-trust like confidence: a feeling that either shows up or doesn't. They wait to "feel ready," and when the feeling doesn't arrive, they conclude something is wrong with them.

This course takes a different view. Trust, between any two people, is a prediction: *based on what I've seen, will this person do what they say?* You trust a friend who has shown up for you twenty times. You're wary of the coworker who has missed three deadlines. Neither judgment is a feeling you chose. It's a forecast built from evidence.

Self-trust works the same way. Your brain is constantly forecasting: *When I say I'll do something, do I?* If the recent record is full of abandoned plans, the forecast is "probably not," and that forecast shows up as heaviness, procrastination, and a critic who says, "Why bother? You never follow through."

Why this is good news

If self-trust were a fixed trait, you'd be stuck. But a forecast can be updated. Change the evidence and, over time, the forecast changes with it.

Psychologist Albert Bandura, whose work defined the concept of *self-efficacy*, identified "mastery experiences," actually doing the thing, as the strongest source of belief in your own capability. Pep talks, inspiration, and other people's encouragement help, but direct experience tends to carry the most weight. That is the engine of this course: you'll generate small, concrete mastery experiences every day for 35 days.

The three ways self-trust erodes

In practice, self-trust breaks down in three predictable ways. You'll probably recognize all three.

Erosion pattern	What it looks like	What it teaches your brain
The broken-promise pile	Plans abandoned, goals quietly dropped, "Monday" that never comes	"Your commitments don't mean anything."

Erosion pattern	What it looks like	What it teaches your brain
The inner critic on loop	A running commentary of not-enough, harshest right after a slip	"You are the problem, so there's no point trying."
Decision distrust	Second-guessing, over-researching, asking five people before choosing	"Your judgment can't be relied on."

Each pattern feeds the others. Broken promises give the critic ammunition. The critic makes new commitments feel heavy, so you avoid or oversize them, and they break. After enough rounds, you stop trusting your own decisions, too.

The four-part rebuild

The course reverses that loop in four moves:

1. **Clear the debt.** (Module 1) Take inventory of old broken promises and close each one out deliberately, so they stop leaking energy.
2. **Handle the critic.** (Modules 2 and 5) Learn to separate useful signal from noise, and replace the critic's tone with a coach's.
3. **Build new evidence.** (Modules 3 and 4) Make promises small enough to keep, and review the evidence daily so it registers.
4. **Protect the record.** (Modules 6 and 7) Repair quickly after misses and consolidate what you've built into a permanent evidence file.

What "self-leadership" means here

Self-leadership is not relentless positivity. A good leader is honest about problems, clear about expectations, fair in judgment, and invested in the person's growth. That's the relationship you're building with yourself: one where you can say "that didn't go well" without it turning into "I am worthless," and where "I'll do it" means something again.

What to expect over 35 days

- **Week 1:** Relief, and some discomfort. Looking at old broken promises is uncomfortable, and closing them out is freeing.
- **Week 2:** The critic may get louder before it gets quieter. That's common when you start paying close attention to it.
- **Weeks 3 and 4:** Your streak of kept micro-promises becomes real evidence. Many people notice commitments start to feel lighter.
- **Week 5:** You consolidate, test bigger commitments, and set up a maintenance rhythm.

You will not finish with a critic that has vanished. Anyone who promises that is overselling. What you can realistically build is a different relationship with that voice and a record you can point to.

A quick self-check: where's your forecast right now?

Before you move on, notice how you'd answer these three questions today. You don't need to write anything yet; just notice.

- If you promised yourself right now that you'd go to bed by 10:30 tonight, how confident are you that you would?
- When you picture starting this course, does the critic already have an opinion about whether you'll finish?
- When you last made a decision alone, how long did it take before you started second-guessing it?

Whatever you noticed is your starting forecast. It isn't a grade, and it isn't permanent. It's simply the "before" picture, and you'll be able to compare it with the "after" in five weeks. People who skip the before picture often underestimate their progress later, because growth that happens gradually is easy to miss.

Action Step

Open your workbook to **Worksheet 1.1: My Self-Trust Baseline**. Write your honest answer to "When I tell myself I'll do something, what percentage of the time do I actually do it?" Then name which of the three erosion patterns is strongest for you, and write one sentence describing what you'd like "I'll do it" to mean to you by Day 35. Finally, make your first micro-promise: something you will do today that takes under two minutes (for example, "I'll fill in Worksheet 1.2 tonight before 9 p.m."). Write it down and keep it.

Lesson 1.2: Running the Inventory

Old broken promises don't disappear just because you stop thinking about them. They sit in the background as "open loops." Psychologists have long noted that unfinished tasks tend to stay more mentally available than finished ones, an observation often called the Zeigarnik effect. And in a 2011 set of studies, E.J. Masicampo and Roy Baumeister found that unfulfilled goals kept intruding on people's thoughts during unrelated tasks, but that making a specific plan for those goals reduced the intrusion, even before the goal was completed.

That second finding is the key to this module. You don't have to finish every abandoned project to get relief. You have to *make a clear decision* about each one.

What counts as a broken promise

For this inventory, a broken promise is any commitment you made to yourself, explicitly or implicitly, that you didn't keep and haven't formally closed. Cast a wide net:

- **Goals:** "This is the year I get fit." "I'll learn Spanish."
- **Projects:** The half-finished course, the unpublished draft, the garage.
- **Routines:** Morning pages, meditation, the gym plan, meal prep.
- **Boundaries:** "I'll stop checking email after 8." "I won't say yes to extra work."
- **Everyday promises:** "I'll call Grandma this week." "I'll book the dentist."
- **Identity promises:** "I'm going to be a more patient parent." "I'll stop being so hard on myself."

How to run it without a shame spiral

The purpose of the inventory is *mapping*, not punishment. A surveyor mapping a flood zone doesn't scold the river. Use these rules:

1. **Set a timer for 20 minutes.** Time-boxing keeps it from becoming an all-evening excavation of regret.
2. **Write in neutral, factual language.** "Planned to run three times a week starting January; stopped in week two." Not "I'm lazy and never stick to anything."
3. **Don't solve anything yet.** Just list. Sorting comes in Lesson 1.3.
4. **Go by life area.** Use the prompts in your worksheet: health, work, money, relationships, home, learning, creative work, personal growth. Life areas jog memory better than a blank page does.
5. **Stop at the timer.** You may have 15 to 40 items. That's normal. You're not unusual; you're a human with a long memory.

Capture four details per item

Column	Why it matters
The promise (in one line)	Names the loop clearly.
When it started	Shows how long it has been open.
Weight (1 to 5)	How much mental noise it still makes. 5 = you think about it weekly, with a sting.
Why it stalled (best guess, one phrase)	Starts revealing patterns: too big, unclear, not really yours, life changed, no system.

Common patterns you'll probably see

When people finish this inventory, the same stall reasons tend to show up again and again:

- **Too big for the season of life.** “Train for a marathon,” made during a job change.
- **Borrowed goals.** Promises that were really someone else’s expectation.
- **No first step.** “Get organized” with no defined start.
- **All-or-nothing framing.** One missed day ended the whole plan.
- **Changed circumstances.** The promise made sense then and doesn’t now.

Notice something: very few of these reasons are “I’m fundamentally untrustworthy.” Most are design flaws in how the promise was made. That’s encouraging, because design flaws can be fixed. Modules 3 and 7 will teach you how to design promises that hold.

If the inventory stirs up heavy feelings

It’s normal to feel some sadness, frustration, or embarrassment during this exercise. Take a breath, drop your shoulders, and remind yourself: “This is a list of old data, not a verdict on me.” If it stirs up something heavier than you can comfortably handle, stop, do something grounding, and consider bringing the list to a therapist or trusted person. You can finish it later.

What the inventory is really for

It’s worth being clear about why you’re doing this, because the critic will try to reframe it as “a list of everything you’ve failed at.” That isn’t what it is. The inventory does three practical jobs:

1. **It makes the invisible visible.** Open loops you never wrote down have a way of feeling larger and more numerous than they are. On paper, they become a finite list.
2. **It reveals your design patterns.** You’ll see *how* you tend to make promises, which is far more useful than a verdict about *who* you are.
3. **It sets up the release.** You can’t deliberately close a loop you haven’t named.

A useful frame: you’re not the defendant here. You’re the auditor. An auditor’s job is to find out what’s actually on the books, accurately and without drama, so better decisions can be made next.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 1.2: The Broken-Promise Inventory**. Set a 20-minute timer, work through the life-area prompts, and fill in the inventory table: the promise, when it started, its weight (1 to 5), and why it stalled. Stop when the timer ends. Then circle the three items with the highest weight; you’ll start with those tomorrow.

Lesson 1.3: Sort the Pile: Release, Renegotiate, or Recommit

You now have a list of open loops. Today, you'll make a clear decision about each one. This is the step that actually quiets them. A decision closes a loop even when the task stays unfinished.

The three R's

Every item on your inventory goes into one of three categories:

1. Release. You formally let it go. It's no longer a commitment. Choose Release when the promise was borrowed, when circumstances have changed, when the cost now outweighs the value, or when you simply don't want it anymore. Releasing is not failing. Organizations cancel projects all the time; it's called prioritizing.

2. Renegotiate. You keep the intention but change the terms: smaller scope, later date, different method. Choose Renegotiate when the underlying goal still matters but the original version was unrealistic. "Run a marathon this year" might become "walk 20 minutes three days a week through spring."

3. Recommit. You keep it as is and schedule a specific next action. Choose Recommit sparingly. It's for items that are genuinely important, genuinely achievable now, and have a clear first step. During this course, recommit to **no more than one or two** items. Everything else should be released, renegotiated to something small, or parked until Module 7.

A quick decision filter

For each item, ask these four questions in order:

1. **Is this still mine?** If it was mainly someone else's expectation: *Release* (or have a real conversation with that person).
2. **Does it still matter to me today?** If not: *Release*.
3. **Is the original version realistic in my current life?** If not: *Renegotiate*.
4. **Can I name the next physical action and do it this month?** If yes, and it's in your top one or two priorities: *Recommit*. If not: *Renegotiate*, or park it for Module 7.

Example: Imagine Dana

Imagine Dana, a project manager with two kids. Her inventory has 27 items. Here's how three of them might sort:

Promise	Decision	New terms
"Get my Master's degree" (5 years open, weight 4)	Release	"I'm choosing not to pursue this now. If it matters again, I'll decide fresh."
"Work out every morning at 5:30" (weight 5)	Renegotiate	"Two 20-minute walks a week at lunch, through March."
"Update my will" (weight 3)	Recommit	"Call the lawyer's office Thursday at 10 a.m."

Say Dana ends up with 19 releases, 7 renegotiations, and 1 recommitment. The list that used to hum in the background as 27 vague obligations is now a short list of clear, sized agreements. That's the shift you're after.

Write the new terms precisely

Vague renegotiations become the next broken promises. For every renegotiated or recommitted item, write:

- **What**, exactly (observable, not "be healthier")
- **When**, specifically (day, time, or trigger)
- **How much** (the minimum that counts)
- **Until when** (an end or review date)

This draws on what psychologist Peter Gollwitzer called *implementation intentions*: "if-then" or "when-then" plans that link a specific situation to a specific action. A 2006 meta-analysis by Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran found that forming implementation intentions was associated with meaningfully better goal attainment than holding good intentions alone. You'll use this format throughout the course.

What about promises that involve other people?

This inventory is about promises to yourself, but some items will involve others ("I'll visit Dad more"). If a release or renegotiation affects someone else, add a note to have a short, honest conversation. Closing the loop internally while leaving the other person expecting the old version just creates a new open loop.

Troubleshooting the sort

A few sticking points come up often:

- **"I can't release it; I'd feel like a quitter."** Try this reframe: releasing is a decision; drifting is an avoidance. You've been drifting on this item, possibly for years.

Releasing it on purpose is the opposite of quitting. It's leadership.

- **"Everything feels important."** Rank your top five by weight, then ask: "If I could only make real progress on one this season, which would it be?" That's your recommit. Most of the others become renegotiations with tiny terms or get parked.
- **"I don't know if I want it anymore."** Park it with a review date ("I'll decide by the end of Module 7"). A parked item with a date is still a clear decision, and it stops the loop from nagging.
- **"Renegotiating feels like lowering my standards."** You're not lowering the standard; you're matching the promise to reality so you can actually meet it. A small promise kept builds more trust than a big one broken.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 1.3: Sorting the Pile**. Run each inventory item through the four-question filter and mark it Release, Renegotiate, or Recommit. For every Renegotiate and Recommit item, write new terms using the What / When / How Much / Until When format. Keep Recommit to a maximum of two items.

Lesson 1.4: Releasing the Debt and Setting Your Baseline

Deciding to release a promise is one thing. Feeling released from it is another. Today you'll do a short closing ritual that marks the end of the old debt, and set up the daily practice you'll use for the rest of the course.

Why a ritual helps

Humans have always used rituals to mark endings: graduations, farewells, retirement parties. Research by Michael Norton and Francesca Gino (2014) found that people who performed simple rituals after a loss reported feeling more in control and less grief than those who didn't. You don't need anything elaborate. You need something deliberate enough that your brain registers "this is closed."

The 10-minute closing ritual

1. **Read your Release list out loud**, one item at a time, followed by the same sentence: *"I'm releasing this. It's no longer a promise I'm holding."*
2. **For each one, name one thing it taught you.** One phrase is enough: "I plan too big in January." "I say yes to things to please other people." These lessons are the valuable part; you're keeping them.
3. **Write a short release statement** (a template is in your worksheet): *"As of [date], I've closed out [number] old promises. I'm not carrying them as debt anymore. What I'm keeping is what they taught me: [lessons]. From here, I'll make fewer promises and keep them."*

4. **Mark the ending physically.** Cross out the Release items with a single line, tear the page out and file it, or move a digital list into an archive folder labeled with today's date. Choose something you'll actually do.
5. **Close with one kept promise.** Before you finish, do one tiny thing you say you'll do: drink a glass of water, stretch for thirty seconds, send one text. End on evidence.

“What if an old promise pops back into my head?”

It will. When it does, use this line: *“That’s closed. I decided on [date].”* If the same item keeps returning with a lot of weight, that’s useful information. It may belong in Renegotiate, not Release. Move it and write new terms.

Setting your baseline

Starting tonight, you’ll track two simple daily numbers in your **Daily Self-Trust Log**:

1. **Promises made vs. kept.** Just a count. “3 made, 2 kept.”
2. **Self-trust rating (1 to 10).** Your gut answer to: “Right now, how much do I believe that when I say I’ll do something, I will?”

You’ll also answer three quick prompts each evening:

- What did I say I’d do today, and did I do it?
- What did the critic say today? (One line.)
- What’s one piece of evidence that I kept my word?

The log takes three to five minutes. It’s the backbone of the entire course. In Module 7 you’ll turn five weeks of these entries into your permanent evidence file, so the entries need to exist.

The first rule of the log: honesty over streaks

Record misses exactly as honestly as you record wins. A log full of fake checkmarks is just another broken promise, and you’ll know it. A log that says “3 made, 1 kept” is useful data; it tells you your promises are too big, which Module 3 will fix.

Your Module 1 checkpoint

By the end of Day 5 you should have:

- Completed the Start-Here Self-Assessment
- Written your baseline and made your first micro-promise
- Completed your Broken-Promise Inventory
- Sorted every item into Release, Renegotiate, or Recommit
- Done the closing ritual

- Started the Daily Self-Trust Log

If you haven't finished everything, that's fine. Do the closing ritual and start the log anyway. Momentum matters more than completion.

A sample first log entry

Here's what a Day 5 entry in the Daily Self-Trust Log might look like, so you can see how short it can be:

Prompt	Entry
Promises made / kept	2 made / 2 kept
Self-trust rating (1 to 10)	4
What did I say I'd do, and did I?	Finish the closing ritual; drink water before coffee. Did both.
What did the critic say?	"You'll forget about this course by next week."
One piece of evidence	Read my release list out loud even though it felt awkward.

That's it. A few numbers, three short lines. On busy nights, a one-line version ("2/2, rating 4, did the ritual") still counts.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 1.4: The Closing Ritual and Release Statement**. Follow the five ritual steps, write your release statement using the template, and record the lessons you're keeping. Then turn to the **Daily Self-Trust Log** in the workbook and complete your first entry tonight.

Module 2: The Inner Critic Protocol

Days 6 to 10. The inner critic is the loudest obstacle to self-trust, and it isn't going away on command. In this module you'll name its patterns, separate useful signal from static, and install a response script that ends the loop.

Lesson 2.1: Meet Your Critic (The Inner Critic Audit)

You'd never talk to a friend the way you talk to yourself. If a coworker said out loud what your critic says in your head, you'd probably report them to HR. Yet most people have heard that voice so long they mistake it for the truth, or for motivation.

What the inner critic is (and isn't)

"Inner critic" is not a clinical term. It's a practical label for the harsh, judging self-talk most people experience, especially after mistakes. Psychologist Paul Gilbert, who developed compassion-focused therapy, describes self-criticism as closely tied to our brain's *threat system*, the same system that responds to danger. That's why a critical thought can feel like a punch in the stomach: your body is treating it as a threat.

It helps to hold two ideas together:

1. **The critic often has a protective origin.** It may have formed to keep you safe from rejection, failure, or embarrassment by getting to the criticism before anyone else could.
2. **Its methods don't work well anymore.** Harshness tends to produce avoidance, not improvement. Research by Juliana Breines and Serena Chen (2012) found that people prompted to take a self-compassionate view of a mistake were *more* motivated to improve and spent more time studying after a failure than people prompted simply to boost their self-esteem.

So you're not going to fight the critic or pretend it doesn't exist. You're going to study it, then change how you respond.

The audit: three days of field notes

For the next three days, you're a researcher and the critic is your subject. Your only job is to notice and record. No arguing, no fixing. Each time you catch a critical thought, jot down:

- **The trigger:** What just happened? (Sent an email with a typo. Skipped the gym. Saw a friend's promotion.)
- **The exact words:** Write the thought verbatim, in the critic's voice. "You idiot. Everyone saw that."

- **Intensity (1 to 10):** How much did it sting?
- **What you did next:** Withdrew, overworked, scrolled, apologized, snapped at someone, froze.

Aim for at least five entries a day. Carry a note on your phone. Most people are surprised by how often the critic speaks, and by how repetitive it is.

The seven common critic patterns

As you collect entries, you'll start to see patterns. These overlap with the thinking errors described by Aaron Beck in cognitive therapy and popularized by David Burns in *Feeling Good*. Here are the seven that show up most in self-trust work:

Pattern	Sounds like
The Global Verdict	"You always mess this up." "You're a failure."
The Fortune Teller	"You'll quit this too, just like everything else."
The Comparer	"Everyone else your age has figured this out."
The Mind Reader	"They think you're incompetent."
The Moving Goalpost	"Sure you did that, but it doesn't count because..."
The Drill Sergeant	"Stop being soft. You need to be harder on yourself."
The Historian	"Remember the last time you tried? Remember 2019?"

Most people have two or three favorites. Knowing yours is powerful, because a pattern you can name becomes a pattern you can anticipate.

Give the critic a name

This sounds silly, and it works. Give your critic a name or a character: "The Auditor," "Coach Karen," "the Heckler," "Static." Naming creates a bit of distance between *you* and *the thought*. Instead of "I'm a failure," you get "The Auditor is saying I'm a failure." That small gap is where every tool in this module operates.

Choose a name that's a little ridiculous rather than scary. You want to be able to roll your eyes at it, not be afraid of it.

Keep your micro-promises going

While you're auditing, keep your daily log going. Notice whether the critic gets louder on days you keep promises or days you break them. Many people find it speaks up most *right after* a kept promise ("That was too easy to count") or *right before* a new one ("Why bother?"). Those are the moments your protocol will target.

What the audit usually reveals

People who complete the three-day audit tend to discover a few things, and it helps to know them in advance so they don't catch you off guard:

- **The critic is repetitive.** Most people find their critic uses a small number of lines over and over. That repetition is useful: it means a handful of prepared responses can cover most of it.
- **The critic has favorite times.** Late evening, right after waking, after social events, and right after checking email or social media are common hot spots.
- **The critic often sounds borrowed.** Some lines may sound like a parent, a teacher, or a former boss. You don't need to analyze where the voice came from for this course to work, but noticing it can loosen its authority. If this brings up painful history, that's a good thing to explore with a therapist.
- **Intensity doesn't equal accuracy.** A thought that stings at a 9 isn't more true than one at a 3. It's just louder.

Action Step

Open **Worksheet 2.1: The Inner Critic Audit**. For three days (Days 6 to 8), log at least five critic moments per day in the audit table: trigger, exact words, intensity, and what you did next. At the end of Day 8, tally which of the seven patterns showed up most, write down your critic's top three favorite lines, and give your critic a name.

Lesson 2.2: Signal vs. Static

Not everything the critic says is wrong. That's what makes it tricky. Buried inside "You're so disorganized, you'll never get anything done" may be a real, useful point: *you missed a deadline because you didn't write it down*. If you throw out everything the critic says, you throw out that useful piece too. If you accept everything, you're flattened by the rest.

The skill in this lesson is separating **signal** (useful, specific, actionable information) from **static** (global, harsh, unhelpful noise).

The signal test

A critical thought contains signal if it passes most of these checks:

Signal	Static
Specific: about a particular action or situation	Global: about your whole character (“you always,” “you’re a...”)
Behavioral: points to something you did	Identity-based: points to who you are
Actionable: suggests a next step	Dead-end: offers no path forward
Proportionate: fits the size of the event	Catastrophic: turns a slip into a disaster
Present-focused: about now	Historical: drags in every past failure

The extraction method

When a critical thought hits, run it through three steps. With practice, this takes less than a minute.

Step 1: Write the thought exactly. “You forgot to prep for the meeting again. You’re so unprofessional. No wonder you haven’t been promoted.”

Step 2: Underline anything specific and behavioral. “You forgot to prep for the meeting.” That’s the signal. Everything else (“so unprofessional,” “no wonder you haven’t been promoted”) is static.

Step 3: Translate the signal into a neutral, useful sentence. “I didn’t prep for the 10 a.m. meeting. Next time I’ll block 15 minutes the afternoon before.”

Notice what happened. The information is still there. You’re still taking responsibility. But the verdict on your character has been removed, and a next action has been added. This is the difference between accountability and self-attack.

What if there’s no signal at all?

Often, there isn’t. “You’re pathetic” contains no specific behavior and no next step. It’s pure static. When you find no signal, you don’t need to argue with the thought or disprove it. You label it and move on: “That’s static.” The next lesson gives you a full script for exactly that.

Cognitive defusion: seeing thoughts as thoughts

One of the most useful skills for handling static comes from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), developed by Steven Hayes and colleagues. It’s called *cognitive defusion*: learning to see a thought as a thought rather than as a fact.

Try it now. Take one of your critic’s favorite lines, like “I’m a failure.” Say it silently and notice how it feels. Now try:

- “I’m *having the thought* that I’m a failure.”
- “I *notice I’m having the thought* that I’m a failure.”
- “[Critic’s name] is doing the failure speech again.”

Most people feel the thought loosen a bit with each version. The words are the same, but you’re no longer standing inside them. You’re observing them. You haven’t argued, debated, or forced a positive thought. You’ve just stepped back.

Worked examples

Critic’s words	Signal (if any)	Useful translation
“You skipped the gym again. You have no discipline.”	Skipped planned workout	“I skipped Tuesday’s workout. I’ll lay out my clothes tonight for Thursday.”
“Everyone at that party thought you were boring.”	None (mind reading)	“That’s static. I don’t actually know what they thought.”
“You snapped at your son. You’re a terrible parent.”	Snapped at son	“I was short with him at dinner. I’ll apologize and name what was going on for me.”
“You’ll never finish this book.”	None (fortune telling)	“That’s static. Today’s promise is 10 minutes of writing.”

Practice makes it fast

At first, the extraction method will feel slow and deliberate. That’s expected; you’re learning a skill. With practice, many people find they can run a thought through the signal test almost automatically, in the few seconds between the critic’s line and their reaction to it.

To speed things up, try the **one-question shortcut** when you’re short on time: “*Is there a specific action here I can take?*” If yes, take it or schedule it. If no, it’s static, and you can let it pass. That single question captures most of what the full method does.

A final reminder: separating signal from static is not about proving the critic wrong. Sometimes the signal is uncomfortable and true, and you’ll need to act on it. The goal is to receive the useful information *without* the attack attached, the way you’d want feedback from a good manager.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 2.2: Signal vs. Static**. Take ten lines from your Inner Critic Audit and run each through the extraction method: write the thought, mark the signal (or write

“none”), and translate the signal into a neutral, useful sentence with a next step. Then practice defusion on your critic’s single most painful line using the three phrasings above, and note what you noticed.

Lesson 2.3: The Response Script

You now know your critic’s patterns and how to pull signal from static. But in the moment, when the critic hits after a slip, you won’t have time to fill in a worksheet. You need a short, memorized script. That’s the Inner Critic Protocol.

The Inner Critic Protocol: N.A.M.E.

The protocol has four steps. The first letters spell N.A.M.E., which is easy to remember because naming is where it starts.

N: Notice. Catch the critic in the act. “There it is.” The hardest step, and the one your audit has been training. Physical cues help: a tight chest, a hot face, a sinking stomach often arrive a split second before the words.

A: Acknowledge. Name the pattern and the critic, without fighting. “That’s the Historian. [Critic’s name] is bringing up 2019 again.” Acknowledging is not agreeing. It’s labeling, the defusion skill from Lesson 2.2.

M: Mine for signal. Ask one question: “Is there anything specific and useful here?” If yes, translate it into a neutral sentence. If no, say “That’s static” and let it go.

E: Exit with an action. End the loop by doing something, however small: the next step from the signal, or a micro-promise kept right now. The action is what ends the loop. Without it, you can end up debating the critic in circles.

The protocol in real time

Here’s what it sounds like, silently, in about 30 seconds:

Notice: “Ugh, chest just tightened.” *Acknowledge:* “That’s the Fortune Teller. The Heckler says I’ll quit this course like everything else.” *Mine:* “Anything useful? ...Yes: I haven’t filled in my log for two days.” *Exit:* “I’ll do today’s log entry right now. Two minutes.”

And for pure static:

Notice: "Here we go." Acknowledge: "Comparer. The Heckler is holding up my college roommate's life again." Mine: "Anything useful? No. That's static." Exit: "I'll drink some water and get back to the spreadsheet."

Why distance helps: talking to yourself by name

Research by psychologist Ethan Kross and colleagues, described in his book *Chatter*, has found that "distanced self-talk," referring to yourself by your own name or as "you" rather than "I," can help people regulate emotion and think more clearly under stress. So in the Acknowledge and Exit steps, try addressing yourself by name: "Okay, Jordan. That's static. What's the next step?" It can feel awkward at first. Many people find it becomes natural within a week.

What the protocol is not

- **It's not forced positivity.** You don't have to replace "I'm a failure" with "I'm amazing." You just stop treating the critic as the final authority.
- **It's not suppression.** Trying *not* to think a thought tends to backfire (Daniel Wegner's well-known "white bear" research found that attempting to suppress a thought can make it return more). The protocol lets the thought be there; it just changes what happens next.
- **It's not a one-time fix.** The critic will return. The goal is to shorten each loop from hours to seconds.

Build the habit with deliberate reps

A script only works under pressure if you've rehearsed it when calm. For the next three days:

1. **Morning rehearsal (2 minutes):** Pick one of your critic's favorite lines and walk through N.A.M.E. out loud or on paper.
2. **Live reps (as they happen):** Use the protocol whenever you catch the critic. Keep a quick tally.
3. **Evening review (1 minute):** In your daily log, note one time the protocol worked and one time the critic got through. No judgment on the second one; it's just information.

Common mistakes with the protocol

- **Skipping Exit.** If you notice, acknowledge, and mine but never take an action, the loop tends to restart a few minutes later. The action is the "full stop" at the end of the sentence.

- **Turning Mine into a debate.** You're looking for one useful thing, not building a legal case. Thirty seconds, then move on.
- **Using it only on big moments.** The protocol gets stronger with small, low-stakes reps. Use it on the critic's comment about a typo, not just on the one about your whole career.
- **Expecting it to feel good.** Sometimes the protocol works and you still feel bad for a while. That's fine. The measure of success is what you *do* next, not whether the feeling vanishes instantly.

Track your progress by one number in your log: roughly how long the critic's loops last. Many people start at "all evening" and notice it shrinking over the following weeks.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 2.3: My N.A.M.E. Protocol**. Write out the protocol for your three most common critic lines, with your critic's name, the pattern, the signal (if any), and a specific exit action for each. Then begin the three-day rehearsal: two minutes each morning, live reps during the day, and the tally in your Daily Self-Trust Log each evening.

Lesson 2.4: Response Cards and Real-Time Reframes

The last piece of the Inner Critic Protocol is making it portable. When the critic is loud, your thinking brain goes a little offline. That's precisely when you need the script in front of your eyes, not buried in your memory. So today you'll build a set of **response cards**: short, pre-written responses to your critic's most common attacks.

Why pre-written responses work

Pilots use checklists. Surgeons use checklists. Not because they don't know what to do, but because stress narrows attention and makes it easy to skip steps. Your response cards are the same idea: a decision made in advance, by the calm version of you, for the stressed version of you.

Anatomy of a response card

Each card has four parts and should fit on an index card or phone note:

1. **The trigger line** (the critic's words): "You always quit."
2. **The pattern**: Global Verdict + Historian
3. **The reframe**: a truthful, balanced statement you actually believe
4. **The exit action**: the one small thing you'll do next

Writing reframes you actually believe

This is where most people go wrong. A reframe that's too positive ("I never quit! I'm unstoppable!") gets rejected by your brain immediately. A good reframe is **accurate, balanced, and forward-facing**. It usually follows one of these five formulas:

Formula	Example
"And also..." acknowledge the partial truth, add missing evidence	"I've quit some things. And I've also kept my log for nine days straight."
"Specific, not global" shrink the verdict to the actual event	"I didn't finish this one project. That's one project, not my whole life."
"What I'd tell a friend" borrow the voice you use for others	"If Sam said this, I'd tell him one missed week doesn't erase the work he's done."
"Not yet" swap a permanent conclusion for a current one	"I haven't figured out a system for this yet."
"Next right step" skip the debate and name the action	"I don't need to settle whether I'm disciplined. I need to do 10 minutes."

The "What I'd tell a friend" formula connects to the research of Kristin Neff, a leading self-compassion researcher. Neff describes self-compassion as having three components: *self-kindness* (treating yourself with the warmth you'd offer a friend), *common humanity* (recognizing that struggle is part of being human, not proof something is uniquely wrong with you), and *mindfulness* (holding painful thoughts in balanced awareness, without over-identifying with them). Notice that the N.A.M.E. protocol already builds in the third component; your reframes can supply the first two.

Sample card set

Here are four sample cards to adapt. Your worksheet has blank cards for your own.

Card: "You always quit." Pattern: Global Verdict / Historian Reframe: "I've stopped some things. I'm also here on Day 10, doing this." Exit: Log today's kept promise.

Card: "It doesn't count; that was too easy." Pattern: Moving Goalpost Reframe: "Small counts. Trust gets built from small, kept promises." Exit: Put a check in the tracker.

Card: "Everyone else has this figured out." Pattern: Comparer Reframe: "I'm seeing their highlights and my behind-the-scenes. Plenty of people struggle with this." Exit: Close the app; do the next task for five minutes.

Card: "You need to be harder on yourself." Pattern: Drill Sergeant Reframe: "Harsh hasn't worked. Honest and kind is the experiment now." Exit: Ask, "What's the next useful

step?” and do it.

Where to keep your cards

- A few printed cards in your wallet, bag, or desk drawer
- A pinned note on your phone’s home screen
- A photo of your cards as your lock screen for the next week
- One card on the bathroom mirror (you’ll use this spot in Module 4)

Module 2 checkpoint

By Day 10 you should have: an audit with your critic’s patterns tallied, a name for your critic, ten signal-vs-static translations, the N.A.M.E. protocol for your top three lines, and a set of response cards. Keep using them. The critic won’t disappear in a week, but many people notice the loops getting shorter.

How to test a reframe

A reframe only works if you believe it at least somewhat. Use the **believability check**: read the reframe out loud and rate how true it feels from 0 to 100%. You’re aiming for at least 60%.

- **Under 60%?** It’s probably too positive. Make it more modest or more specific. “I’m great at following through” might become “I followed through on three things this week.”
- **Around 60 to 80%?** That’s the sweet spot. It’s credible enough to land and hopeful enough to help.
- **Over 90%?** Great, as long as it still addresses the critic’s actual claim.

Revisit your cards at the end of each module. As your evidence grows, you can update the reframes with new facts: “I’ve kept my log for 20 days,” then “for 30 days.” A card that grows with your track record gets more convincing over time.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 2.4: Inner Critic Protocol Response Cards**. Write at least six cards, one for each of your critic’s most frequent lines, using the four-part format and one of the five reframe formulas. Test each reframe by reading it aloud: if your honest reaction is “I don’t believe that,” make it more balanced. Then put your cards in at least two of the locations listed above.

Module 3: Micro-Promises

Days 11 to 15. This is where the new track record starts. You'll learn the 5-minute promise system: commitments small enough to keep and visible enough to count.

Lesson 3.1: The 5-Minute Promise System

If self-trust is a track record, then the fastest way to rebuild it is to string together as many kept promises as possible. Not heroic ones. Small ones. A few kept promises a day for 25 days adds up to dozens of pieces of evidence your brain can see, and a very different forecast.

Why small beats big

When people finally decide to rebuild trust in themselves, they usually go big: a new morning routine, a strict diet, a daily workout, all starting Monday. It feels like the scale of the promise should match the scale of the problem. But big promises are exactly how the broken-promise pile got built.

Behavior scientist BJ Fogg, who founded the Behavior Design Lab at Stanford and wrote *Tiny Habits*, argues that making a behavior tiny, easy enough to do even on a bad day, is one of the most reliable ways to get a new behavior started. The point isn't that tiny actions change your life on their own. It's that they get *done*, consistently, and consistency is what builds the pattern.

For self-trust, there's an extra benefit: every kept micro-promise is a mastery experience, Bandura's strongest source of self-efficacy. Small, kept, repeated.

The rules of a micro-promise

A micro-promise must meet five criteria. Use the acronym **S.M.A.L.L.**:

Letter	Rule	Test
S	Short: takes 5 minutes or less	Could I do this in a commercial break?
M	Measurable: clearly done or not done	Would a stranger agree whether I did it?
A	Anchored: tied to a time or an existing routine	Do I know exactly <i>when</i> this happens?

Letter	Rule	Test
L	Low-friction: no special equipment, mood, or motivation needed	Could I do it tired, busy, or grumpy?
L	Logged: recorded right after	Is there a place I'll mark it?

Good vs. oversized promises

Oversized	Micro-promise
"I'll exercise every day."	"After I pour my coffee, I'll do 10 squats."
"I'll read more."	"When I get into bed, I'll read two pages before touching my phone."
"I'll stop procrastinating on the report."	"At 9 a.m., I'll open the report file and write one sentence."
"I'll be more organized."	"Before I leave my desk, I'll write tomorrow's top task on a sticky note."
"I'll eat healthier."	"At lunch I'll add one vegetable to my plate."

The "minimum that counts" and the "bonus zone"

A micro-promise has a floor, not a ceiling. You promise the minimum: two pages, ten squats, one sentence. If you feel like doing more, that's the bonus zone, and it's welcome. But the promise is kept the moment you hit the minimum.

This matters because of how the critic works. If you promise two pages and read twenty, the critic may say, "You should do twenty every day." Don't take the bait. Raising the floor every time you exceed it is how promises get oversized again. The floor stays put until Module 7, where you'll learn how to scale deliberately.

How many micro-promises per day?

Start with **three**. One is easy to forget about; five or more gets crowded. Three gives you enough daily evidence to notice, with room to keep them all.

A balanced set usually includes:

1. **A body promise** (movement, water, sleep, food)
2. **A progress promise** (one small step on something that matters to you: a project, a skill, a renegotiated item from Module 1)

3. **A care promise** (something kind or restorative: a walk outside, a text to a friend, five minutes without a screen)

The two-week rule

For the next two weeks, don't change your three micro-promises unless one is clearly too big (you're missing it more than twice a week). Stability lets the evidence accumulate. You'll adjust in Lesson 3.3.

Anchoring: when-then plans

Every micro-promise needs an anchor, the implementation-intention format from Module 1. Two formats work well:

- **Time anchor:** "At 7:30 a.m., I'll..."
- **Routine anchor:** "After I [existing habit], I'll..."

Routine anchors (sometimes called habit stacking) are usually more reliable, because the existing habit acts as a built-in reminder. "After I brush my teeth at night, I'll write tomorrow's one priority" is harder to forget than "every evening."

A sample starting set

Here's how one full set of three micro-promises might look for someone with a demanding job:

Type	Micro-promise	Minimum	Anchor
Body	10 squats	10	After I pour my first coffee
Progress	Open the job-applications doc and edit one line	1 line	When I sit at my desk after lunch
Care	Step outside without my phone	2 minutes	When I close my laptop for the day

Notice what these have in common: each is tied to something that happens every day, each has a number you can check, and none depends on feeling motivated. They look almost too small. That's the design. The goal right now is not transformation; it's reliability.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 3.1: Designing My Micro-Promises**. Write three micro-promises (one body, one progress, one care), run each through the S.M.A.L.L. test, and write each

one in when-then format with a clear minimum. If any promise fails a test, shrink it until it passes. Start keeping all three tomorrow, Day 12.

Lesson 3.2: Making Promises Visible

A kept promise that nobody sees, including you, barely counts in the mind's ledger. The critic is excellent at erasing evidence: "Sure, you did your squats, but you didn't do anything that matters." That's why the second half of the micro-promise system is making every kept promise *visible*.

Why visibility matters

Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer, in *The Progress Principle*, studied thousands of daily diary entries from knowledge workers and found that, on the days people felt best about their work, the most common factor was making progress, even small progress. But progress only affects how you feel if you *notice* it. A visible record turns invisible progress into something you can look at.

There's also a simpler reason: memory is biased. Many people with a strong critic remember misses much more vividly than kept promises. Without a record, three kept days and one missed day can feel like "I failed again." With a record, you can see the actual ratio.

Your two tracking tools

You'll use two tools from the workbook, and they do different jobs.

1. The Micro-Promise Tracker (the scoreboard). A simple grid: your three micro-promises down the side, the days across the top. Mark each cell as soon as you keep the promise. Use a symbol system:

Mark	Meaning
✓	Kept (hit the minimum)
✓+	Kept, with bonus
R	Missed, then repaired (you'll learn repair in Module 6)
○	Missed

The tracker is designed to be seen at a glance. Put the printed version somewhere you'll pass every day: fridge, desk, inside your bathroom cabinet. If you prefer digital, recreate the same grid in any notes app or spreadsheet; the only requirement is that you can see the whole month on one screen.

2. The Daily Self-Trust Log (the story). You started this in Module 1. The tracker shows *whether* you kept promises; the log captures *what it meant*. Each evening, add one line to the log's "evidence" prompt: a specific sentence about a kept promise. "Did my 10 squats even though I was running late. Didn't negotiate with myself." These sentences become the raw material for your evidence file in Module 7.

The "log it now" rule

Mark the tracker **immediately** after you keep a promise, not at the end of the day. Two reasons:

- **Accuracy.** End-of-day recall is fuzzy, and fuzzy recall tends to lean toward the critic's version.
- **The moment of acknowledgment.** Marking the cell is a tiny moment of "I said I would, and I did." Those moments are the whole point.

When you mark it, try a quick internal acknowledgment. Not a big celebration, just a nod: "Done. Kept." Some people use a small physical gesture, like a fist tap on the desk. BJ Fogg calls this kind of immediate positive feeling "Shine" and treats it as part of what helps a habit take hold. You don't need to feel euphoric. You need to register it.

Handling the "it doesn't count" objection

Expect the Moving Goalpost pattern this week. It will say:

- "Ten squats is pathetic."
- "Anyone could do that."
- "This isn't real change."

Pull out your response card. The honest answer: *You're not doing this for the squats. You're doing it to prove your word means something again. And it's working, because here's the grid.* The size of the promise is not the point. The keeping is.

Making it visible to someone else (optional)

Some people find it helpful to share their tracker with one trusted person: a partner, a friend, a colleague also working on something. This is optional. If you do it, choose someone who will be curious, not someone who will judge or nag, and share the *tracker*, not your whole log. A weekly text ("Week 2: 19 out of 21") is plenty.

Reading your tracker

After a week or so, the tracker starts telling you things. Look for:

- **Row patterns.** One promise with lots of empty cells usually means it needs a new anchor or a smaller minimum.
- **Column patterns.** A day of the week with misses across all promises (often weekends or a particular busy workday) suggests that day needs its own plan.
- **Streaks.** Runs of kept days are your best evidence. Notice them and say them out loud in your mirror work next module.
- **R marks.** Every repaired miss is proof you come back. Count them with pride, not embarrassment.

You'll use these patterns in tomorrow's calibration lesson. For now, just keep marking, and let the grid fill in.

Action Step

Set up **Worksheet 3.2: The Micro-Promise Tracker**. Write your three micro-promises in the left column, post the tracker somewhere you'll see it daily (or recreate it digitally), and mark every kept promise immediately for the rest of the course. In tonight's Daily Self-Trust Log entry, write one specific evidence sentence about a promise you kept today.

Lesson 3.3: Calibrating: When to Shrink, Hold, or Grow

By now you've kept micro-promises for a few days. You probably have some data. Maybe everything is going smoothly. Maybe one promise keeps slipping. Maybe you've been hitting the bonus zone and feel ready for more. Today you'll learn to read the data and adjust, which is the skill that keeps a promise system alive long after this course ends.

The 80% rule

Aim for a keep rate of roughly **80% or higher** for each micro-promise over any given week. That means missing no more than one day out of seven, or so.

- **Consistently above 90%:** The promise is well calibrated. Hold.
- **Between 70% and 90%:** Mostly working. Look for the specific days or situations when it slips and fix the anchor.
- **Below 70%:** The promise is too big or badly anchored. Shrink it or re-anchor it. This is not a personal failure; it's a design adjustment.

These aren't research-derived thresholds. They're practical guidelines to keep you from two traps: shrugging off a failing promise, and overreacting to a single miss.

Diagnosing a slipping promise

When a promise keeps slipping, ask these questions in order:

1. **Is the anchor reliable?** “After lunch” fails on days lunch is skipped or eaten at your desk. Pick an anchor that happens every single day.
2. **Is the minimum small enough?** If you’re thinking “I don’t have time,” it’s probably too big. Cut it in half.
3. **Is there friction you can remove?** Shoes by the door. Book on the pillow. File already open.
4. **Do you actually want this?** Sometimes a promise slips because it was a “should” rather than a “want.” If so, swap it for something that serves the same area of life.

Example: Imagine Luis

Imagine Luis, who promised “After dinner, I’ll spend 5 minutes on my online course.” By Day 14 he’d kept it 2 out of 4 days. His diagnosis:

- **Anchor:** Dinner time varies wildly because of his kids’ activities. Unreliable.
- **Minimum:** Five minutes of logging in, finding his place, and watching was more like 12 minutes in practice.
- **Friction:** The laptop was in another room.

His fix: “When I sit down on the couch after the kids are in bed, I’ll open the course app on my phone and watch 2 minutes.” He kept it the next seven days straight.

When to grow a promise

Growth is tempting, but premature growth is a classic way to slide back into the broken-promise pile. Only grow a promise when **all three** of these are true:

1. You’ve kept it at 90%+ for at least **two weeks**.
2. You’ve been regularly hitting the bonus zone *without* pushing yourself.
3. The promise now feels almost automatic, like something you’d do anyway.

Then grow it by a small step, about 20 to 50% at most (for example, 2 pages becomes 3; 10 squats becomes 15), and keep it at the new level for another two weeks before any further change. You’ll learn more about deliberate scaling in Module 7.

A note on timelines: in Phillippa Lally’s 2009 study of habit formation at University College London, the time it took participants’ new behaviors to become automatic varied widely, from 18 to 254 days, with a median of about 66 days. So don’t expect a promise to feel effortless in a week. Missing a single day did not appear to seriously derail habit formation in that study, which is worth remembering as you head into Module 6.

The weekly promise review

Every seventh day of the course (Days 14, 21, 28, and 35) take ten minutes for a weekly review. Look at your tracker and log and answer:

- What's my keep rate for each promise this week?
- Which promise needs to shrink, hold, re-anchor, or grow?
- What was my average self-trust rating this week vs. last week?
- What did I learn about how I make promises?

Treat this like a short meeting with yourself, a self-leadership meeting. You're the manager reviewing the numbers with fairness and curiosity, not blame.

A calibration example table

Here's how a Day 14 review might look:

Promise	Kept this week	Keep rate	Decision
10 squats after coffee	7 of 7	100%	Hold
Edit one line of applications after lunch	4 of 7	57%	Re-anchor to 8:45 a.m. before email
2 minutes outside, no phone	6 of 7	86%	Hold; add a cue on the laptop lid

This takes about five minutes. The key is that each decision is small and specific. You're not overhauling your life; you're fine-tuning a system that's already mostly working.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 3.3: Calibration and Weekly Review**. Calculate your keep rate for each micro-promise so far, run any promise under 70% through the four diagnosis questions, and write a revised version if needed. Then complete your first weekly review (Day 14) using the review prompts, and put the next three review dates in your calendar.

Module 4: Mirror Work, Minus the Woo

Days 16 to 20. Evidence only builds trust if you actually look at it. This module turns the mirror into a practical daily self-accountability check: 90 seconds, evidence-focused, with no affirmation fluff.

Lesson 4.1: Why Mirror Work (and Why Not Affirmations)

When most people hear “mirror work,” they picture standing in front of the bathroom mirror saying “I am worthy, I am powerful, I am enough” while feeling faintly ridiculous. If that’s worked for you, great. For many people with a strong inner critic, it backfires, and there’s a reason for that.

The problem with affirmations you don’t believe

In a 2009 study, psychologist Joanne Wood and colleagues asked participants to repeat the statement “I am a lovable person.” People who already had high self-esteem felt slightly better afterward. But people with low self-esteem tended to feel *worse* than those who didn’t repeat the statement at all. One likely explanation: when a statement is far from what you currently believe, it invites your mind to argue back. “I am lovable” gets met with “Oh really? What about...” and suddenly the critic has a microphone.

That’s why this course uses a different approach. Instead of stating things you don’t yet believe, you’ll review things that are *demonstrably true*. Not “I am disciplined,” but “I did my ten squats today, even though I was tired.” Your critic can argue with a claim. It has a much harder time arguing with a fact.

So why a mirror at all?

You could review your evidence in a notebook, and you will. The mirror adds three things:

1. **An unavoidable daily anchor.** Almost everyone looks in a mirror at least once a day, usually at the same time. That makes it one of the most reliable routine anchors you have (remember Lesson 3.1).
2. **Face-to-face accountability.** Trust between people is built partly through eye contact and direct communication. Speaking to yourself face to face makes the practice feel more like a conversation between two parties, which is exactly the relationship you’re rebuilding: the one who makes promises and the one who keeps them.
3. **Exposure to discomfort, in small doses.** Many people find it uncomfortable to look themselves in the eye. That discomfort is often tied to the same shame the critic

feeds on. Staying with it for 90 seconds, gently, is a small daily practice in not looking away from yourself.

What mirror work is in this course

Here's the working definition: **Mirror work is a 90-second daily review, spoken to your own reflection, of the promises you made and kept, what you learned, and what you're committing to next.**

It is:

- **Evidence-based.** You only say things that are true.
- **Specific.** Named actions, not general qualities.
- **Brief.** 90 seconds. Not a meditation session.
- **Two-directional.** It includes looking back (what did I keep?) and looking forward (what am I promising next?).

It is not:

- A performance of positivity
- A place to list every flaw you noticed
- A replacement for your written log (it works *with* it)

The accountability-partner model

Think of the best accountability partner you've ever had: a coach, a mentor, a good manager, a friend who checked in. They probably did three things when you met:

1. Asked what you'd done, and acknowledged it plainly.
2. Asked what got in the way, without shaming.
3. Asked what you'd do next, and made sure it was realistic.

That's the structure of the mirror protocol you'll learn tomorrow. The difference is that the accountability partner is you. You're learning to be the kind of partner for yourself that you'd want anyone else to have.

An honest word on discomfort

For the first few days, this practice may feel awkward, silly, or even painful. That's common and expected. Some people find it hard to make eye contact with themselves at all. If that's you:

- Start by looking at your reflection without eye contact. Look at your shoulders, or your hands on the sink.
- Say the words quietly or in a whisper.

- Keep it to 30 seconds for the first few days.

If looking in the mirror brings up intense distress, for example significant body-image concerns or strong feelings of disgust or panic, skip the mirror and use the written version in your workbook instead. That’s a completely valid way to do this module, and those feelings are worth exploring with a licensed professional.

Three truths you can use tomorrow

To prepare for the protocol, it helps to see what “true, specific, evidence-based” sounds like compared with a typical affirmation:

Typical affirmation	Evidence-based statement
“I am disciplined.”	“I’ve done my squats 9 of the last 10 days.”
“I trust myself completely.”	“I said I’d finish the inventory by Friday, and I did.”
“I am enough.”	“I handled the critic with a response card twice today.”

Notice that the evidence-based versions are less grand and more convincing. They also update automatically as your track record grows, which affirmations can’t do.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 4.1: Mirror Work Readiness**. Rate your current comfort with looking yourself in the eye (1 to 10), note what you expect to feel, choose your mirror and your anchor time (for example, “after I brush my teeth at night”), and choose your starting format: full mirror, mirror without eye contact, or written-only. Then write three statements from this week’s log that are specific, true, and evidence-based; you’ll use them tomorrow.

Lesson 4.2: The 90-Second Mirror Protocol

Today you’ll learn the exact script you’ll use every day for the rest of the course. It’s short on purpose. A practice you’ll actually do every day beats a better practice you’ll do twice.

The protocol: K.E.P.T.

The four steps spell K.E.P.T., because the whole practice is about promises kept.

K: Kept (about 30 seconds). Look at yourself and name, out loud, the specific promises you kept today. *“Today you did your ten squats before coffee. You wrote one sentence of the report at 9. You texted your sister.”* Use “you” and your name if it helps. This is the

distanced self-talk from Lesson 2.3, and it can make the practice feel like an honest report from a partner rather than self-praise.

E: Evidence (about 20 seconds). Connect the actions to what they mean for your track record. *“That’s 14 days of squats out of 16. That’s a pattern now, not a fluke.”* This step is where evidence becomes belief. You’re not claiming a trait (“I’m disciplined”). You’re reading the data (“14 of 16”).

P: Pattern or problem (about 20 seconds). Name, honestly and without judgment, one thing that didn’t go to plan and what you notice about it. *“You skipped the reading promise again. Evenings are hard when you’re tired. It might need a new anchor.”* If everything went to plan, name one thing you noticed about what made it work.

T: Tomorrow (about 20 seconds). State tomorrow’s promises, clearly and specifically, while looking yourself in the eye. *“Tomorrow: squats before coffee, one sentence at 9, two pages when you get into bed. That’s the deal.”* This is the moment of making the promise, face to face. Tomorrow night, you’ll report back.

Full example

Here’s what a complete K.E.P.T. round might sound like for someone named Priya, on Day 17:

“Okay, Priya. **Kept:** You drank water first thing. You did the ten-minute walk after lunch even though it was cold. You didn’t do your one-line journal. **Evidence:** That’s the walk five days running. You said you’d do it and you did. **Pattern:** The journal keeps slipping on days you get home late. Maybe move it to the train. **Tomorrow:** water first thing, the walk after lunch, one journal line on the train home. That’s the deal.”

That’s about 70 seconds.

Rules that keep it honest

1. **Only true statements.** If you didn’t keep a promise, don’t include it in Kept. The whole practice depends on your brain learning that what you say in the mirror is reliable.
2. **Specific beats general.** “You texted your sister” beats “You were a good sibling.”
3. **Neutral tone on misses.** Say the problem the way you’d say “It rained today.” Just a fact that affects planning.
4. **Tomorrow’s promises must be ones you can keep.** If you’re making them in the mirror, you’re making them to someone looking right at you. Don’t overpromise to that person.

Pairing the mirror with your log

The mirror and the log work as a pair:

Tool	When	What it does
Micro-Promise Tracker	Immediately after each kept promise	Records it
Daily Self-Trust Log	Evening, 3 to 5 minutes	Captures the story and ratings
K.E.P.T. mirror round	Right after the log, 90 seconds	Speaks the evidence out loud and sets tomorrow

Doing the log first means the mirror round has fresh, accurate data to work from.

What if the critic interrupts?

It probably will, especially during Kept and Evidence. (“Ten squats? Seriously? Who are you kidding?”) When it does, don’t argue in the mirror. Run a quick N.A.M.E. from Module 2: *“That’s the Moving Goalpost. That’s static.”* Then go back to the next line of your script. The critic interrupting is part of the practice, not a sign it isn’t working.

Keeping it fresh

After a week or two, the protocol can start to feel routine. That’s actually a good sign; it means it’s becoming a habit. But if it starts to feel empty, try one of these variations:

- **Add a number.** “That’s 22 kept promises this week.”
- **Add a “because.”** “You kept it because you laid your shoes out last night.” This reinforces what’s working.
- **Change the Tomorrow step to one promise.** On days when three feels like too much to say, say the one that matters most, with full eye contact.
- **Read one evidence sentence from your log.** Let a past version of you report in.

Action Step

Use **Worksheet 4.2: My K.E.P.T. Script**. Write out tonight’s K.E.P.T. round in full using today’s actual tracker data, then do it at your mirror (or in writing, if you chose that format). Afterward, rate how uncomfortable it felt (1 to 10) and note one thing you noticed. Repeat the K.E.P.T. round every evening through Day 35, logging the discomfort rating each time.

Lesson 4.3: Troubleshooting the Mirror

By now you've done the K.E.P.T. round a few times. You probably have some reactions: it feels silly, or it feels surprisingly emotional, or you keep forgetting, or the critic is very loud. This lesson addresses the most common problems and how to adjust without abandoning the practice.

Problem 1: "I feel ridiculous."

This is by far the most common reaction. A few things help:

- **Remember what you're doing.** You're not performing; you're reporting. A status update to yourself is no stranger than a status update to your boss.
- **Lower the volume.** Speak quietly or in a whisper. No one needs to hear.
- **Keep it matter-of-fact.** If the practice feels ridiculous, it may be because you're adding emotional emphasis. Say it the way you'd read a weather report.
- **Give it time.** Many people report the awkwardness fades within the first week or two. Track your discomfort rating; watching it drop is its own evidence.

Problem 2: "I can't look myself in the eye."

Look at something else: your shoulders, your hands, the space just below your chin. Gradually, over several days, try a second or two of eye contact during the Tomorrow step, when you're making the promise. You're building tolerance gradually, the same way you build any other capacity.

Problem 3: "It brings up a lot of emotion."

Some people find that the first time they speak kindly and honestly to their own reflection, they tear up. That's not a problem. It often reflects how unusual it is to be addressed by yourself with fairness rather than criticism. Let it happen, finish your script if you can, and write a line about it in your log.

If the emotions feel overwhelming, persistent, or frightening, pause the mirror practice, switch to the written version, and consider talking with a licensed therapist. The written K.E.P.T. round gives you the same structure without the face-to-face intensity.

Problem 4: "I keep forgetting."

That's an anchor problem, not a discipline problem. Fixes:

- **Stack it more tightly.** "After I brush my teeth" is better than "sometime in the evening."

- **Leave a cue on the mirror.** A small sticky note with “K.E.P.T.” on it, or one of your response cards from Module 2.
- **Shorten it.** On busy nights, a 30-second version still counts: one kept promise, one promise for tomorrow.

Problem 5: “I have nothing to put in Kept.”

This happens, usually on a hard day. Two responses:

1. **Look smaller.** Did you get out of bed? Show up to work? Feed yourself? Do this practice? Those are kept commitments. On a hard day, basic ones count.
2. **Use it as information.** “Today I kept nothing I promised. That tells me my promises don’t fit days like today.” Then make tomorrow’s promises smaller. This is exactly where the Repair Ritual in Module 6 will come in.

Problem 6: “The critic takes over.”

If the critic dominates your mirror time, try these:

- **Put a response card on the mirror.** Read it before you start.
- **Write the script first.** Then read it to your reflection. Reading keeps you on track.
- **Name the takeover.** “The critic is loud tonight. That’s noted.” Then say only the Tomorrow step.

The advanced version: the weekly mirror review

Once you’re comfortable with the daily round, add a longer version on your weekly review days (Days 21, 28, and 35). It takes about three minutes:

1. **This week’s total:** “You made 21 promises and kept 18.”
2. **The best piece of evidence:** the one kept promise you’re proudest of, and why.
3. **The biggest lesson:** one thing you learned about how you make or keep promises.
4. **Next week’s commitment:** any adjustment to your micro-promises.

Module 4 checkpoint

By Day 20 you should be doing a K.E.P.T. round most evenings, tracking your discomfort rating, and pairing it with your log. Don’t aim for perfect. Aim for most days, getting a little easier.

A written K.E.P.T. round

If you’ve chosen the written format, or on nights when the mirror isn’t possible, use this four-line version in your journal or log:

- **K:** Today I kept...
- **E:** That means...
- **P:** What didn't go to plan, and what I notice...
- **T:** Tomorrow I promise...

Written rounds count exactly as much as spoken ones. The point is the structure: an honest look back, a clear promise forward, every day.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 4.3: Mirror Troubleshooting**. Look at your discomfort ratings from the last few days and note the trend. Identify which of the six problems you've run into, write the specific fix you'll use, and write a 30-second "hard day" version of your K.E.P.T. script to use on nights when the full version isn't realistic.

Module 5: The Self-Leadership Voice

Days 21 to 25. Quieting the critic leaves a gap. In this module you'll fill it with a coach: a new tone, a set of questions, a daily check-in format, and a way to trust your own decisions again.

Lesson 5.1: Critic vs. Coach

For three weeks, you've been learning to notice and respond to the inner critic. But responding to a voice isn't the same as replacing it. If you only ever defend against the critic, it stays in charge of the conversation. This module is about building a second voice, one that leads rather than attacks.

Why "coach"?

Think about the best coach, teacher, or manager you've ever had. Most people describe someone who:

- Held high standards *and* believed they could meet them
- Was honest about mistakes without making them personal
- Focused on the next play, not the last one
- Asked more questions than they gave speeches
- Stayed steady when things went badly

That's the voice you're building. Not a cheerleader who says everything is great. Not a drill sergeant who says everything is terrible. A coach who says, "Here's where you are. Here's what's next. I know you can do it."

Critic and coach: side by side

Situation	Critic's voice	Coach's voice
You missed a micro-promise	"Typical. You always do this."	"What got in the way? What would make it easier tomorrow?"
You made a mistake at work	"Everyone saw. You're incompetent."	"That was a real miss. What's the fix, and who needs to know?"
You're about to try something new	"Who do you think you are?"	"It's new, so it'll be clumsy at first. What's the first small step?"

Situation	Critic's voice	Coach's voice
You kept a promise	"That was too easy to count."	"Nice. That's another one on the record."
You're overwhelmed	"Get it together. Others manage."	"This is a lot. What's the one thing that matters most right now?"

Notice that the coach doesn't lower the standard. It still wants the micro-promise kept and the work mistake fixed. What changes is the *tone* and the *direction*: from attack to support, and from past to next.

The four qualities of a coaching voice

- 1. Honest.** The coach doesn't pretend a miss didn't happen. Self-leadership includes clear accountability.
- 2. Warm.** The coach is on your side. This is the self-kindness piece of Kristin Neff's self-compassion model. Warmth isn't softness; it's the belief that you're worth investing in.
- 3. Forward-facing.** The coach's favorite word is "next." What's the next step, the next attempt, the next promise.
- 4. Curious.** The coach asks, rather than assumes. "What happened?" is more useful than "What's wrong with you?"

"Won't being nice to myself make me lazy?"

This is the most common fear, and it's worth answering directly. Many people believe the critic is what keeps them productive and that without it they'd do nothing.

The research on self-compassion doesn't support that fear well. The Breines and Chen studies you met in Module 2 found that self-compassion after a failure was associated with more motivation to improve, not less. Kristin Neff has also noted that self-compassion is not the same as self-indulgence: caring about yourself includes caring about your long-term wellbeing, which sometimes means holding yourself to hard things.

And you have your own data. Look at your Broken-Promise Inventory. The critic has been running the show for years. How has that worked out? The honest answer for most people is: a lot of guilt, and not much follow-through. It's reasonable to try a different approach for 35 days and see what your own tracker says.

Finding your coach's voice

Some people find it easiest to model the coach on a real person: a former teacher, a grandparent, a mentor. Others imagine a character. Others simply imagine how they would speak to a close friend in the same situation. Any of these work. The important thing is to be able to hear the difference between the two voices, so you can choose.

Hearing the difference in real time

For the next few days, try a simple experiment. Each time you catch the critic, pause and ask: *"What would my coach say instead?"* Don't force yourself to believe the coach's version. Just hear it. Most people find that simply generating the alternative weakens the critic's grip, because it reveals that the critic's version is one option, not the only possible interpretation.

If you can't come up with a coach's line at all, borrow one from the table above, or use the all-purpose coach line: *"Okay. What's next?"*

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 5.1: Critic vs. Coach**. Describe the best coach, mentor, or supporter you've had (or imagine one) and list the qualities that made them effective. Then take five critic lines from your audit and rewrite each one in the coach's voice, making sure each rewrite is honest, warm, forward-facing, and curious. Finally, give your coach a name, just as you named your critic.

Lesson 5.2: The Coaching Questions

The fastest way to switch from critic to coach is to change the kind of sentence you use. The critic speaks in *statements* (verdicts, labels, predictions). The coach speaks in *questions*. A question naturally pulls your mind toward curiosity and solutions, and it's much harder for a question to become a verdict.

Why questions work

Compare these two thoughts after a missed promise:

- "I can't stick to anything." (statement: closed, global, final)
- "What made today harder than yesterday?" (question: open, specific, forward)

The first ends the conversation. The second starts one. Questions also naturally invite specifics, which is the signal-vs-static distinction from Module 2 working in a new form.

The coach's question bank

Here are twenty questions sorted by situation. You'll pick your favorites in the worksheet.

After a miss:

1. What got in the way?
2. Was the promise the right size?
3. What would make it 10% easier tomorrow?
4. What's the smallest version I could do right now?
5. What would I say to a friend in this exact spot?

When facing something hard:

6. What's the very next physical action?
7. What do I already know how to do here?
8. What's the worst realistic outcome, and could I handle it?
9. Who could I ask for help?
10. What would "good enough" look like?

When overwhelmed:

11. What matters most in the next hour?
12. What can I drop, delay, or delegate?
13. What do I need right now: rest, food, movement, or help?
14. If I could only do one thing today, what would it be?
15. What's in my control, and what isn't?

After a win:

16. What did I do that made this work?
17. How can I repeat that?
18. What does this say about my track record?
19. Who helped, and have I thanked them?
20. What's the next small promise that builds on this?

Beware of disguised critic questions

Not every question is a coaching question. The critic can speak in question form too:

- "Why do I always do this?"
- "What's wrong with me?"
- "Why can't I be like everyone else?"

These are statements wearing a question costume. They assume a global flaw and ask you to explain it. The quick test: **does the question point toward a next action or toward**

a verdict? “Why do I always do this?” points toward a verdict. “What got in the way this time?” points toward an action.

A useful swap is to replace “why” with “what” or “how.” “Why did I skip my walk?” tends to invite self-justification or self-blame. “What made the walk hard today?” invites problem-solving.

Example: Imagine Marcus

Imagine Marcus, who promised to spend five minutes each evening on his job applications. On Day 22 he spends the evening scrolling instead. His first thought is the critic: “Why am I so lazy? No wonder I’m stuck in this job.”

He catches it (N.A.M.E.), then switches to three coaching questions:

1. **What got in the way?** “I was wiped out after a long meeting and the laptop felt like work.”
2. **What would make it 10% easier?** “Doing it on my phone from the couch, not at the desk.”
3. **What’s the smallest version I could do right now?** “Open the job site and save one listing.”

He does the smallest version in two minutes, marks it R (repaired) on his tracker, and changes the anchor for tomorrow. The critic’s version of that evening ends in shame and more scrolling. The coach’s version ends with one kept promise and a better plan.

Make the questions automatic

Pick three questions that fit you best and write them somewhere you’ll see them often, alongside your response cards. Many people choose one “after a miss” question, one “facing something hard” question, and one “after a win” question. Use them every time you catch the critic this week.

A two-minute coaching conversation

When something significant happens, a good or a bad outcome, you can use a structured mini-conversation with yourself. It takes about two minutes and works well written in your log:

1. **What happened?** (Just the facts.)
2. **What did I do well?** (Always find at least one thing.)
3. **What would I do differently?** (One thing, specific.)
4. **What’s next?** (One action, with a time.)

This four-question sequence mirrors a simplified version of the “after-action reviews” many teams use to learn from projects. It keeps you honest without letting the review become a trial.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 5.2: My Coaching Questions**. Circle your top question from each of the four categories, then write your three go-to questions on a card or phone note. For the rest of this module, each time you catch a critic statement, convert it into one of your coaching questions and answer it. Record at least three of these conversions in the worksheet.

Lesson 5.3: The Daily Self-Leadership Check-In

You now have a coach’s tone and a coach’s questions. Today you’ll put them into a short daily structure: a morning check-in that sets the day’s promises with the coach’s voice, to pair with your evening log and K.E.P.T. mirror round.

Why a morning check-in?

Your evening practices look back. The morning check-in looks forward. Together they create a full loop, like a manager who sets priorities with you in the morning and reviews them with you at day’s end. That rhythm of “plan, do, review” is how trust gets built in any working relationship.

The morning check-in also gets the coach speaking first. For many people, the critic is loudest in the first few minutes after waking. If the first structured thought of your day is a coaching question, you’ve changed who opens the conversation.

The 3-minute morning check-in

1. State check (30 seconds). Ask: *“How am I, honestly, right now?”* Rate your energy (1 to 10) and name one word for your mood. This matters because your promises should fit the day you’re actually having, not the day you wish you were having.

2. Promise check (60 seconds). Review your three micro-promises. Ask: *“Given my energy today, are these the right size?”* On a low day (energy 1 to 4), you might pre-shrink one: *“Today, the minimum is five squats.”* That’s not cheating. It’s the self-leadership skill of setting realistic expectations, and it prevents a miss.

3. One priority (30 seconds). Ask: *“What’s the one thing that would make today a good day if I got it done?”* Write it down. This isn’t a micro-promise; it’s a direction.

4. Coach's word (30 seconds). Ask: *"What does my coach want me to remember today?"* Write one short line. Examples: "Small counts." "Next, not last." "You can do hard things slowly." "Ask for help early."

5. Anticipate the critic (30 seconds). Ask: *"Where is the critic most likely to show up today?"* Name it and pick the response card you'll use. "The 2 p.m. presentation. The Mind Reader will say they think I'm unprepared. Card: 'I don't know what they think. I prepared. Next slide.'"

The pre-shrink option

The pre-shrink deserves special attention. Many broken promises happen because people hold themselves to their best-day standard on their worst days. The morning check-in gives you a structured, honest way to adjust the promise *before* the day starts, which keeps it a promise kept rather than a promise broken.

Two rules keep it honest:

1. **You can only pre-shrink in the morning**, not in the moment you're tempted to skip.
2. **You can shrink the size but not to zero.** Five squats, not no squats. One sentence, not no sentences.

How it fits with your other tools

Here's your complete daily rhythm as of Day 23:

Time	Practice	Duration
Morning	Self-leadership check-in	3 minutes
Throughout the day	Keep micro-promises; mark tracker immediately; N.A.M.E. + coaching questions when the critic shows up	Seconds each
Evening	Daily Self-Trust Log	3 to 5 minutes
Evening	K.E.P.T. mirror round	90 seconds

That's roughly 10 minutes of structured practice a day, plus the micro-promises themselves. Together with lesson reading, it fits within the 15 to 20 minutes a day this course asks of you.

Example: A morning check-in

Imagine Aisha, on Day 23:

State: Energy 4. Mood: foggy. Didn't sleep well. **Promises:** Walk is fine. Pre-shrink writing from one paragraph to one sentence. Water is fine. **One priority:** Send the budget draft to my manager. **Coach's word:** "Done beats perfect today." **Critic forecast:** When I send the draft, the Comparer will say others would have done it better. Card: "I'm seeing their highlights and my behind-the-scenes."

That took Aisha under three minutes. On a foggy day, she's set herself up to keep all three promises and has a plan for the critic.

When you skip the check-in

You'll miss mornings. When you do, you don't need to skip the whole practice. Try the **30-second version** at any point in the day: energy rating, the one priority, and the coach's word. That's enough to reset the tone. And if you notice several skipped check-ins in a row, that's a signal to use the Repair Ritual in Module 6 on this practice itself.

Action Step

Use **Worksheet 5.3: The Morning Self-Leadership Check-In**. Complete the five-step check-in tomorrow morning and every morning through Day 35, using the daily check-in grid in the worksheet. Note any day you used the pre-shrink option and whether you kept the smaller promise.

Lesson 5.4: Trusting Your Own Decisions

One of the three erosion patterns from Lesson 1.1 was decision distrust: second-guessing, over-researching, outsourcing choices to others, or avoiding them entirely. Broken promises teach you that your *follow-through* is unreliable. Over time, many people generalize that into a belief that their *judgment* is unreliable too. Today you'll start rebuilding that.

How decision distrust shows up

- Asking three or four people before making ordinary decisions
- Reading dozens of reviews for a small purchase
- Changing your mind repeatedly after deciding
- Deferring to others ("Whatever you think") even when you have a preference
- Avoiding decisions until they're made for you by a deadline
- Replaying past decisions and wishing you'd chosen differently

Some of these are useful in moderation. Getting input on big choices is wise. The problem is when they become the default for every choice, including ones you're fully capable of making alone.

Decisions are promises, too

Here's the connection to everything you've learned: every decision is a small promise to yourself. "I'll go with this option and stand behind it." When you decide and then immediately undo it, second-guess it, or let someone else override it, you're breaking a small promise. When you decide, act, and review honestly, you're keeping one.

That means you can rebuild decision trust the same way you've been rebuilding follow-through: with small, kept decisions, reviewed with a coach's voice.

Sort decisions by size

Not every decision deserves the same process. A simple sorting system:

Decision size	Examples	Process	Time limit
Small (easily reversible, low cost)	What to eat, which route to take, which task to do first	Decide alone, quickly. No research.	Under 2 minutes
Medium (reversible with some cost)	A purchase under your personal threshold, a weekend plan, how to handle a work email	Decide alone, with a short pros/cons if needed.	Under 1 day
Large (hard to reverse, high cost)	Job change, a move, major financial or relationship choices	Use the full process below; get input from people you trust and qualified professionals where relevant.	Set a deadline

Many people with decision distrust treat small decisions like large ones. The exercise this week is to deliberately make small and medium decisions faster and on your own, and then keep them.

The Decide-Commit-Review method

For decisions you want to make with more confidence:

1. **Clarify.** What am I actually deciding? What matters most to me here? (Name one or two values or priorities.)

2. **Gather, with a limit.** Collect the information you need, and set a stopping point in advance (“three options, 20 minutes, one person’s input”).
3. **Decide.** Choose the option that best fits what matters most. Say it out loud or write it down: “I’m choosing X because Y.”
4. **Commit.** Act on it. Resist the urge to reopen it unless genuinely new information appears.
5. **Review, later.** At a set time, ask the coaching questions: *What went well? What would I do differently? What did I learn about my judgment?*

The review step is critical. It separates *outcome* from *decision quality*. Poker player and author Annie Duke calls the mistake of judging decisions only by their outcomes “resulting” in her book *Thinking in Bets*. A good decision can have a bad outcome because of luck or unknowns; a poor decision can turn out fine. Judge the process: *Did I decide with the information and values I had?*

The decision log

Starting today, you’ll keep a small decision log alongside your daily log. For one or two decisions a day, note:

- The decision and its size
- What you chose and why (one line)
- Whether you kept it or reversed it
- A later review, for medium and large decisions: how it turned out and what you learned

Over the final ten days of the course, this builds a second kind of evidence: proof that your judgment is more reliable than your critic claims.

Handling decision regret

Some of your decisions will turn out badly. When they do, the critic will say, “See? You can’t trust your judgment.” Use the Review step to separate the parts:

- **What did I know at the time?**
- **Was my process reasonable given what I knew?**
- **What was outside my control?**
- **What will I do differently next time, if anything?**

Often you’ll find the decision was reasonable and the outcome was bad luck. Sometimes you’ll find a real lesson. Both are useful. Neither is proof that your judgment is broken.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 5.4: The Decision Trust Builder**. List the decision-distrust behaviors you recognize in yourself, then practice the sort by writing three recent decisions and labeling each small, medium, or large. For the rest of the course, make at least one small decision each day in under two minutes without asking anyone, and log one or two decisions daily in the decision log grid. Use Decide-Commit-Review for any medium or large decision that comes up.

Module 6: Repair After Relapse

Days 26 to 30. You will break a promise to yourself during this course. This module is for the day after: how to repair a miss so it rebuilds trust instead of eroding it, and how to stop one miss from turning into a collapse.

Lesson 6.1: The Anatomy of a Relapse

Here's something that rarely gets said in self-improvement: the moment right after you break a promise to yourself is often more important than the promise itself. How you respond to a miss decides whether it stays a single miss or becomes the first brick of a new broken-promise pile.

The miss is not the problem. The spiral is.

Most plans don't collapse because of one missed day. They collapse because of what happens *after* the missed day. Typically it goes like this:

1. **The miss.** You skip the walk.
2. **The verdict.** The critic says, "See? You can't stick to anything."
3. **The all-or-nothing flip.** "Well, the streak's broken, so what's the point?"
4. **The abandonment.** You skip the next day, and the next. The tracker goes untouched.
5. **The avoidance.** Looking at the tracker now feels bad, so you stop looking at it.
6. **The quiet quit.** A few weeks later, it's another item on the broken-promise pile.

Researchers Janet Polivy and C. Peter Herman described a version of this pattern in dieting research, often called the "what-the-hell effect": after breaking a self-imposed rule, people tended to abandon the rule entirely rather than just accept the single lapse. The same logic shows up well beyond food. One broken promise becomes permission to break them all.

Lapse vs. relapse

It helps to use two different words for two different things:

- **A lapse** is a single miss. One skipped promise, one bad day.
- **A relapse** is a return to the old pattern: the tracker abandoned, the promises quietly dropped.

A lapse is normal, expected, and fixable within 24 hours. A relapse is what happens when a lapse isn't repaired. The goal of this module is not to prevent lapses. It's to stop lapses from becoming relapses.

Remember Phillippa Lally’s 2009 habit study from Module 3: missing a single opportunity to perform a new behavior did not appear to seriously derail the habit-forming process. In other words, one miss isn’t what does the damage. The spiral is.

The four common triggers

When you look back at your broken-promise inventory and your first few weeks of tracking, you’ll probably find that misses cluster around a few triggers:

Trigger	What it looks like	What it’s telling you
Disruption	Travel, illness, a sick kid, a deadline week, a holiday	Your promises need a “disruption version”
Depletion	Exhaustion, poor sleep, emotional heaviness	Your promises need to be smaller on low-energy days
Drift	No specific reason; you just forgot or didn’t feel like it	Your anchor or cue is weak
Doubt	“What’s the point? This isn’t working.”	The critic has the microphone; time for N.A.M.E. and your evidence

Naming the trigger matters, because each one has a different fix. Disruption needs planning ahead. Depletion needs smaller promises. Drift needs a stronger anchor. Doubt needs evidence and the coach’s voice.

Why misses can build trust

This may sound backward, but a well-repaired miss can strengthen self-trust more than an unbroken streak. Think about trust between people. A friend who has never let you down is wonderful, but you don’t really know how they’ll handle a mistake. A friend who once let you down, owned it, fixed it, and did better afterward earns a deeper kind of trust: you know the relationship can survive a failure.

The same is true with yourself. Every time you miss, repair, and come back, you’re building evidence of something the critic says you can’t do: recover. That’s why the course’s tracker has an “R” mark. A repaired miss is a kind of kept promise: the promise to come back.

Your personal early pattern

Most people find that one or two of the four Ds account for most of their misses. That’s good news. It means you don’t need to prepare for everything, just for your top one or two. If Depletion is your main trigger, for example, the most valuable thing you can do in the rest of this module is build low-energy versions of your promises. If Drift is, you’ll focus on

stronger anchors and cues. Your relapse map will point you to where your effort matters most.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 6.1: My Relapse Map**. Look back at your tracker and log from Days 11 to 26 and your Broken-Promise Inventory. List your misses and mark each with its trigger (Disruption, Depletion, Drift, or Doubt). Identify your most common trigger, then trace one past relapse through the six-step spiral, writing what happened at each step and the point where you could have interrupted it.

Lesson 6.2: The Repair Ritual

When you break a promise to someone you care about, you don't just pretend it didn't happen. You acknowledge it, make it right as best you can, and recommit. Doing that well is what keeps relationships strong. The Repair Ritual applies the same steps to the promises you make to yourself.

This lesson is the basis for your **Repair Ritual one-pager** in the workbook: a single page you can keep handy for the day after any miss.

When to use it

Use the Repair Ritual within 24 hours of any missed micro-promise, and definitely before you miss the same promise twice in a row. The simplest rule: **never miss twice**. One miss is a lapse. Two in a row is the start of a new pattern. The Repair Ritual sits between the two.

The 5-step Repair Ritual (about five minutes)

1. Recognize (30 seconds). Say plainly what happened: *"I said I'd do my ten-minute walk yesterday, and I didn't."* No excuses, no drama, no verdict. Just the fact. This is the honesty that trust depends on.

2. Explore (60 seconds). Use the coach's questions: *"What got in the way? Was it Disruption, Depletion, Drift, or Doubt?"* Write one line about the cause. *"Meeting ran late, got home at 7, was starving and tired. Depletion."*

3. Pardon (30 seconds). Offer yourself the same understanding you'd offer a friend who missed something. Use a line drawn from Kristin Neff's common-humanity idea: *"Missing things is part of being a person. This doesn't erase the other days I kept."* You're not excusing the miss; you're declining to add a second injury (the verdict) to the first (the miss).

4. Adjust (60 seconds). Change one thing to make the promise easier to keep, based on the trigger:

Trigger	Typical adjustment
Disruption	Create a “disruption version” (e.g., walk becomes 3 minutes of stretching in a hotel room)
Depletion	Pre-shrink the promise on low-energy days, or move it earlier in the day
Drift	Strengthen the anchor or add a visible cue
Doubt	Re-read your evidence; use a response card before the promise time

5. Recommit and Repair-rep (90 seconds or less). Do a small version of the missed promise *right now*, even if it’s just a minute. Then mark the tracker with an **R**. Then state the next promise clearly, just as in the Tomorrow step of the mirror round: *“Tonight’s walk happens right after I get home, before dinner. Five minutes minimum.”*

The “repair rep” is the most important part. It turns the ritual from a reflection into an action. You don’t just think about coming back; you come back, today, in a small way.

Example: Imagine Sofia

Imagine Sofia, who promised to write one paragraph of her novel each morning at 7. On Day 27 she oversleeps and rushes to work. That evening she notices the empty box on her tracker, and the critic says, “Here we go again. This is exactly what happened with the last draft.”

She pulls out her Repair Ritual one-pager:

1. **Recognize:** “I said I’d write at 7 this morning and didn’t.”
2. **Explore:** “Up late last night, overslept. Depletion. Also, the 7 a.m. slot has no backup.”
3. **Pardon:** “Oversleeping happens. I’ve written 14 of the last 16 mornings.”
4. **Adjust:** “If I miss 7 a.m., the backup is one sentence on my phone at lunch.”
5. **Repair rep:** She writes two sentences on her phone right there, marks R on her tracker, and says, “Tomorrow, 7 a.m., one paragraph.”

Total time: about four minutes. The old version of this evening would have been guilt, avoidance, and maybe a week off the draft. The new version adds a data point to her record: *I come back.*

What repair is not

- **It's not punishment.** No “make-up” doubling (“I missed yesterday, so today I’ll write two paragraphs”). That just makes the next promise bigger and more likely to break.
- **It's not a lecture.** The critic will try to take over the Explore step. Keep it to one line about causes, not a speech about character.
- **It's not optional when things feel bad.** The Repair Ritual matters most exactly when you least want to do it.

Using the one-pager under stress

The Repair Ritual is designed to be used when you least want to use it: tired, embarrassed, or annoyed with yourself. That’s why it lives on one page. Some practical tips:

- **Keep it where misses happen.** If evenings are your weak spot, keep the page by your bed.
- **Read it, don’t remember it.** Under stress, following written steps is easier than recalling them.
- **Set a timer for five minutes.** It keeps the ritual from becoming a long rumination.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 6.2: The Repair Ritual One-Pager**. Fill in the personalized version: your own Recognize sentence template, your go-to Explore questions, your Pardon line, your adjustment for each of the four triggers, and a repair-rep minimum for each of your micro-promises. Print it or save it where you can reach it quickly, and use it within 24 hours of your next miss.

Lesson 6.3: Stopping the Spiral Before It Starts

The Repair Ritual handles a miss after it happens. This final lesson in Module 6 is about prevention: planning ahead for the moments you know are coming, and setting up an emergency protocol for the times you’ve already drifted for several days.

Plan for the predictable

Most misses are not surprises. You know the high-risk situations: travel, the end-of-quarter crunch, holidays, the week the kids are home, a bad night’s sleep. Psychologist Gabriele Oettingen’s research on *mental contrasting* suggests that thinking about both your goal and the obstacles in the way, and then making a plan for those obstacles, tends to support follow-through better than positive visualization alone. Her WOOP method (Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan) turns that into a simple routine.

Here's a version adapted for self-trust:

Step	Question	Example
Wish	What promise do I want to keep through this situation?	"Keep my morning walk going during next week's work trip."
Outcome	What will it mean if I do?	"I'll come home with my track record intact."
Obstacle	What, inside me or around me, is most likely to get in the way?	"Early meetings, hotel, no routine, I'll feel too tired."
Plan	If [obstacle], then I will [action].	"If I have an early meeting, then I'll do 5 minutes of walking around the hotel floor before breakfast."

The disruption version

For each of your micro-promises, write a **disruption version**: the smallest meaningful form of the promise that works in almost any circumstance.

Everyday promise	Disruption version
10-minute walk after lunch	2 minutes of stretching anywhere
One paragraph of writing at 7 a.m.	One sentence on my phone, any time
Read two pages before bed	Read one paragraph
Prep tomorrow's lunch	Put one piece of fruit in my bag

The disruption version isn't a cheat code. It's a pre-negotiated agreement that protects the most important thing: the unbroken habit of doing what you said. It's the micro-promise version of "the show must go on."

The early warning signs

Spirals rarely start with a dramatic collapse. They start with small signals. Learn yours. Common early warnings:

- Not looking at the tracker for a day or more
- Skipping the evening log "just this once"
- Saying "I'll catch up on the weekend"
- Feeling a small wince when you think about the course

- The critic getting louder, and you not using your cards

When you notice one of these, treat it like a check-engine light. You don't need to panic. You do need to pull over and look.

The Restart Protocol: when you've already drifted

Sometimes you'll miss several days before you catch it. Life happens. When that occurs, the Repair Ritual may feel too small. Use the Restart Protocol instead:

1. **Look at the tracker.** Yes, the empty boxes. Look for 30 seconds. Avoidance is what turns drift into a quiet quit.
2. **Name the gap neutrally.** "I've missed four days since Tuesday."
3. **Name the trigger.** Which of the four Ds started it?
4. **Pick one promise, not three.** Restart with the single easiest micro-promise, in its disruption version, today.
5. **Do the repair rep now.** Mark it R.
6. **Add the other promises back one at a time,** one every day or two, as each one sticks.
7. **Write one line in your log:** "Restarted on [date]." That line is part of your evidence file. It proves you come back.

The "never zero" principle

If you remember only one thing from this module, remember this: **aim to never have a zero day.** Even on the worst days, keep one promise, in its smallest form. One squat. One sentence. One glass of water, marked on the tracker. A tiny kept promise keeps the connection between "I said" and "I did" intact, and that connection is what you're building.

Module 6 checkpoint

By Day 30 you should have: your relapse map with your most common trigger identified, your personalized Repair Ritual one-pager, a WOOP plan for your next predictable disruption, a disruption version for each micro-promise, and the Restart Protocol saved for when you need it.

A sample WOOP for a holiday week

Imagine Ken, who has kept a daily 10-minute walk for three weeks and is heading to his in-laws' for five days.

- **Wish:** Keep the walk going all five days.
- **Outcome:** Come home with an unbroken record and a bit of time to himself each day.
- **Obstacle:** Packed schedule, feeling rude to leave, no routine.

- **Plan:** If the schedule is full, then he'll walk for five minutes before anyone else is up, and he'll tell his partner about the plan on the drive there.

Four sentences, written in advance, can protect a whole week.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 6.3: Spiral-Proofing Plan**. Write a WOOP plan for the next high-risk situation you can see coming in the next month. Write a disruption version for each of your micro-promises. List your personal early warning signs, and copy the Restart Protocol into the space provided, signed and dated, so it's ready the next time you drift.

Module 7: The Track Record

Days 31 to 35. You've built five weeks of evidence. In this final module you'll compile it into a permanent evidence file, learn to scale up to bigger commitments without breaking trust, and set up a maintenance rhythm for life after the course.

Lesson 7.1: Building Your Evidence File

For five weeks you've been generating evidence: tracker marks, log entries, repaired misses, kept decisions, critic loops you interrupted. Right now, that evidence is scattered across pages. Today you'll consolidate it into a single, permanent **evidence file** that you can return to whenever the critic says you can't be trusted.

Why consolidate?

Memory tends to favor the negative. Psychologists Roy Baumeister and colleagues summarized a large body of research in a 2001 paper titled "Bad Is Stronger Than Good," concluding that negative events and feedback generally have a stronger psychological impact than positive ones of similar size. That means five weeks of kept promises can fade from memory faster than a single bad day.

An evidence file counters that bias. It's a written, concrete, reviewable record. When the critic says "you never follow through," you don't have to argue from feelings. You can open the file.

What goes in the evidence file

Your evidence file has five sections. You'll build it from your tracker, your Daily Self-Trust Log, your decision log, and your worksheets.

1. The numbers. - Total micro-promises made and kept over the course (count your tracker) - Your overall keep rate - Your longest run of kept days - Number of repaired misses (R marks) - Your self-trust rating in Week 1 vs. Week 5 (average from your log)

2. The best evidence sentences. Go back through your log's daily "evidence" line and pick your ten strongest, most specific sentences. "Did my walk in the rain on Day 19 even though I really didn't want to." These are the heart of the file.

3. The comebacks. List every time you missed and came back. Include the date, the trigger, and how you repaired it. This section proves something the critic has always denied: you recover.

4. The critic, then and now. Write your critic’s three favorite lines from your Module 2 audit. Next to each, note how often you hear it now and how quickly you respond compared with Week 2. Include your best response card.

5. What I know about myself now. Five to ten short, true statements about how you make and keep promises. For example: - “I keep promises best when they’re anchored to something I already do.” - “Evenings are my weak spot; mornings are my strong spot.” - “I come back after misses, usually within a day.” - “I can make small decisions without asking anyone.”

Every statement must be backed by evidence you can point to. No affirmations, only conclusions from data.

Where to keep it

Keep the evidence file somewhere easy to reach: the back of your workbook, a notes app, a pinned document. Many people also keep a one-line summary on a card with their response cards, for example: *“35 days. 91 of 105 promises kept. 8 comebacks. I do what I say.”* The numbers will be your own.

How to use it

- **When the critic says you can’t be trusted:** Open the file. Read section 2 and 3.
- **Before a big new commitment:** Read section 5 to design it well.
- **During a rough patch:** Read the comebacks. You’ve been here before, and you came back.
- **Every month:** Add new evidence. The file is meant to keep growing.

Retaking the Start-Here Self-Assessment

On Day 35, retake the Start-Here Self-Assessment. Compare your scores with Day 1. Whatever the change, record it honestly in your evidence file, including any areas that didn’t shift much. Those tell you where to focus next.

A sample evidence file summary

Here’s how the “numbers” section might look for a hypothetical participant at the end of the course:

Measure	Result
Micro-promises made	75
Micro-promises kept (including repaired)	66

Measure	Result
Keep rate	88%
Longest run	11 days
Repaired misses (R)	5
Average self-trust rating, Week 1	3.8
Average self-trust rating, Week 5	6.2

Your numbers will be your own, and they may be higher or lower. What matters is that they're real. A 70% keep rate you actually earned is far stronger evidence than a perfect score you didn't.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 7.1: My Evidence File**. Fill in all five sections: the numbers from your tracker and log, your ten best evidence sentences, your comebacks, your critic then-and-now comparison, and your "What I know about myself now" statements. Write a one-line summary for your card. Save or store the file where you'll be able to find it in six months.

Lesson 7.2: Scaling Up to Bigger Commitments

Micro-promises were never meant to be the final destination. They were the foundation. Now that you have a track record, you can start making larger commitments, carefully enough that you don't slide back into the broken-promise pile.

Why scaling usually goes wrong

After a few good weeks, many people feel a surge of confidence and jump straight to a major commitment: "I've kept my 10-minute walk for a month, so now I'll train for a half-marathon." Sometimes that works. Often, it reproduces the exact pattern the course started with: a promise sized for your best day, broken on your worst, followed by the critic's "I told you so."

The lesson from five weeks of data is that *keeping promises is a skill*, and skills scale gradually. You wouldn't go from lifting 10 pounds to 100 in one step.

The Scale-Up Ladder

Scale using a three-rung ladder. Only move up a rung when the one below is stable.

Rung	What it is	When you're ready for it	Example
1. Grow a micro-promise	Increase an existing promise by 20 to 50%	90%+ keep rate for two weeks, regularly in the bonus zone	10-minute walk becomes 15-minute walk
2. Add a project promise	A multi-week commitment with a clear end date, built from weekly micro-promises	All three micro-promises stable for three to four weeks	"Finish the first draft of the chapter in six weeks: 20 minutes, four mornings a week"
3. Take on a stretch commitment	A larger goal, broken into milestones, each with its own micro-promises	At least one project promise completed	"Run a 5K in three months" or "Launch the side business website this quarter"

Designing a bigger promise that holds

Use everything you've learned. Every bigger commitment should include:

1. **A clear finish line.** Not "get fit," but "run a 5K on [date]."
2. **Weekly micro-promises underneath it.** The big goal lives on paper; the micro-promises are what you actually do.
3. **A minimum that counts** for each weekly action.
4. **A disruption version** for each action (Module 6).
5. **A WOOP plan** for the most likely obstacle.
6. **A scheduled review** every one to two weeks, with the coach's questions.
7. **A release clause.** Decide in advance under what conditions you'd renegotiate or release it. "If I'm injured, I'll renegotiate the date." This way, changing course later is a kept promise, not a broken one.

The release clause is one of the most powerful tools in this course. Many old broken promises became "broken" because you had no honest way to change them when circumstances changed. With a release clause, adjusting is part of the agreement.

The capacity check

Before committing to anything bigger, check your capacity honestly:

- How many active commitments am I carrying right now (to myself and others)?
- What will I stop or reduce to make room for this?
- Is this the right season of my life for it?

- Is this commitment genuinely mine, or am I trying to impress someone (including my critic)?

If you can't name what you'll stop or reduce, the new commitment probably doesn't have room yet. That's a legitimate, self-trusting answer: "Not now. I'll revisit on [date]."

Revisit your parked promises

Remember the items from Module 1 that you parked for Module 7? Now's the time to look at them again. For each one, ask:

- Does this still matter to me?
- Where does it fit on the Scale-Up Ladder?
- Do I have capacity for it now?

Choose **at most one** to bring back, designed with the seven elements above. The rest can stay parked with a review date, or be released.

A worked example: from micro to project

Imagine Leah, whose micro-promise has been "write one sentence of my newsletter at 8 a.m." She's kept it 95% of the time for three weeks and often writes a full paragraph. She's ready for Rung 2.

- **Finish line:** Publish the first issue of the newsletter by the last Friday of next month.
- **Weekly micro-promises:** 20 minutes of writing at 8 a.m., four days a week; one 15-minute editing session on Saturday.
- **Minimum:** 5 minutes of writing on weekday mornings.
- **Disruption version:** one sentence on her phone.
- **WOOP:** If a work deadline takes over a week, she'll drop to the minimum rather than skipping.
- **Review:** Every Sunday, 10 minutes.
- **Release clause:** If a major family event comes up, she'll move the publish date by two weeks, and that counts as a kept promise.

Every element comes directly from a skill you've already practiced.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 7.2: The Scale-Up Plan**. Decide which rung of the Scale-Up Ladder you're ready for, and design one bigger commitment using the seven-element template, including its release clause. Run the capacity check. Review your parked items from Worksheet 1.3 and choose at most one to bring back.

Lesson 7.3: Self-Trust for Life: The Maintenance System

You've reached the final lesson. Over 35 days you've cleared the old debt, installed a protocol for the critic, built a daily promise system, practiced honest self-review, developed a coaching voice, learned to repair misses, and compiled a record. The question now is: how do you keep all of this going once the course structure is gone?

What to keep, what to lighten

You don't need to keep every practice at full intensity forever. Here's a sustainable maintenance version:

Practice	During the course	Ongoing maintenance
Micro-promises	3 daily	Keep 2 to 3 daily; grow or swap them deliberately
Micro-Promise Tracker	Daily	Daily (it takes seconds)
Daily Self-Trust Log	Full entry nightly	One-line evidence entry nightly; full entry once a week
K.E.P.T. mirror round	Nightly	Nightly short version, or 3 to 4 times a week
Morning check-in	Daily	Daily on workdays, or when energy is low
N.A.M.E. + response cards	As needed	As needed; refresh your cards every few months
Repair Ritual	After every miss	After every miss (this one stays)
Weekly review	Every 7 days	Every week, 10 minutes
Evidence file	Built on Day 31 to 35	Add to it monthly

The weekly self-leadership meeting

The single most important habit to keep is the weekly review. Think of it as a standing 10-minute meeting with yourself. Put it on your calendar now, at a fixed time. The agenda:

1. **Numbers:** Promises made and kept this week. Self-trust rating.
2. **Best evidence:** One sentence for the evidence file.
3. **Misses and repairs:** What happened, what adjusted.
4. **Critic check:** Any new lines? Any old ones back? Do you need a new response card?

5. **Next week:** Any promise to grow, shrink, swap, or release?

The monthly and quarterly check

- **Monthly (20 minutes):** Update the evidence file. Re-read your “What I know about myself now” statements and add any new ones.
- **Quarterly (45 minutes):** Retake the Start-Here Self-Assessment. Run a mini Broken-Promise Inventory: are any new open loops accumulating? Release, renegotiate, or recommit them. Decide whether you’re ready for the next rung of the Scale-Up Ladder.

Signs you need to go back to basics

Everyone slides sometimes. If you notice these, return to Module 3 and restart with three micro-promises and a daily log for two weeks:

- Your weekly keep rate drops below 70% for two weeks in a row
- You’ve stopped tracking entirely
- The critic’s loops are lasting hours again
- You’re making big promises and breaking them

Going back to basics isn’t starting over. Your evidence file still exists. You’re just running the proven system again.

When to get more support

Self-help tools like these work best alongside real-world support. Consider talking with a licensed therapist or counselor if you notice persistent low mood, anxiety that interferes with daily life, self-criticism that feels overwhelming no matter what you try, or patterns that seem connected to past trauma. Needing more support is not a failure of self-trust; choosing it is an act of self-leadership.

Your self-trust agreement

The final step is to write a short agreement with yourself, a document that captures how you’ll keep this going. It includes your ongoing micro-promises, your weekly review time, your repair commitment, and one sentence about the kind of relationship you intend to have with yourself.

The long view

Trust between people isn’t built in a week, and it isn’t fixed forever once it’s built. It’s maintained through ongoing small actions. Your self-trust works the same way. Some

months will be strong. Some will slip. What matters over the long run is that you have a system to notice, repair, and keep going, and that system is now yours.

Action Step

Complete **Worksheet 7.3: My Maintenance System and Self-Trust Agreement**. Choose your maintenance version of each practice, schedule your weekly review, monthly update, and first quarterly check in your calendar, list your personal “back to basics” signals, and write and sign your self-trust agreement. Then turn to the final page of the workbook, the 30/60/90-Day Plan, and complete it.

Closing: Five Weeks of Kept Promises

You started this course with a pile of broken promises, a critic on loop, and a forecast that said “don’t believe you.” Look at what you’ve done since.

You mapped the old debt and closed it out. You studied your critic, gave it a name, and built a protocol to interrupt it. You made small promises and kept them, visibly, day after day. You looked yourself in the eye and reported the truth. You built a coach’s voice and started trusting your own decisions again. You broke promises, because everyone does, and you came back. And now you have a written record of all of it.

That record is what self-trust has always been. Not a feeling that arrives one morning, but the accumulated answer to the question, “When I say I’ll do something, do I?” Your answer to that question is now based on evidence you can open and read.

What’s realistic from here

Be honest with yourself about where you are. Some people finish these 35 days with a clearly different relationship to their own word. Others see a smaller shift and a lot of useful data about what to adjust. Both are real progress. The critic won’t have vanished, and it doesn’t need to. What matters is that it’s no longer the only voice in the room, and no longer the one in charge.

Your next steps

1. **Complete your 30/60/90-Day Plan** on the final page of the workbook.
2. **Put your weekly self-leadership meeting on the calendar** for the next twelve weeks.
3. **Keep your Repair Ritual one-pager and response cards** somewhere you’ll find them.
4. **Add to your evidence file** once a month.
5. **Revisit this course whenever you need it.** Re-reading Module 3 or Module 6 after a hard stretch is not starting over. It’s maintenance.

One last micro-promise

Before you close this page, make one more small promise, something you’ll do within the next 24 hours that takes under five minutes. Write it down. Then keep it, and mark it on your tracker.

That’s how it started. That’s how it continues. One small promise, kept.

Thank you for doing this work. You showed up for yourself for 35 days. That’s the evidence.

