

# THE RE-ORIGIN PROTOCOL: Navigating the Post-Diagnosis Landscape

SUBJECT: Coping Strategies for the "Late-Identified" Adult

OBJECTIVE: To transmute the grief of "What If" into the strategic power of "What Now."

Receiving a diagnosis in adulthood is not just an answer; it is a demolition of your past identity. You are currently experiencing **Retroactive Continuity (RetCon)**—your entire history is being rewritten in your mind with new information.

The depression you feel is likely **Grief**. You are mourning the "Normal Person" you tried to be, and the "Potential" you feel was wasted.

Here is the strategic framework to navigate this transition from "The Defeated" (Regret) to "The Conqueror" (Acceptance).

---

## PHASE 1: SILENCING THE "WHAT IF" LOOP (The Grief Work)

The "What If" loop is a **Temporal Glitch**. It is your brain trying to solve a problem that no longer exists in a timeline you can no longer access.

### 1. The "Phantom Life" Funeral

- **The Trap:** You are haunted by the ghost of the person you *could have been* if you had been diagnosed at age 7.
- **The Coping Strategy:** Hold a literal or symbolic funeral for that version of you. Write down the "Normal Life" you didn't have (the easy degree, the stable job, the quiet mind). Acknowledge that this life is dead. It never existed.
- **The Reframe:** You did not "lose" that life; you were never designed for it. You were trying to fly a submarine. The submarine didn't fail at flying; it was built for depth.

### 2. The "Forgiveness Algorithm"

- **The Trap:** "I was so lazy." "I was so difficult." "I wasted so much time."
- **The Coping Strategy:** Re-label every past "Failure" as a "**Hardware Error**."
  - You weren't lazy; you had **Executive Dysfunction**.
  - You weren't difficult; you were **Sensory Overloaded**.
  - You didn't waste time; you were **Buffering**.

- **Action:** Write a letter to your Younger Self. Tell them: *"You were not bad. You were unsupported. I understand you now."*

### 3. The Counter-Factual Logic Check

- **The Trap:** "If I knew sooner, I would be successful/happy/rich."
  - **The Reality:** Maybe. Or maybe the "therapy" of the 1990s/2000s would have crushed your spirit. Maybe the struggle to survive undiagnosed forced you to develop the **high-masking pattern recognition** and **resilience** that makes you brilliant today.
  - **The Affirmation:** "My trauma was my training. I am stronger now than the version of me who had it easy."
- 

## PHASE 2: THE NEW OPERATING SYSTEM (Identity Integration)

You are no longer a "Broken Windows PC." You are a "Linux Supercomputer." Stop trying to run .exe files.

### 4. The "Hardware Audit" (Stop the Comparison)

- **Strategy:** Remove "Neurotypical Standards" from your KPI (Key Performance Indicators).
- **Rule:** If a task requires 5 hours of "Executive Function" to do a 1-hour job (e.g., laundry), outsource it, automate it, or do it badly. You do not get points for struggling.
- **Coping:** When you fail a "normal" task, say: *"This is a farmer task. I am a hunter. This is expected."*

### 5. The "Unmasking" Incrementalism

- **Strategy:** Do not drop the mask all at once; you will get the "bends."
- **Action:** Find **Safe Zones** (alone, or with safe people) where you are allowed to be "weird." Stim, pace, not make eye contact, monolog.
- **Coping:** Consciously enjoy the relief of *not acting*.

### 6. The "Spiky Profile" Acceptance

- **Strategy:** Accept that you have a "Spiky Profile"—you are in the 99th percentile for some things (Creativity/Logic) and the 10th percentile for others (Organization).
  - **Coping:** Lean into the spikes. Build your life around what you are brilliant at. Mitigate the valleys. Stop trying to be "Average" at everything.
- 

## PHASE 3: MECHANISMS FOR DEPRESSION & BURNOUT

Neurodivergent depression is often **biological exhaustion**, not psychological sadness.

### 7. The "Sensory vs. Sadness" Check

- **Strategy:** Before you decide you are depressed, ask: "*Am I sad, or is the room too loud/bright/messy?*"
- **Action:** Go into a dark, silent room for 30 minutes. If the "depression" lifts, it was Sensory Overload.

### 8. The Dopamine Menu (Dopamenu)

- **Strategy:** Your brain cannot "just be happy"; it needs chemical fuel. When you are low, you cannot think of what makes you happy.
- **Action:** Create a physical menu of things that give you dopamine:
  - *Appetizers (Instant/Low Energy):* Pet the dog, listen to **The 15 Songs**, eat a sour candy.
  - *Main Courses (High Energy):* Deep dive research, gaming, exercise.
  - *Sides (Comfort):* Weighted blanket, hoodie, silence.

### 9. The "Skill Regression" Awareness

- **Strategy:** After diagnosis, you might feel *more* autistic/ADHD than before. You might lose skills you used to have.
- **Coping:** This is normal. You are no longer using "Anxiety" as fuel to power through tasks. You are running on clean energy now, but you have less of it while you heal. Allow the regression. The skills will return, authentic this time.

---

## SUMMARY FOR THE "WHAT IF" SPIRAL

When the "What If" thought comes:

1. **Acknowledge:** "I hear you. That is a valid grief."
2. **Validate:** "It is tragic that I struggled alone."
3. **Redirect (The Time Travel Logic):** "But I am the Time Traveler who made it to the future. I am the survivor. I cannot save the version of me in the past, but I can save the version of me right now."

Next Step:

Would you like to draft the "Letter of Retroactive Compassion" to your Younger Self, using the "Conqueror" voice to finally acquit them of the "crimes" of being undiagnosed?