

# SENSORY REACTIVITY SPECTRUM

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Heightened sensitivity to noise, movement, and visual density can overload cognitive capacity when exposure is continuous and unbuffered.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Make camera-optional participation the default in longer meetings so visual exposure can be regulated without social penalty.
- Provide quiet or low-traffic zones for focus-critical work to reduce cumulative sensory load.
- Avoid mandatory open-office presence for deep work so concentration is supported by environment rather than endurance.
- Normalize sensory regulation tools such as headphones, tinted screens, or fidgets as performance supports rather than exceptions.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - EXPOSURE MODULATION

1

Non-essential sensory input is reduced at the outset so the nervous system has less information to process simultaneously. This lowers baseline arousal before cognitive demand increases.

2

A stable sensory bubble is created using positioning, tools, or environmental adjustments. Unpredictable input is intentionally limited. This stabilizes attention and emotional regulation.

3

A brief exit is taken before overload peaks, followed by a regulated return. Re-entry happens once baseline stability is restored. This prevents shutdown rather than reacting to it.



When a brain shuts down in noise and chaos, it is not weak – it is telling the truth about the environment faster than everyone else.

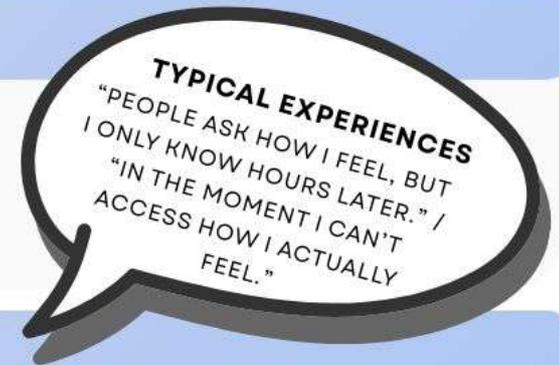


# EMOTIONAL PROCESSING TEMPO

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Emotional insight often arrives after the moment, especially under pressure, making real-time responses less accurate.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Separate emotional check-ins from decision-making so clarity is not forced before it has formed.
- Offer follow-up channels that allow emotional responses to arrive after initial discussions.
- Normalize delayed replies as a valid processing style rather than disengagement.
- Avoid requiring immediate emotional reactions after conflict or difficult feedback.
- Schedule emotional conversations with intentional pause space built into the process.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - SLOW THE MOMENT

1

The absence of immediate clarity is acknowledged internally or aloud. Emotional processing is recognized as ongoing rather than incomplete. This removes pressure to perform instant insight.

2

A later moment is explicitly agreed upon for revisiting the topic. Emotional signals are allowed to surface without interruption. This protects accuracy over speed.

3

The conversation is resumed once emotional processing has settled. Responses are more precise and grounded. Distortion caused by urgency is reduced.



Some people don't feel less – they feel later. If you rush their timing, you get distortion.



# EMOTIONAL ABSORPTION

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Strong empathic resonance can blur emotional boundaries and create exhaustion even without active engagement.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Make emotional responsibility explicit so individuals are not implicitly expected to carry group regulation.
- Reduce constant co-regulation demands that require continuous emotional attunement.
- Limit exposure to highly emotional group settings where possible to prevent cumulative drain.
- Use written or asynchronous formats to reduce emotional intensity during collaboration.
- Add deliberate decompression windows after emotionally dense interactions.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - LIGHT BOUNDARIES

**1**

Emotional signals are internally distinguished between what belongs to the self and what does not. This creates an initial boundary without withdrawal. Awareness precedes regulation.

**2**

Exposure time in emotionally intense spaces is intentionally reduced. Duration is treated as a regulatory variable. This limits cumulative drain.

**3**

Absorbed emotion is released through writing, movement, or quiet reflection. Emotional residue is cleared deliberately. Capacity is restored before re-engagement.



Empathy is not carrying everyone else's feelings; it is knowing which ones are yours.



# RECOVERY TIME SENSITIVITY

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Some nervous systems require extended time to return to baseline after activation, especially following social or emotional load.

**TYPICAL EXPERIENCES**  
"ONE HARD MEETING CAN COST ME THE REST OF THE DAY." / "I NEED MORE TIME TO RESET THAN PEOPLE ASSUME."

### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Schedule explicit recovery buffers after emotionally or socially intense interactions so regulation can reset.
- Avoid stacking high-stakes or high-demand conversations without breaks to prevent cumulative overload.
- Allow lighter or lower-demand tasks following intense engagement to support gradual re-entry.
- Treat recovery as an essential component of sustainable performance rather than optional downtime.
- Factor regulation and recovery time into planning and workload expectations so capacity is realistically supported.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - BUFFER THEN LOAD

**1**

Recovery time is protected immediately after emotionally or socially intense activity. This buffer is treated as essential rather than optional. Regulation begins before depletion deepens.

**2**

The buffer is used for low-demand regulation rather than new input. Cognitive load is intentionally minimized. This allows the nervous system to settle.

**3**

More demanding work resumes only once baseline has returned. Capacity is verified rather than assumed. Sustainability is preserved.



Recovery is not a luxury after the work; it is part of the work.

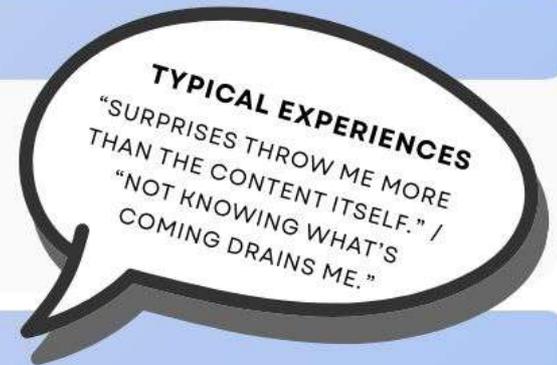


# PREDICTIVE SENSORY ANTICIPATION

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Knowing what sensory and emotional load to expect reduces pre-activation stress and stabilizes regulation.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Share agendas, formats, and participation expectations in advance so individuals can prepare cognitively and regulate their energy.
- Signal interaction intensity and social demand ahead of time to reduce anticipatory stress and allow realistic capacity planning.
- Avoid last-minute changes that disrupt regulatory preparation and force unnecessary cognitive or emotional recalibration.
- Offer participation choices that allow adjustment to capacity, such as camera use, speaking roles, or contribution format.
- Provide previews of location, setup, or sensory conditions where relevant.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - PREVIEW THE LOAD

**1**

Basic information about setting, format, and duration is gathered or shared in advance. Unknowns are reduced intentionally. Anticipatory stress decreases.

**2**

Likely sensory or emotional demands are identified ahead of time. Supports or adjustments are selected proactively. Regulation becomes predictive rather than reactive.

**3**

Participation is renegotiated if conditions change unexpectedly. Adaptation replaces forced endurance. Safety is maintained.



Predictability is not control; it is how safety is created for some nervous systems.

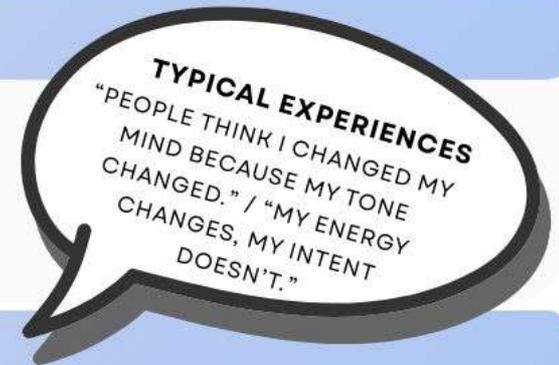


# AFFECTIVE FLUIDITY

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Emotional tone may shift with context, energy, and safety while commitment and intent remain stable.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Separate emotional tone from commitment when evaluating reliability or engagement, recognizing that affect does not reliably signal intent or follow-through.
- Prioritize clarity, consistency, and follow-through over visible enthusiasm when assessing contribution or alignment.
- Avoid enforcing forced positivity norms, as they can distort communication and penalize neutral or regulated expression.
- Use written recaps to stabilize shared understanding and reduce interpretation.
- Invite explicit statements of commitment so expectations are clear and misinterpretation is minimized.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - REFRAME THE SIGNAL

1

Tone shifts are named neutrally without apology or over-explanation. Contextual factors are acknowledged. Meaning is stabilized.

2

Commitment is anchored through actions, decisions, or deliverables. Reliability is demonstrated behaviorally. Misinterpretation is reduced.

3

Focus is redirected to outcomes, next steps, and agreements. Emotional variance is decoupled from trust. Alignment is restored.



Tone changes reflect context, not inconsistency.



# INTEROCEPTIVE CLARITY

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Internal body signals are often detected late, delaying boundary-setting and increasing overload risk.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Build brief, regular body check-ins into the workday so internal signals are noticed earlier rather than only at the point of depletion.
- Allow explicit naming of capacity changes without penalty to support timely boundary-setting and reduce masking pressure.
- Avoid punishing boundaries that are communicated late, recognizing that bodily awareness may lag behind rising strain.
- Normalize posture shifts, camera changes, or movement as legitimate regulation tools rather than signs of disengagement.
- Offer simple grounding practices as part of team routines so regulation support.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - TINY CHECK-INS

**1**

Brief pauses are introduced at natural transitions between tasks or meetings. Attention is turned inward momentarily. Signals are given space to register.

**2**

A small number of body cues such as breath, tension, or energy are scanned. Detection happens before escalation. Boundaries become clearer.

**3**

The next block is adjusted proactively. Load is reduced before collapse. Regulation is maintained.



Bodies usually know long before calendars do.



# FEEDBACK RESPONSE ACTIVATION

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Feedback can trigger strong nervous system activation that blocks comprehension until regulation is restored.



**TYPICAL EXPERIENCES**  
"AFTER THE FIRST CRITICAL POINT I CAN'T HEAR THE REST." / "I SHUT DOWN BEFORE I CAN UNDERSTAND."

### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Provide written feedback first so information can be processed without immediate activation.
- Separate feedback delivery from performance ratings to reduce threat response.
- Allow time between feedback and discussion so regulation can return.
- Focus feedback on observable behavior rather than inferred intent.
- Invite follow-up conversations once clarity is available.
- Try out SBI- Care Feedback framework: Situation → Behavior → Impact → Clarify → Acknowledge → Recommend → Encourage Growth

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - TWO-ROUND FEEDBACK

**1**

Feedback is received initially without any requirement to respond or defend. The nervous system is allowed to react privately. Information is taken in without pressure.

**2**

Time is intentionally given for emotional activation to settle before discussion occurs. Regulation is prioritized over resolution. Comprehension improves as arousal decreases.

**3**

A second conversation is held to clarify meaning and select next steps. Insight becomes accessible once regulation allows presence. Learning stabilizes.



Feedback lands when regulation allows presence.



# EXPRESSIVE NEUTRALITY

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Inner engagement and commitment may not be visible externally, leading to misinterpretation of motivation or care.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Decouple engagement from visible expressiveness when evaluating contribution.
- Ask directly about understanding or alignment instead of inferring from tone or affect.
- Offer alternative contribution channels beyond verbal performance.
- Highlight output quality and follow-through over enthusiasm signals.
- Avoid rewarding performative expressiveness as a proxy for commitment.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - DON'T GUESS

**1**

Engagement is checked explicitly through direct questions rather than inferred from expression. Assumptions are paused deliberately. Clarity is prioritized over impression.

**2**

Content understanding is assessed through questions, insights, or written input. Engagement becomes visible through substance rather than affect. Misreads decrease.

**3**

Contribution is acknowledged explicitly based on output and reliability. Trust is anchored in evidence. Misinterpretation is reduced.



Quiet faces often hide the loudest thinking.



# SENSORY-EMOTION COUPLING

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Emotional state is tightly linked to sensory conditions, which can amplify mood shifts under strain.

**TYPICAL EXPERIENCES**  
"IN LOUD ROOMS I FEEL IRRITABLE AND SLOW." / "THE SPACE CHANGES HOW I FEEL."

### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Treat environment as part of performance design rather than background context.
- Allow personal sensory adjustments without stigma, recognizing them as legitimate regulation strategies rather than preferences or disengagement.
- Move key conversations to lower-stimulation settings where possible so attention and processing capacity are supported.
- Adjust environmental factors before judging attitude, motivation, or intent, treating context as a performance variable.
- Normalize requests to change conditions as proactive regulation.
- Normalize the use of regulation tools (e.g., noise-canceling headphones).

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - FIX THE ROOM FIRST

1

One environmental factor is identified as a potential driver of emotional strain. Attention is shifted from self-judgment to context assessment. Responsibility is reframed.

2

A concrete adjustment is made to reduce sensory load, such as lowering noise or changing location. The nervous system is given immediate relief. Emotional intensity softens.

3

Mood or task is revisited once conditions stabilize. Interpretation becomes clearer. Performance recovers.



Many attitudes are just architecture.



# ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL URGE

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Stable structures conserve cognitive bandwidth, while constant change increases sensory and emotional load.

**TYPICAL EXPERIENCES**  
“WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGES AT ONCE I CAN'T THINK.” / “INSTABILITY DRAINS MY CAPACITY.”

### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Keep structural anchors stable whenever possible during periods of change so cognitive orientation and emotional safety are preserved.
- Communicate changes early and with clear rationale to reduce uncertainty and prevent unnecessary stress responses.
- Phase rollouts to avoid simultaneous disruption across domains and allow regulation and learning to occur incrementally.
- Involve affected individuals in planning adjustments so changes reflect lived workflow realities rather than abstract redesign.
- Avoid cosmetic reorganizations that increase noise and complexity.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – ANCHOR AND UPDATE

1

Core elements that will remain stable are clarified explicitly. Predictability is reinforced before change is introduced. Safety increases.

2

Changes are explained with context and sequencing. Impact is paced intentionally. Cognitive load is managed.

3

Transitions are monitored and adjusted as needed. Stabilization is prioritized before further change. Capacity is protected.



Stability supports thinking.



# RELATIONAL REJECTION SENSITIVITY

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Ambiguous social signals can trigger rapid emotional escalation and threat interpretation.

**TYPICAL EXPERIENCES**  
"SILENCE MAKES ME ASSUME I DID SOMETHING WRONG." / "I READ DANGER INTO PAUSES."

### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Use explicit wording rather than relying on implied meaning so expectations and intent are clear without requiring inference.
- Normalize clarification requests without penalty to prevent misunderstanding from being treated as incompetence.
- Build response-latency norms so silence is understood as processing time rather than disengagement or avoidance.
- Provide context for delays to reduce misinterpretation and relational tension.
- Separate task feedback from relational signals deliberately so performance discussions do not trigger unintended threat responses.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - 10-SECOND RESET

1

Internal threat signals are noticed before reacting. Interpretation is paused intentionally. Space is created.

2

A brief pause is taken before responding or defending. Regulation is restored sufficiently to think clearly. Escalation is interrupted.

3

Meaning is clarified directly through explicit communication. Assumptions are replaced with information. Safety is repaired.



Safety repairs faster than feedback.

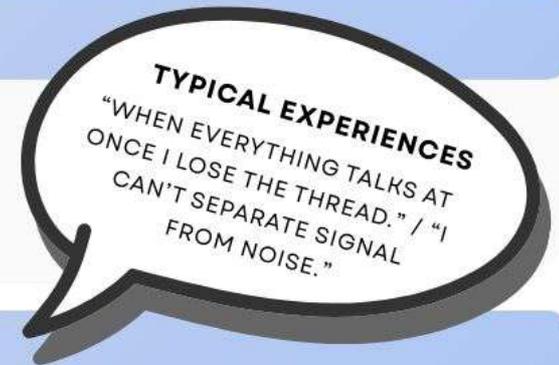


# INFO-NOISE CONFUSION

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Sensory input and information streams merge under load, reducing clarity before facts are processed.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Separate information delivery from discussion time so cognitive processing can occur before evaluation or response is expected.
- Reduce parallel communication channels during complex topics to prevent attention from fragmenting across competing inputs.
- Facilitate turn-taking to avoid overlap and ensure contributions are heard.
- Summarize decisions and key points explicitly so shared understanding does not rely on memory or inference.
- Allow brief exits or pauses when overload rises to support regulation before clarity collapses.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - SIGNAL OVER NOISE

**1**

Background sensory and informational input is reduced intentionally. Attention is narrowed to essential signals. Cognitive bandwidth is freed.

**2**

Key messages are highlighted and repeated clearly. Redundancy supports clarity rather than noise. Understanding stabilizes.

**3**

Focus returns to priorities, decisions, and next steps. Complexity is reduced. Execution improves.



Precision thinkers suffer in loud systems.



# EMOTIONAL MASKING EXHAUSTION

## DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

### FRICITION

Sustained emotional masking creates invisible fatigue and depletes regulatory capacity over time.



### DESIGN RESPONSES

- Normalize honest state reporting without penalty so capacity can be named.
- Reduce forced positivity or constant emotional performance norms that increase masking and invisible labor.
- Separate evaluation from emotional check-ins so disclosure does not carry performance consequences.
- Offer simple state scales instead of narrative disclosure to lower the effort and risk of emotional reporting.
- Create safe mask-off spaces or moments where regulation can occur.

### 3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – DROP THE MASK SAFELY

**1**

Reduced capacity is named simply and neutrally. No justification or performance is required. Energy is conserved.

**2**

Performance output is lowered slightly to free regulatory resources. Capacity is redirected toward stabilization. Sustainability improves.

**3**

Freed energy is used for real regulation rather than impression management. Recovery becomes possible. Long-term capacity is protected.



Looking fine can be unpaid emotional labour.

