

SENSORY REACTIVITY SPECTRUM

DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

FRICTION

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"AFTER A DAY OF CAMERA-ON MEETINGS MY BRAIN JUST STOPS WORKING." / "NOISE AND VISUAL MOVEMENT DRAIN ME FASTER THAN THE TASK ITSELF."

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

FRICTION ⚠️

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"PEOPLE ASK HOW I FEEL, BUT
I ONLY KNOW HOURS LATER." /
"IN THE MOMENT I CAN'T
ACCESS HOW I ACTUALLY
FEEL."

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

FRICTION

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I LEAVE MEETINGS FEELING
EVERYTHING EVERYONE FELT,"
/ "EVEN LISTENING DRAINS ME
EMOTIONALLY,"

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.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"SURPRISES THROW ME MORE
THAN THE CONTENT ITSELF." /
"NOT KNOWING WHAT'S
COMING DRAINS ME."

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

FRICTION

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"PEOPLE THINK I CHANGED MY MIND BECAUSE MY TONE CHANGED." / "MY ENERGY CHANGES, MY INTENT DOESN'T."

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.



BODY SIGNAL CLARITY

DOMAIN 1: SENSORY & EMOTIONAL PROCESSING

FRICTION

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I ONLY REALIZE I'M DONE
WHEN I CRASH." / "MY BODY
WARNS ME AFTER IT'S
ALREADY TOO MUCH."

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

FRICTION

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"PEOPLE THINK I DON'T CARE
BECAUSE I'M NOT ANIMATED,"
/ "MY FACE DOESN'T SHOW
HOW MUCH I'M THINKING"

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

FRICTION

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

FRICTION ⚠

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

FRICTION

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

FRICTION

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"WHEN EVERYTHING TALKS AT
ONCE I LOSE THE THREAD." / "I
CAN'T SEPARATE SIGNAL
FROM NOISE."

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

FRICTION

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

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"PEOPLE THINK I'M FINE, BUT
IT COSTS ME EVERYTHING." /
"LOOKING OKAY IS
EXHAUSTING."

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.



ATTENTION MODULATION

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Attention capacity fluctuates across contexts and task types rather than remaining stable, which leads to uneven performance when environments assume constant focus.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I CAN FOCUS DEEPLY ON ANALYSIS BUT MY ATTENTION DROPS IN LONG MEETINGS." / "MY FOCUS DEPENDS ON THE SITUATION, NOT EFFORT."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Match task types deliberately to individual attention profiles so focus is supported by fit rather than effort.
- Reduce competing sensory and informational input during focus-critical work phases.
- Structure meetings with clear agendas and limited scope to prevent attentional drift.
- Allow planned attention resets between cognitively different tasks.
- Treat attention as a condition-dependent resource rather than character trait.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – ATTENTION STABILIZATION

1

At the beginning of a work phase, the primary task or guiding question is explicitly named. Competing priorities are intentionally parked to prevent attentional splitting. This creates a clear cognitive anchor.

2

During the work phase, parallel input such as notifications or side conversations is intentionally reduced. The environment is actively shaped to support sustained focus.

3

When attention begins to fade, a brief pause is used to reset orientation. The same task is then resumed rather than switching context. This preserves cognitive continuity.



Attention follows conditions, not character.



HYPERFOCUS TENDENCY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Prolonged narrow focus can produce high output while reducing awareness of time, physical needs, and competing responsibilities.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I LOSE HOURS WHEN I GET INTO SOMETHING I LIKE." / "I FORGET TIME AND MY BODY WHEN I'M FOCUSED."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Define explicit time boundaries around deep focus periods to prevent unintentional overextension.
- Schedule clear stopping points in advance so exit does not rely on internal time awareness.
- Pair hyperfocus windows with planned recovery to restore baseline capacity.
- Evaluate outcomes rather than hours to avoid reinforcing overwork.
- Protect calendars from critical meetings immediately after hyperfocus sessions.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – FOCUS CONTAINMENT

1

Before focused work begins, a clear start and end frame is defined. The focus window is treated as intentionally contained. This prevents attention from expanding without limits.

2

During the focus period, an external signal such as a timer or calendar alert is used. Attention is interrupted reliably without relying on internal time perception. Focus remains bounded.

3

At the end of the session, progress and next steps are documented deliberately. Cognitive closure is created before recovery begins. This reduces lingering mental load.



Focus becomes sustainable when it has borders.



DISTRACTION SENSITIVITY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Sensitivity to external input increases context switching and fragments progress, particularly in notification-heavy environments.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"EVERY NOTIFICATION PULLS ME OUT OF THE TASK." / "I CAN'T STAY WITH ONE THING WHEN ALERTS KEEP COMING."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Reduce notification-driven workflows so attention is not constantly redirected by external demands, allowing sustained focus to stabilize.
- Establish explicit single-task blocks instead of encouraging parallel work, recognizing that depth requires protected time.
- Simplify digital and physical workspaces to lower visual and informational noise that fragments attention.
- Set team norms that discourage multitasking as a default expectation, especially during focus-critical work phases.
- Clarify stimulus-control practices so focus protection is socially supported rather than individually negotiated.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - STIMULUS REDUCTION

1

At the start of a task, incoming stimuli such as notifications or alerts are intentionally reduced. The focus environment is prepared before work begins. This protects initial attention.

2

During the task, only materials directly related to the objective remain visible. Unrelated inputs are removed or deferred. This preserves cognitive continuity.

3

When distracting thoughts arise, they are captured externally rather than acted upon. The task remains uninterrupted. This prevents internal switching.



Distraction reflects load, not willpower.



PROCESSING SPEED VARIABILITY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Processing and response speed vary with cognitive load and stress, making speed an unreliable indicator of understanding.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"WHEN I'M RUSHED I'M LESS
ACCURATE AND CLEAR." / "I
NEED TIME TO PROCESS
PROPERLY."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Allow response latency for complex or high-stakes topics to support accuracy and reduce premature conclusions.
- Separate information intake from response expectations to lower pressure-based errors and cognitive overload.
- Provide written pre-reads so processing can begin before discussion rather than under time constraints.
- Confirm shared understanding explicitly before decisions are finalized to prevent downstream misalignment.
- Avoid rewarding pace when it compromises clarity, accuracy, or decision quality.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - PACE DECOUPLING

1

When information is presented, no immediate response is expected. Time pressure is intentionally removed from the processing phase. This allows understanding to form fully.

2

Cognitive processing is allowed to continue asynchronously or offline. Lower-stress contexts are used to refine clarity. This reduces error risk.

3

A response is offered once the core point has cohered internally. Communication prioritizes clarity over speed. This protects decision quality.



Speed is a poor proxy for insight.



COGNITIVE TRANSITION AGILITY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Switching between cognitive modes carries a high energetic cost that accumulates across fragmented schedules.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"ONE MEETING IN THE MIDDLE
OF DEEP WORK RUINS MY
MOMENTUM." / "SWITCHING
TASKS EXHAUSTS ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Batch tasks by cognitive mode so similar demands are grouped together and switching costs are reduced.
- Reduce forced context switching by protecting uninterrupted work blocks from mid-task interruptions.
- Add intentional transition buffers between cognitively different activities to allow cognitive reorientation.
- Signal mode changes clearly so attention can reset and expectations remain aligned.
- Treat transitions as legitimate work time rather than invisible overhead.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - TRANSITION BUFFERING

1

Before switching tasks, the previous activity is intentionally closed. A short written note captures the stopping point. This prevents open cognitive loops.

2

A brief reset through movement or breathing follows the closure. The nervous system disengages from the prior mode. This reduces carryover strain.

3

The new task or thinking mode is explicitly named. Attention reorganizes around a clear frame. This supports efficient re-entry.



Every switch has a cost.



TEMPORAL ORIENTATION

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Individuals differ in their natural time-horizon focus, which can clash with standardized planning expectations.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"LONG-TERM PLANNING
EXHAUSTS ME, I NEED NEAR-
TERM ANCHORS." / "BIG
TIMELINES FEEL ABSTRACT."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Clarify time-horizon expectations explicitly rather than assuming a shared temporal orientation.
- Align tasks with individual temporal strengths where possible so engagement is supported by fit rather than strain.
- Translate long-term goals into near-term anchors that make progress concrete and cognitively accessible.
- Separate vision-setting from execution sessions so strategic thinking does not interfere with delivery.
- Avoid penalizing differences in temporal orientation, recognizing them as variation rather than deficiency.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – TIME ALIGNMENT

1

At the outset of a task, its true time horizon is identified. Expectations are aligned explicitly. This prevents hidden mismatch.

2

Within that horizon, concrete anchors are defined. Progress becomes visible and less abstract. This supports sustained engagement.

3

Tasks and communication are shaped to match the temporal focus. Cognitive strain is reduced. Sustainability increases.



Brains keep time differently.



TIME ESTIMATION ACCURACY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICITION

Over- or underestimation of task duration destabilizes planning despite strong effort and intent.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I WAS SURE THIS WOULD
TAKE AN HOUR." / "MY
ESTIMATES ARE ALWAYS OFF."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Use historical time data to ground estimates in evidence rather than intuition or optimism.
- Break tasks into smaller, clearly defined units to improve estimation accuracy.
- Add explicit buffers to absorb uncertainty without cascading pressure.
- Review estimated versus actual durations regularly to identify patterns and improve calibration.
- Treat estimation as an ongoing calibration process rather than a judgment of competence.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – TIME CALIBRATION

1

Before committing, a time estimate is explicitly stated and recorded. The estimate becomes observable. This enables learning.

2

A realistic buffer is added deliberately. Downstream pressure is reduced. Planning becomes more resilient.

3

After completion, estimated and actual durations are compared. Patterns are reviewed. Accuracy improves over time.



Estimation errors are data, not flaws.



MENTAL FATIGUE THRESHOLD

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Performance can collapse suddenly after sustained effort, making push-through norms counterproductive.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"AFTER A CERTAIN POINT
EVERYTHING TAKES TWICE AS
LONG." / "I HIT A WALL
SUDDENLY."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Define maximum sustainable focus durations rather than relying on endurance or push-through norms.
- Schedule recovery before depletion occurs so regulation is proactive rather than reactive.
- Normalize stopping work when early fatigue signals appear, treating them as data rather than failure.
- Avoid long, unbroken cognitive blocks that increase depletion and error risk.
- Alternate high- and low-load tasks intentionally to distribute cognitive effort and protect capacity.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – FATIGUE PROTECTION

1

Early signals such as slowing, irritation, or minor errors are intentionally observed. Fatigue is recognized before collapse. This enables proactive regulation.

2

Work is paused even if tasks remain unfinished. Deeper depletion is prevented. Capacity is preserved.

3

Recovery is prioritized through rest, movement, or low-demand activity. Complex work resumes only after restoration. This protects long-term performance.



Brains are not endless batteries.



WORKING MEMORY FLUIDITY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Holding multiple elements in mind becomes unreliable under load, increasing error risk.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I LOSE TRACK WHEN TOO MUCH IS SAID VERBALLY." / "I CAN'T HOLD ALL STEPS IN MY HEAD."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Externalize information consistently so memory is not overloaded during execution.
- Reduce reliance on memory-dependent task execution by embedding visible cues and artifacts.
- Provide written summaries after discussions to stabilize shared understanding.
- Avoid multi-step verbal instructions without visual support, especially under cognitive load.
- Chunk information deliberately so each unit remains processable and retrievable.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – LOAD EXTERNALIZATION

1

Key items are written down immediately. Internal memory load is reduced. Attention is freed.

2

Information is stored in one trusted, visible system. Retrieval becomes reliable. Cognitive strain decreases.

3

Work proceeds directly from the external system. Internal recall is no longer required. Error risk is reduced.



Writing is respect for the brain.



THOUGHT PATTERN DENSITY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Multiple parallel thought streams reduce clarity and slow decision-making under pressure.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"EVERYTHING FEELS URGENT
AT ONCE." / "MY HEAD FEELS
CROWDED."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Limit concurrent tasks so attention is not split across competing priorities.
- Address one decision at a time to reduce cognitive crowding and internal competition.
- Separate ideation from decision sessions so idea generation does not overload choice-making.
- Externalize non-urgent threads to create cognitive space without losing them.
- Timebox cognitive thinning intentionally so complexity is reduced within a defined frame.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – COGNITIVE THINNING

1

One thought or decision is intentionally selected as the current focus. Competing threads are deprioritized temporarily. This restores clarity.

2

Remaining thoughts are organized externally. They feel contained rather than urgent. Cognitive pressure decreases.

3

Action is taken on the selected item. Only then does focus shift. Momentum is preserved.



Too many open tabs hide priorities.



COGNITIVE PACING PREFERENCE

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Mismatch between natural thinking pace and imposed tempo reduces contribution quality.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"ASYNCHRONOUS WORK FITS ME BETTER." / "FAST PACE LOWERS MY QUALITY."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Offer flexible pacing options instead of enforcing uniform response speed across tasks and roles.
- Separate fast-response tasks from deep-thinking work so urgency does not compromise quality.
- Allow asynchronous contributions where clarity benefits from time and reflection.
- Match tasks deliberately to pacing strengths so performance is supported by fit rather than pressure.
- Avoid judging pace differences, recognizing them as variation in cognitive tempo rather than commitment.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - PACE MATCHING

1

The true urgency of a response is clarified explicitly. Assumptions about speed are removed. Expectations become aligned.

2

Immediate reactions are separated from deeper thinking tasks. Time is allocated according to cognitive demand. Quality improves.

3

People and communication channels are matched to the required pace. Contributions become more effective. Friction decreases.



Forcing pace loses intelligence.



TASK COMPLETION MOMENTUM

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Energy often drops near task completion, leading to lingering unfinished work.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"TASKS SIT AT EIGHTY PERCENT DONE." / "FINISHING IS HARDER THAN STARTING."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Define completion criteria clearly so the end point is unambiguous and shared.
- Use visible progress markers to sustain momentum and orientation toward completion.
- Separate start and finish phases deliberately, recognizing that each requires different cognitive effort.
- Close loops explicitly to signal completion and prevent lingering open tasks.
- Treat finishing as a distinct cognitive task rather than a natural byproduct of starting.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – COMPLETION ANCHORING

1

At the outset, what "finished" means is defined explicitly. The end state becomes concrete. Ambiguity is removed.

2

Progress is tracked visibly toward that end state. Orientation is maintained. Momentum is supported.

3

Completion is confirmed and marked intentionally. Cognitive closure occurs. Trust increases.



Endings require structure, not pressure.



RETROSPECTIVE CLARITY

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Understanding and learning often arrive after events once cognitive load has subsided.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I ONLY UNDERSTAND WHAT
HAPPENED LATER." / "CLARITY
COMES AFTER THE MOMENT."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Schedule short debriefs regularly to capture delayed insight once cognitive load has settled.
- Use simple, consistent reflection questions so learning becomes repeatable rather than ad hoc.
- Capture learnings in writing to stabilize insight beyond the moment.
- Separate emotional processing from analysis so reflection remains clear and constructive.
- Revisit events intentionally to consolidate understanding and inform future action.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – LOOK BACK TO LEARN

1

After the event, what happened is reconstructed factually. Memory is stabilized. Emotional charge is reduced.

2

One or two clear learnings are identified once load has settled. Insight becomes explicit. Meaning is extracted.

3

One insight is translated into a concrete behavioral or structural change. Learning is operationalized. Improvement becomes visible.



Insight arrives after the dust settles, often with greater clarity.



INFO STRUCTURING LOAD

DOMAIN 2: COGNITIVE & TEMPORAL REGULATION

FRICTION

Information often arrives unstructured under load, making prioritization difficult.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I HAVE ALL THE PIECES BUT
CAN'T SEE THE STRUCTURE." /
"EVERYTHING FEELS
SCATTERED."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Use shared templates and visual canvases to impose structure early so information has an immediate organizing frame.
- Group topics visibly in real time during discussions to prevent fragmentation and cognitive overload.
- Assign clear responsibility for maintaining structure so coherence does not depend on individual effort.
- Summarize decisions and next steps explicitly to stabilize shared understanding and accountability.
- Keep structure stable during execution so progress is not disrupted by unnecessary reorganization.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – STRUCTURE FIRST

1

A small number of organizing buckets is defined early. Incoming information has a place. Cognitive overload is reduced.

2

New input is placed into a bucket as it appears. Pile-up is prevented. Structure remains intact.

3

The overall structure is reviewed aloud before closing. Shared understanding is reinforced. Execution becomes clearer.



Some minds need maps and different systems.



MOVEMENT PLANNING FLUENCY

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Planning and sequencing physical actions can require disproportionate effort, especially under complexity or time pressure.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I KNOW WHAT TO DO, BUT MY BODY DOESN'T FOLLOW SMOOTHLY."
"STARTING COMPLEX PHYSICAL TASKS FEELS HARDER THAN THINKING THEM THROUGH."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Reduce motor complexity in tasks so execution relies less on multi-step physical sequencing.
- Allow extra time for physical setup so starting does not require rushing the body into coordination.
- Avoid action-heavy requests under time pressure so planning load does not spike into shutdown.
- Break tasks into explicit physical steps so the body has a clear order to follow.
- Treat motor planning as a design variable rather than a motivation issue.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – MOTOR SEQ. SUPPORT

1

The task is simplified by removing nonessential physical steps or movements. The goal remains the same while the motor pathway becomes shorter. This reduces load before execution begins.

2

The remaining actions are segmented into clear, manageable physical units. Each unit is named so the body has an obvious next step. This reduces ambiguity during movement initiation.

3

Execution is paced so each movement has time to complete without pressure. The sequence is allowed to unfold without interruption or social urgency. This reduces errors.



Some people don't need more instructions; they need one clear physical step at a time.



MOTOR FATIGUE BUILD-UP

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Repetitive or sustained movements create quiet strain that accumulates over time and reduces performance.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"THE TASK IS EASY, BUT IT
DRAINS ME OVER TIME." /
"REPETITION WEARS ME DOWN
EVEN WHEN NOTHING FEELS
HARD."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Rotate motor demands across tasks so the same movement pattern is not loaded continuously.
- Plan physical recovery breaks proactively so fatigue is interrupted before it compounds.
- Reduce repetitive fine-motor work where possible so strain is not invisible and constant.
- Alternate physical and cognitive tasks so effort is distributed across systems.
- Treat fatigue as predictable physiology rather than poor resilience.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - LOAD ROTATION

1

Early signs of physical strain are noticed intentionally before performance drops. Small indicators are treated as actionable data rather than noise. This prevents late-stage collapse.

2

The next task is switched to one that uses different movements or muscle groups. Motor load is redistributed rather than pushed through. This reduces cumulative micro-strain.

3

Full recovery is allowed before returning to the same motion pattern. The body is given time to reset to baseline. This protects long-term capacity.



Repetition sends the invoice to the body quietly.



ENERGY-TASK SYNCHRONY

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Output quality depends strongly on alignment between task demands and available energy across the day.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I'M CAPABLE, JUST NOT AT THIS TIME OF DAY." / "TIMING AFFECTS MY OUTPUT MORE THAN SKILL."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Align demanding tasks with energy peaks so performance is supported by timing rather than force.
- Allow flexible scheduling if possible so capacity variation is treated as normal.
- Avoid high-load tasks in low-energy windows so errors and strain do not become predictable.
- Separate availability from peak performance so presence is not mistaken for readiness.
- Encourage energy alignment as norm rather than an individual preference.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – ENERGY ALIGNMENT

1

Personal energy peaks and dips are observed across the day without judgment. Patterns are named so planning becomes evidence-based. This turns variability into a usable map.

2

Demanding tasks are matched intentionally to peak energy windows. Lower-demand work is placed in dip windows by design. This improves quality without increasing effort.

3

Peak windows are protected from unnecessary interruptions. Meetings and admin are minimized during high-output periods. This sustains performance over time.



Capacity depends on timing as much as ability.



BOOM-BUST ENERGY PATTERN

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Short bursts of high output followed by crashes reduce long-term sustainability despite impressive peaks.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I PUSH HARD, THEN I'M
WIPE OUT." / "AFTER PEAKS I
CRASH."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Cap intensity periods explicitly so output peaks have clear structural boundaries.
- Schedule recovery before depletion occurs so rest is proactive rather than reactive.
- Avoid rewarding overexertion so sustainability is not socially penalized or framed as underperformance.
- Track sustainability over time so patterns are observed, adjusted, and managed rather than celebrated uncritically.
- Treat pacing as leadership hygiene rather than a personal weakness or limitation.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - INTENSITY REGULATION

1

The duration of high-intensity effort is defined in advance. The end point is planned so stopping does not rely on willpower. This prevents accidental overextension.

2

Recovery is inserted immediately after the effort window. The next block is intentionally low-demand and regulation-supportive. This interrupts the boom-bust cycle.

3

Future intensity is adjusted based on the real recovery cost. Peaks are evaluated by what they require afterward, not only what they produce. This protects long-term capacity.



Sustainability beats heroics.



SOMATIC AWARENESS

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Physical signals of strain or fatigue are often noticed late, increasing injury and burnout risk.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I NOTICE I'M DEPLETED ONLY
WHEN IT'S TOO LATE." / "MY
BODY WARNS ME AFTER I'VE
ALREADY OVERDONE IT."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Encourage regular body check-ins so early signals are detected before breakdown.
- Allow self-paced load adjustment so the body can steer before damage accumulates.
- Treat late boundaries as data so capacity elimination is not moralized. Integrate somatic cues into planning so schedules reflect physiology.
- Use simple intensity regulation signals so adjustment becomes easier to communicate.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – SIGNAL AWARENESS

1

A brief pause is built into transitions to create awareness space. The nervous system is invited to report before the schedule dictates the next move. This increases early detection.

2

Physical signals such as tension, pain, breath, or heaviness are noticed deliberately. Signals are treated as information rather than obstacles. This supports timely adjustment.

3

Load or posture is adjusted before strain accumulates. The body is protected while work continues in a modified form. This reduces injury risk and depletion.



Bodies whisper long before they shout.



POSTURAL REGULATION DEMAND

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Holding static postures consumes significant energy, especially in long meetings or high-visibility settings.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"SITTING STILL DRAINS ME
MORE THAN MOVING." /
"STILLNESS COSTS ME
STAMINA."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Allow posture changes during work so regulation is not mistaken for distraction or disengagement.
- Normalize subtle movement in meetings so stillness is not treated as a proxy for professionalism.
- Provide ergonomic flexibility so the body is supported rather than constrained by fixed setups.
- Avoid stillness-based professional norms that turn necessary self-regulation into masking effort.
- Include brief stretch moments so posture is periodically reset by design rather than by strain.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – POSTURAL FLEXIBILITY

1

Posture is changed regularly rather than held as a single fixed position. Shifts are framed as regulation-supportive, not disruptive. This reduces static strain.

2

Small movements are used intentionally to stay regulated while working. Micro-movement is treated as compatible with attention. This improves endurance.

3

The setup is adjusted so the body is supported rather than strained. The environment carries part of the load the body would otherwise hold. This preserves energy.



Stillness looks professional but costs the body.



FINE MOTOR COORDINATION VARIABILITY

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Precision in small movements varies with speed, pressure, fatigue, and environment.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"MY ACCURACY DROPS AS
SOON AS I'M RUSHED." /
"SPEED RUINS MY PRECISION."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Offer alternative input methods so precision does not depend on tiny movements under pressure.
- Reduce speed pressure on precision tasks so accuracy can remain stable across conditions.
- Allow assistive tools that enlarge or simplify motor demands, supporting precision without added strain.
- Evaluate accuracy separately from speed so performance is measured fairly rather than conflated.
- Design tasks so precision is supported by conditions rather than sustained grit or endurance.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – PRECISION SUPPORT

1

Tools are selected that make movements larger and easier to execute. The motor demand is reduced without reducing task value. This protects accuracy.

2

Pace is slowed intentionally when accuracy matters more than speed. Pressure is removed from fine-motor execution. This reduces error amplification.

3

Quality is evaluated with criteria separate from speed expectations. Precision is recognized as condition-dependent. This prevents unfair performance judgments.



Sometimes tools need to grow, not effort.



MOTOR PLANNING LAG

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

A delay between intention and physical action can appear, especially under observation or pressure.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"THE HARDEST PART IS
PHYSICALLY STARTING." / "MY
BODY FREEZES AT THE START."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Allow initiation latency so starting is not forced through countdown pressure or urgency cues.
- Avoid public start pressure that increases motor freeze under observation or scrutiny.
- Separate instruction from execution so the body can begin after the mind has mapped the action.
- Use predictable start cues so initiation remains stable across contexts.
- Allow brief mental rehearsal so the body is supported in taking a smoother first step.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – INITIATION BUFFER

1

A clear and predictable start signal is provided. Initiation is structured rather than improvised under pressure. This reduces freeze risk.

2

A short quiet moment is allowed for body alignment before movement begins. The nervous system settles enough to initiate. This supports smoother starts.

3

Execution begins without additional commentary or social pressure. The start is protected from interruption. This improves follow-through.



A delayed start is not resistance.



BODY-BASED REGULATION

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Movement is often required to regulate attention and arousal, and suppressing it increases strain.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I NEED TO MOVE TO
CONCENTRATE." / "STILLNESS
MAKES ME LESS FOCUSED."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Normalize movement as regulation so it is not framed as noncompliance or disengagement.
- Allow pacing and fidgeting so attention can be maintained without masking cost.
- Avoid rigid stillness norms that create preventable strain and fatigue.
- Provide regulation tools so movement can be channelled discreetly and effectively.
- Design spaces that allow movement without disrupting others or requiring self-policing.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – MOVEMENT ENABLEMENT

1

Movement is explicitly permitted during work and meetings. Permission is made social, not private. This removes the need to hide regulation.

2

Movement is normalized through visible modeling and consistent cues. The environment signals that regulation is compatible with professionalism. This reduces stigma-driven inhibition.

3

Space and routines are designed so movement can occur without derailing the group. Regulation is supported structurally rather than negotiated each time. This protects attention and energy.



Movement prevents distraction for some brains.



SENSORY-MOTOR CROSSING

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Sensory load directly interferes with motor coordination and precision.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"NOISE MAKES MY
COORDINATION WORSE." /
"BUSY ENVIRONMENTS AFFECT
MY MOTOR CONTROL."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Reduce sensory load for precision work so coordination is not compromised by conditions.
- Adjust light, sound, and space so motor tasks are executed in supportive environments.
- Separate sensory-heavy activities from motor-precise tasks to prevent interference.
- Allow quiet or low-stimulation formats when accuracy is required.
- Treat coordination variability as an environment signal rather than an attitude.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – ENVIRONMENTAL TUNING

1

One sensory condition is changed before judging performance. The environment is tested as a causal factor. This shifts attention from blame to design.

2

Time is allowed for the nervous system to settle after the adjustment. Coordination is given a chance to recover. This improves reliability.

3

The task is reattempted once conditions support precision. Success is evaluated under supportive settings. This prevents misattribution.



Question the room before the person.



ENVIRONMENTAL MATCHING

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Performance depends on alignment between task demands and the spatial environment.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"SOME SPACES DRAIN ME MORE THAN OTHERS." / "THE ROOM AFFECTS MY PERFORMANCE."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Offer multiple workspace types so different tasks can be matched to supportive conditions.
- Allow task-environment matching so space becomes part of the workflow rather than a fixed constraint.
- Avoid one-size-fits-all layouts that create predictable friction.
- Label spaces by function so people can choose environments intentionally.
- Review fit regularly because needs can change across workload and seasons.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – ENVIRONMENT FIT

1

More than one workspace option is made available. Choice is framed as a performance strategy, not a preference. This supports diverse needs.

2

Task type is matched intentionally to space. High-focus tasks receive low-disruption environments. This improves output consistency.

3

Space fit is reviewed and adjusted as demands change. The environment is treated as a dynamic tool. This sustains capacity.



Inconsistent output often reflects space mismatch.



MOVEMENT INHIBITION CONTROL

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Suppressing natural movement consumes energy and increases masking cost.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"MANAGING MY BODY COSTS
MORE ENERGY THAN MY JOB."
/ "I SPEND ENERGY HIDING
REGULATION."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Reduce appearance-based judgment so harmless movement is not socially penalized or misinterpreted.
- Avoid punishing regulation behaviors that do not disrupt work or outcomes.
- Focus evaluation on output and follow-through rather than presentation or stillness.
- Offer lower-visibility options so regulation does not require constant public self-control.
- Name movement diversity as normal so psychological safety replaces masking.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – VISIBILITY SAFETY

1

Movement acceptability is stated explicitly. The social rule is clarified so people do not self-police. This reduces masking cost.

2

Visibility pressure is reduced where possible. Options such as camera-off or seating choice are offered. This supports regulation without performance theatre.

3

Work is evaluated on outcomes, not on stillness or presentation. Productivity is measured by results. This improves equity.



Masking hides cost, not effort.



PHYSICAL ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Layout distances and obstacles add hidden energy cost before work even begins.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"JUST GETTING THERE
ALREADY DRAINS ME." /
"DISTANCE COSTS ME ENERGY
BEFORE I START."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Reduce unnecessary distances by selecting locations and layouts that limit walking and repeated transitions so access does not drain energy upfront.
- Offer alternative access routes such as shorter paths, elevators, or remote options to reduce uneven physical load.
- Group meetings by location where possible to avoid cumulative fatigue from frequent movement between spaces.
- Schedule extra transition time so arrival allows brief orientation.
- Include access in venue decisions by treating distance and layout as performance-relevant design factors.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – DESIGN FOR REACHABILITY

1

Check whether paths are easy for everyone by reviewing walking distance, stairs, door access, navigation complexity, and required transitions.

2

Switch rooms or formats if access cost is high by relocating meetings, offering hybrid options, or changing layouts when reaching the space already consumes significant energy.

3

Add time margin so travel does not steal capacity by scheduling buffer time that allows arrival, settling, and regulation before cognitive or social demands begin.



Measure distance before judging commitment.



GESTURE-SPEECH COUPLING

DOMAIN 3: MOTOR & ENERGY RHYTHMS

FRICTION

Verbal fluency can depend on freedom of movement, especially gesturing.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I SPEAK MORE CLEARLY
WHEN I CAN MOVE." /
"GESTURING HELPS ME
THINK."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Allow standing and gesturing so speech can be supported by movement.
- Offer camera-optional segments so movement does not become self-conscious.
- Use walking meetings when appropriate so verbal clarity can emerge through motion.
- Avoid polished-speech bias so delivery style is not confused with competence.
- Encourage movement-friendly formats that improve thinking without disrupting others.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – MOVE TO SPEAK

1

The body is freed through standing or light movement before speaking. Permission is explicit so self-monitoring decreases. This supports fluency.

2

Speaking begins while natural gestures are allowed. Expression is supported rather than constrained. This improves coherence.

3

Key points are captured once clarity emerges. The content is stabilized in writing or decisions. This preserves value beyond performance.



Some voices unlock through motion.



CONTEXTUAL CODE-SWITCHING LOAD

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION

Adjusting communication style across contexts requires high cognitive effort and reduces spontaneity.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"SWITCHING REGISTERS
DRAINS MY ENERGY." /
"ADAPTING TONE IS
EXHAUSTING."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Reduce unnecessary tone shifts so communication remains consistent across contexts.
- Make communication norms explicit so people do not have to guess the "right" style in each setting.
- Avoid penalizing style consistency so authenticity is not treated as noncompliance.
- Allow preparation for high-visibility moments so language can be assembled.
- Standardize formats where possible so cognitive energy is spent on content rather than adaptation.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – REGISTER STABILIZATION

1

The expected tone and style for the context is defined up front. Hidden rules are surfaced so adaptation is not constant. This lowers cognitive cost.

2

Language is prepared briefly when visibility or stakes are high. Key phrases or points are drafted to reduce in-the-moment switching. This improves fluency and reduces strain.

3

Style consistency is protected from penalty through explicit norms. Feedback focuses on clarity and outcomes rather than "vibe." This reduces masking-driven communication.



Adaptability should not mean exhaustion.



SOCIAL ENERGY DRAIN

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION ⚠️

Sustained interaction depletes energy even when engagement is positive, requiring longer recovery.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"MEETINGS EXHAUST ME
MORE THAN WORK." /
"PEOPLE DRAIN MY ENERGY."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Limit duration of high-interaction events so social demand has boundaries.
- Schedule recovery time after social load so regulation occurs before depletion compounds.
- Avoid back-to-back exposure so energy is not consumed without reset.
- Allow opt-out from nonessential interaction so participation is strategic rather than constant.
- Treat recovery as capacity protection so sustainability is planned rather than improvised.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – EXPOSURE MANAGEMENT

1

The duration of high-interaction mode is decided in advance. A clear end point reduces fear of endless exposure. This supports regulated participation.

2

Recovery time is blocked immediately after social load. The next block is intentionally low-demand and quiet. This allows energy to stabilize.

3

Work resumes once capacity has returned rather than by default. Re-entry is paced based on energy signals. This prevents social load from derailing the day.



Some people don't run out of ideas; they run out of people.



HIGH-FIDELITY LISTENING

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION

Deep, detailed listening increases cognitive load, especially when verbal density is high.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"LISTENING ITSELF DRAINS MY CAPACITY." / "TOO MANY DETAILS EXHAUST ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Reduce verbal density in meetings so attention is not consumed by excess detail.
- Provide written summaries so the brain can release information.
- Assign selective listening roles so responsibility is distributed, not total.
- Separate listening from decision-making so comprehension is stabilized before conclusions.
- Externalize key points in real time so cognitive load is lowered while discussion continues.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – INPUT LOAD CONTROL

1

Incoming verbal detail is reduced to essentials before expanding context. The group prioritizes signal over volume. This protects attention capacity.

2

The listening target is defined explicitly, such as decisions, risks, or action items. Attention is directed toward what matters most. This prevents overload from diffuse listening.

3

Key points are externalized in notes or visible boards. The brain no longer has to hold the entire stream. This preserves clarity for the next step.



Every extra word spends someone else's attention.



NONVERBAL INTERPRETATION VARIABILITY

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICITION

Nonverbal cues are difficult to read or produce consistently, leading to misinterpretation.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES

"MY FACE DOESN'T SHOW
HOW ENGAGED I AM," /
"PEOPLE MISREAD MY
EXPRESSIONS."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Avoid judging engagement by body language so performance is not confused with intent.
- Encourage explicit verbal signals so meaning is carried by language rather than inference.
- Reduce reliance on "reading the room" so contribution is not tied to nonverbal decoding.
- Focus evaluation on output and follow-through so reliability is measured by evidence.
- Invite clarification inputs so misreads are corrected early and neutrally.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – SIGNAL DECODING

1

Intent is stated clearly rather than relying on tone or facial cues. Meaning is anchored in words. This reduces interpretive ambiguity.

2

The impact of messages is checked directly by asking how they landed. Assumptions are replaced with explicit feedback. This prevents escalating misinterpretations.

3

Judgments are anchored in actions and outputs rather than expressions. Engagement is measured through contribution quality. This improves fairness and accuracy.



Body language measures performance, not intent.



AUTHENTICITY ORIENTATION

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICITION

Preference for direct, congruent communication can create friction in performative or politeness-driven systems.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"MY DIRECTNESS GETS
MISREAD AS COLD." /
"HONESTY CAUSES FRICTION."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Allow respectful direct expression so congruence is treated as professionalism.
- Reduce performative politeness norms that demand emotional theater to be accepted.
- Separate professionalism from cheerfulness so competence is not tied to affect.
- Value clarity over charm so communication is optimized for accuracy and trust.
- Provide shared language for respectful directness so direct styles are understood consistently.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – AUTHENTICITY PROTECTION

1

Plain, honest language is explicitly permitted within respect boundaries. Norms are clarified so directness is not penalized. This creates psychological safety for congruent speech.

2

Relational warmth is separated from factual clarity during interpretation. The group focuses on content and intent rather than tone preference. This reduces misattribution.

3

Congruent communication is acknowledged and valued through outcomes. Trust is reinforced through reliability and precision. This stabilizes the social meaning of directness.



Accuracy depends on honesty.



SCRIPTED COMMUNICATION RELIANCE

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION ⚠️

Prepared language supports clarity, while spontaneous speaking under pressure can reduce fluency.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"COLD CALLING SHUTS MY
BRAIN DOWN." / "I NEED
PREPARATION TO SPEAK
CLEARLY."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Share topics in advance so preparation is possible before high-stakes discussion.
- Offer language scaffolds such as prompts or sentence starters to support entry.
- Allow prepared contributions so quality is not gated by improvisation.
- Accept written input formats so ideas are captured even when speech stalls.
- Avoid cold calling so participation is invited through predictable cues rather than surprise.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – PREPARATION ENABLEMENT

1

Topics and likely questions are previewed early. The nervous system is given time to assemble language. This reduces pressure-based blanking.

2

Time is allowed to draft brief notes or scripts. Preparation is treated as a quality practice. This increases clarity and confidence.

3

Participation is invited using prepared material rather than forced spontaneity. Contributions are integrated visibly into outcomes. This protects equity of voice.



Preparation is respect for the conversation.



ONE-ON-ONE FLUENCY VS GROUP SILENCE

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION

Rich contribution appears in one-on-one settings while group contexts suppress visibility.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES

"GROUPS SHRINK MY VOICE."
/ "I'M CLEARER ONE-ON-ONE."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Use one-on-one input channels so insight is not limited to group performance or visibility.
- Collect written input before meetings so ideas enter the room without forcing airtime or speed.
- Rotate participation formats so contribution is distributed across modalities and interaction styles.
- Avoid dominance-based discussions so speed, volume, or social confidence do not control outcomes.
- Name and integrate quiet contributions explicitly so value is visible, credited, and retained.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – PARTICIPATION DESIGN

1

Multiple contribution channels are offered explicitly. People know how to contribute without fighting for airtime. This reduces group suppression effects.

2

Input is gathered outside the group space, such as asynchronously or one-on-one. Ideas are captured before social dynamics filter them. This increases signal quality.

3

Contributions are integrated visibly into decisions and next steps. Credit is assigned transparently. This reinforces participation safety.



Value is often created off stage.



MESSAGE PRECISION VS SOCIAL BUFFERING

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION ⚠️

Tension between accuracy and social softening can distort meaning.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"TONE EXPECTATIONS
SCRAMBLE MY MESSAGE." /
"SOFTENING DILUTES
ACCURACY."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Clarify intent explicitly so precision is not misread as aggression or lack of care.
- Normalize respectful directness so accuracy remains socially safe and interpretable.
- Separate message from tone preference so evaluation centers on content rather than delivery style.
- Model precision with care so directness and respect are paired consistently in practice.
- Provide sentence starters so difficult truths can be expressed clearly without distortion or excessive softening.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – PRECISION FRAMING

1

Intent is stated before delivering content so the frame is clear. The listener knows the purpose of the message. This reduces defensive interpretation.

2

Brief relational context is added without diluting meaning. Respect is signaled while precision remains intact. This improves receptivity.

3

The message is delivered clearly and specifically, then anchored in next steps. Meaning is stabilized through actions or agreements. This prevents drift into tone policing.



Care and clarity belong together.



RELATIONAL JUSTICE SENSITIVITY

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION

Perceived unfairness triggers strong emotional activation and moral vigilance.



TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"BIAS IN THE ROOM DERAILS
ME COMPLETELY." /
"UNFAIRNESS OVERWHELMS
ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Address fairness explicitly so concerns are surfaced directly rather than forced into indirect conflict.
- Provide transparent rationales so decisions are interpretable, reviewable, and contestable.
- Separate justice concerns from personal conflict so ethical issues are not individualized or pathologized.
- Create safe escalation channels so reporting does not require social or reputational risk.
- Make equity review routine so fairness is operationalized consistently rather than treated as performative.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – EQUITY PROCESSING

1

The fairness concern is acknowledged explicitly without minimizing it. The issue is treated as legitimate input. This reduces escalation through invisibility.

2

Known rationale, constraints, and decision criteria are shared transparently. The system logic is made visible. This restores interpretability.

3

Process or criteria are adjusted if needed, and changes are communicated. If no change is possible, the limits are stated clearly. This closes the loop without dismissing the concern.



Unspoken injustice shows up as dysfunction.



MORAL DISCOMFORT SENSITIVITY

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION

Ethical misalignment creates stress, withdrawal, or confrontation when values conflict with actions.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"THIS CONFLICTS WITH MY
VALUES." / "ETHICAL
MISALIGNMENT SHUTS ME
DOWN."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Clarify shared values operationally so ethics is expressed in concrete language, criteria, and thresholds.
- Allow ethical dissent safely so disagreement is not treated as disloyalty or disruption.
- Separate ethics discussions from performance reviews so speaking up does not carry punitive risk.
- Create resolution processes so value conflicts have a clear path beyond repeated debate.
- Treat ethical signals as system feedback rather than personal disruption or resistance.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – ETHICAL ALIGNMENT

1

The value conflict is named directly and respectfully. The concern is located in principles rather than personalities. This stabilizes the conversation.

2

The ethics discussion is separated from evaluation and status dynamics. Safety is reinforced through explicit boundaries. This enables honest articulation.

3

Resolution proceeds through policy adjustment, decision revision, or documented rationale. The outcome is captured so ambiguity does not repeat. This turns discomfort into system learning.



Values reveal system truth.



SOCIAL VISIBILITY ENGAGEMENT

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICITION

Performance and regulation shift under observation and public exposure, changing output quality independent of skill.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"BEING WATCHED CHANGES
HOW WELL I WORK." /
"PUBLIC EXPOSURE REDUCES
MY CLARITY."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Offer visibility-optional participation so contribution is not tied to public performance or exposure.
- Reduce forced spotlight moments that trigger regulation shifts and degrade clarity.
- Provide alternative contribution modes such as written input or smaller group formats.
- Separate presence from value so visibility is not mistaken for competence or commitment.
- Use smaller decision spaces when stakes are high so clarity and regulation are protected.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – VISIBILITY REGULATION

1

Visibility pressure is identified and named as a performance variable. Participation options are clarified without stigma. This restores agency.

2

Exposure is reduced where possible through camera choice, smaller groups, or asynchronous channels. Regulation is supported through lower observation load. This preserves capacity.

3

Impact is evaluated through outcomes rather than public performance. Work quality is assessed in conditions that support regulation. This improves fairness.



Visibility changes regulation before skill.



INTERACTION TIMING

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION

Response timing often includes a short processing delay that supports clarity but clashes with rapid turn-taking norms.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I NEED A MOMENT BEFORE I
CAN RESPOND CLEARLY." /
"SILENCE HELPS ME THINK."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Build pause tolerance into team norms so thinking time is treated as part of communication rather than absence.
- Use explicit turn-taking so responses are not lost to speed-based competition.
- Normalize thinking pauses verbally so silence is interpreted as processing rather than disengagement.
- Separate reflection time from speaking time so quality is not traded for immediacy.
- Allow written or asynchronous contributions when timing pressure would reduce clarity.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – TIMING REGULATION

1

Silence is allowed to exist without being filled immediately. The group holds space without interpreting pause as failure. This reduces pressure-driven responses.

2

Processing is signaled explicitly so others know thinking is happening. A simple phrase or gesture marks the pause as intentional. This protects clarity under social tempo.

3

The response returns once processing completes and the point is coherent. The group resumes turn-taking without penalizing timing differences. This anchors communication in content, not speed.



Silence is often where clarity forms.



LITERAL-CONCRETE INTERPRETATION

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICITION

Preference for precise, literal language reduces ambiguity but struggles with hints, subtext, or implied meaning.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS
EXACTLY AS STATED." / "HINTS
CONFUSE ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Use explicit instructions and deadlines so expectations do not depend on inference.
- Avoid implicit expectations in high-stakes contexts so compliance is not mistaken for misunderstanding.
- Clarify meaning early when consequences are high.
- Reduce figurative language in agreements so commitments remain interpretable.
- Confirm shared meaning explicitly so both sides operate from the same interpretation.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - CLARIFICATION

1

Intent and expectations are stated in plain language. Ambiguity is reduced before tasks begin. This prevents avoidable misalignment.

2

Understanding is checked by asking for a brief restatement. Clarifying questions are welcomed rather than judged. This verifies shared interpretation.

3

One shared interpretation is agreed upon before moving forward. The agreement is captured in writing when useful. This reduces later conflict over implied meaning.



Hints test mind reading, not intelligence.



EMPATHIC OVERIDENTIFICATION

DOMAIN 4: SOCIAL & COMMUNICATION STYLES

FRICTION ⚠️

Absorbing others' emotions over time increases burnout risk, especially in care roles.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I CARRY EMOTIONS LONG
AFTER MEETINGS." / "OTHER
PEOPLE'S FEELINGS EXHAUST
ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Define emotional role boundaries so responsibility is not unlimited or assumed by default.
- Reduce default emotional labor expectations so empathy is not treated as constant availability.
- Normalize decompression after care work so emotional load is acknowledged and discharged.
- Offer supervision or debrief formats so emotional experiences are processed with appropriate support.
- Teach boundary language so regulation needs can be communicated clearly and without guilt.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – BOUNDARY SETTING

1

Emotional load limits are clarified explicitly, including what can be carried and what cannot. Boundaries are framed as sustainability tools. This prevents silent accumulation.

2

Exposure to high-emotion spaces is reduced where possible through duration limits or rotation. Demand is distributed across people and time. This lowers chronic absorption.

3

Emotions are released through a deliberate ritual such as writing, walking, or debriefing. Residue is cleared before returning to heavy work. This reduces burnout risk.



Empathy needs boundaries to be sustainable.



REFLECTIVE INTEGRATION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Insights remain individual unless translated into systems, causing repeated inefficiencies and recurring friction.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"WE LEARN BUT NOTHING
CHANGES." / "INSIGHTS
DON'T STICK."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Schedule structured debriefs so learning is captured while memory is fresh and context is still available.
- Translate insights into small, concrete process changes so reflection produces operational improvement.
- Store learnings centrally so they are retrievable and reusable when similar work repeats.
- Review lessons intentionally before repeating work so patterns are interrupted rather than reinforced.
- Assign integration ownership so learning has accountability and follow-through.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – LEARNING INTEGRATION

1

One insight and one friction point are captured immediately after an event or cycle. The capture is concrete and brief so it is repeatable. This turns experience into data.

2

The insight is converted into a small system change such as a checklist, template, or rule. The change is designed to be implementable within existing workflows. This makes learning operational.

3

The change is embedded and communicated so it becomes shared practice. Adoption is checked in the next cycle and adjusted if needed. This turns learning into evolution.



Learning changes systems, not memories.



ACCOUNTABILITY ANCHORING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Tasks drift when ownership is shared vaguely instead of being clearly assigned and tracked to closure.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES

"WE THOUGHT SOMEONE ELSE HAD IT." / "NO ONE OWNED IT."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Assign one clear owner per task so responsibility is unambiguous from creation to completion.
- Track actions visibly so ownership and deadlines are not lost in conversation or memory.
- Close loops explicitly so completion is confirmed rather than assumed or inferred.
- Follow up at the next touchpoint so unfinished items cannot disappear silently over time.
- Separate owners from helpers so support is available without blurring accountability.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – OWNERSHIP ANCHORING

1

One accountable name is assigned per task at the moment it is created. The owner confirms understanding of the outcome and deadline. This prevents diffusion.

2

Ownership and deadline are made visible in a shared system. Progress is tracked so work does not rely on memory or goodwill. This creates follow-through.

3

Completion is confirmed publicly and the loop is closed. If incomplete, the next action and date are reassigned. This prevents drift.



Shared ownership needs clear anchors.



ADAPTIVE SCALING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICITION

Systems that worked at small scale can break under growth, increasing cognitive friction unless redesign occurs.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"WHAT WORKED BEFORE
SUDDENLY DOESN'T." / "SCALE
CHANGED EVERYTHING."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Review system fit at growth points so emerging strain becomes visible before performance drops or workarounds form.
- Simplify before adding layers so complexity is reduced at the structural level rather than redistributed onto people.
- Add support with responsibility so capacity increases while ownership and decision paths remain clear.
- Retire obsolete practices so old systems do not compete with new ones or silently drain attention and time.
- Treat redesign as normal scaling work that accompanies growth cycles, rather than a failure of discipline or execution.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – SCALING RESET

1

The system is checked for where it is straining under new volume or complexity. Friction is named as a design issue rather than a personal one. This creates a starting point.

2

Elements are removed or simplified before new tools are added. The goal is clarity before expansion. This prevents compounding complexity.

3

Targeted supports are added where the strain is real and measurable. Roles and routines are updated to match the new scale. This restores flow.



Systems scale by redesign, not endurance.



ERROR ANTICIPATION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

High vigilance for risk can slow execution and create anxiety when it remains unbounded and repetitive.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"RESPONSIBILITY MAKES ME
OVERCHECK." / "I CAN'T STOP
REVIEWING RISKS."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Separate risk review from execution so vigilance does not hijack momentum or stall progress.
- Timebox risk analysis so anticipation has clear limits and does not expand endlessly.
- Normalize early risk signals so caution is recognized as intelligence rather than framed as negativity.
- Use risk logs so concerns are parked externally instead of being rechecked mentally.
- Clarify decision thresholds so action proceeds unless new data crosses a defined line.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – RISK CONTAINMENT

1

Risks are scanned once within a defined window. Key concerns are named and recorded without solving everything immediately. This prevents looping.

2

Risks are parked externally in a log with an owner or next review point. The mind is released from repeated re-evaluation. This reduces anxiety.

3

Execution proceeds unless new information appears. Review occurs at the planned checkpoint rather than continuously. This preserves speed and safety.



Foresight needs boundaries.



DELEGATION MATURITY

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Delegation breaks down through overfunctioning, underfunctioning, or unclear boundaries, creating bottlenecks and mistrust.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"IT'S FASTER IF I DO IT MYSELF." / "DELEGATION CREATES MORE WORK."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Delegate outcomes rather than methods so autonomy is real and micromanagement decreases.
- Match tasks to capacity so delegation supports sustainability rather than overload transfer.
- Clarify decision room so the delegate knows what can be decided without approval.
- Use light check-ins so accountability exists without control.
- Adjust systems rather than blaming individuals when delegation repeatedly fails.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - DELEGATION STRUCTURING

1

Success is defined clearly including outcome, timeline, and quality bar. The boundary is stated so ownership is real. This reduces rework.

2

The task is matched to the right person and decision room is confirmed. Resources or context are provided before launch. This prevents downstream blockage.

3

Check-ins occur at sensible points focused on outcomes and obstacles. Support is added where needed without taking control back. This builds trust.



Delegation fails from unclear outcomes.



PLANNING HORIZON

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Preference for short- or long-term planning can clash with role expectations when time-horizon assumptions are implicit.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"LONG-TERM PLANNING
BLOCKS ME." / "I STRUGGLE
WITH DISTANT GOALS."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Match planning to horizon strengths so work aligns with natural temporal orientation.
- Break long-term goals into near-term anchors so progress is tangible and cognitively accessible.
- Separate vision from operations so strategic thinking is not forced during execution time.
- Use visual roadmaps so horizons remain visible without becoming abstract.
- Pair complementary strengths across team members so horizons are covered without overloading one person.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – HORIZON ALIGNMENT

1

The time horizon is named explicitly at the start of planning. Expectations are aligned so the brain knows what kind of thinking is required. This reduces mismatch stress.

2

The horizon is anchored with concrete near-term steps and checkpoints. Abstraction is converted into visible progress markers. This supports follow-through.

3

Today's work is linked back to the larger timeline in a brief review. Meaning and direction remain intact without requiring constant long-range focus. This sustains engagement.



Different minds live in different timeframes.



WORKING MEMORY LOAD

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Holding multiple elements in mind under load increases errors and stress, especially when information remains verbal-only.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"IF IT'S ONLY SPOKEN I LOSE IT." / "TOO MUCH TO HOLD IN MY HEAD."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Externalize information systematically so memory is not the primary storage system.
- Embed cues and checklists so execution relies on visible prompts rather than recall.
- Provide written summaries so shared understanding remains stable after meetings.
- Use visual supports to reduce cognitive strain in complex workflows.
- Encourage "write first" norms so ideas and instructions become durable artifacts.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – LOAD EXTERNALIZATION

1

Key items are captured in writing immediately so they do not compete in working memory. Notes are treated as part of the work rather than extra work. This stabilizes recall.

2

Items are stored in one trusted, visible place so retrieval is consistent. A single source of truth reduces searching and re-asking. This lowers stress.

3

Work proceeds directly from the external system rather than internal recall. Steps are executed with reference to the artifact. This reduces errors under load.



Memory is not a filing cabinet.



COMPLEXITY MAPPING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Strong awareness of interdependencies increases cognitive load and can slow action without containment of scope.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I SEE ALL THE RIPPLES SO I
HESITATE." / "EVERYTHING
FEELS INTERCONNECTED."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Externalize system maps so complexity is held in a shared visual rather than individual cognition.
- Separate analysis from execution so thinking does not delay action indefinitely.
- Validate systems-thinking strengths so caution is recognized as insight rather than resistance.
- Limit scope per decision so only relevant interdependencies are considered.
- Define clear decision framing so action is taken within a bounded slice.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – COMPLEXITY CONTAINMENT

1

Key elements and connections are mapped visually in a simple format. The map is treated as a working tool rather than a perfect model. This reduces mental load immediately.

2

Only the dependencies that matter for the current decision are highlighted. Analysis is timeboxed so containment remains real. This prevents endless scanning.

3

Action proceeds within the bounded slice and outcomes are monitored. If new data emerges, the map is updated rather than redone from scratch. This preserves progress.



Seeing complexity prevents future failure.



DECISION LATITUDE

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Unclear decision boundaries create hesitation, overreach, and delays, especially when escalation paths are implicit.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I'M NOT SURE IF I'M ALLOWED TO DECIDE." / "I DON'T KNOW WHEN TO ESCALATE."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Clarify decision rights explicitly so authority is not guessed under pressure or urgency.
- Define autonomous, consultative, and escalated decisions so action paths are predictable and delay is reduced.
- Document ownership clearly so accountability does not drift across roles or handoffs.
- Use decision ladders or RACI-style tools to make boundaries visible and decision logic explicit: Responsible → Accountable → Consulted → Informed
- Review authority when roles change so outdated assumptions do not persist and friction is avoided.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - AUTHORITY CLARITY

1

The decision is labeled as owned, shared, or escalated before work begins. Scope is clarified so people know how far they can go. This reduces hesitation.

2

If escalation is needed, the path and criteria are named explicitly. Required inputs are identified so escalation is not a vague handoff. This speeds resolution.

3

The decision is made within the defined boundary and recorded. Follow-through is assigned so closure is real. This prevents reopening cycles.



Authority clarity unlocks action.



NONLINEAR EXECUTION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICITION

Work can progress in jumps and parallel paths, which may look disordered despite producing strong outcomes.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"MY PROCESS LOOKS MESSY
BUT IT WORKS." / "I DON'T
WORK STEP BY STEP."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Define outcomes rather than prescribing steps so multiple valid pathways remain possible.
- Allow flexible execution paths so work can proceed through parallel progress rather than forced sequence.
- Track milestones rather than linear order so progress is recognized accurately.
- Communicate nonlinearity early so stakeholders understand the execution logic.
- Create visible checkpoints so the pathway can vary while accountability stays clear.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - OUTCOME ORIENTATION

1

"Done" is clarified in concrete terms so the end state is stable even if the route varies. Success criteria are agreed before execution begins. This reduces conflict about process style.

2

Work proceeds in flexible order while milestones are tracked visibly. Progress is measured by completed units rather than continuous linear flow. This makes outcomes legible.

3

Milestones are reviewed and next steps are selected based on what is now enabled. The system adapts without re-litigating the process style. This sustains momentum.



Linear paths are not the only efficient ones.



COGNITIVE TRANSITIONS

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICITION

Switching between tasks or mental modes carries high cognitive cost that drains energy across fragmented days.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"INTERRUPTIONS RESET ME COMPLETELY." / "CONTEXT SWITCHING EXHAUSTS ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Batch tasks by cognitive mode so similar thinking demands are grouped rather than scattered.
- Reduce mid-task interruptions so continuity is not constantly broken by external input.
- Schedule transition buffers so switching is treated as real work time rather than invisible overhead.
- Signal work mode explicitly so others know when deep work is in progress.
- Park interrupted tasks visibly so restarting does not require reconstructing context from memory.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – TRANSITION BUFFERING

1

The previous task is closed with a brief note capturing the stopping point and next action. Open loops are externalized so they do not linger cognitively. This reduces restart cost later.

2

A short pause occurs without new input so the nervous system can reset. Transition is treated as regulation space rather than dead time. This lowers mode-switch strain.

3

The new task and mode are named explicitly before engaging. Attention reorients around a clear frame instead of drifting between demands. This improves re-entry quality.



Constant pivots drain capacity faster than work.



STRUCTURAL THINKING

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICTION

Clear systems are often required before smooth execution is possible, while implicit or shifting processes block action.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I NEED TO SEE THE SYSTEM
BEFORE I CAN WORK." /
"UNCLEAR STEPS STOP ME."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Provide visible workflows so steps are observable, predictable, and stable during execution.
- Document processes explicitly so execution does not depend on guessing hidden or shifting rules.
- Allow time for system design so structure is built before speed is demanded.
- Avoid mid-process changes so cognitive maps remain reliable and progress is not disrupted.
- Name the process in simple, shared terms so orientation stays intact across participants.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL – VISUAL SYSTEM FRAMING

1

The flow from input to output is mapped in a simple visible format. Key steps and handoffs are named explicitly. This turns confusion into a navigable path.

2

The structure is kept visible where work happens, such as in boards, templates, or shared documents. People can reference the map rather than hold it mentally. This reduces working memory load.

3

The structure is held stable during execution so progress is not constantly reoriented. Adjustments are batched and communicated intentionally. This protects momentum.



Maps unlock momentum.



TASK INITIATION

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICITION

Starting tasks requires disproportionate effort even when goals are clear due to friction at the point of initiation.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"I KNOW WHAT TO DO BUT I
CAN'T START." / "THE
BEGINNING IS HARDER THAN
THE WORK ITSELF."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Use body doubling formats so initiation happens with external presence rather than isolated effort.
- Define one visible first action so the entry barrier is lowered immediately.
- Separate start expectations from finish expectations so the first step is not psychologically overloaded.
- Allow assisted kickoffs such as templates, prompts, or co-start sessions to reduce activation friction.
- Replace open-ended tasks with initiation scaffolding so starting is structurally supported rather than willpower-dependent.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - START ONLY

1

One concrete first action is named explicitly so the entry point becomes small and doable. The action is designed to reduce friction rather than produce a full result. This makes initiation more likely.

2

Work begins in shared presence or with external structure such as a timer, checklist, or accountability cue. The nervous system receives a starting rail rather than an open field. This reduces resistance.

3

Pressure to finish is released and attention returns to starting only. Momentum is allowed to build before evaluation begins. This protects initiation from premature self-judgment.



Starting is about reducing friction, not increasing willpower.



PRIORITIZATION CLARITY

DOMAIN 5: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION & SYSTEMS THINKING

FRICITION

Multiple demands can feel equally urgent, blocking sequencing and creating paralysis without a clear selection rule.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES
"EVERYTHING FEELS URGENT
AT ONCE." / "I CAN'T DECIDE
WHAT COMES FIRST."

DESIGN RESPONSES

- Externalize all tasks explicitly so urgency does not compete inside working memory.
- Rank priorities using a shared rule so selection does not depend on stress.
- Limit active tasks in progress so attention is not split across too many open loops.
- Separate urgency from importance so time pressure does not override strategic value.
- Review priorities at set intervals so re-sorting becomes routine rather than constant negotiation.

3-STEP REGULATION PROTOCOL - PRIORITY ANCHORING

1

All demands are listed outside the head so cognitive crowding reduces immediately. The list is treated as a working surface rather than a verdict. This creates room to think.

2

One single priority is chosen for the current window based on the agreed rule. The selection is made explicit so attention has a clear target. This reduces internal competition.

3

Work-in-progress is capped so focus is protected until the selected item moves forward. Remaining items are parked rather than mentally rehearsed. This restores momentum.



Clarity comes from choosing what not to do.

