

Building a Dark Day Response

Prepare for the kinds of moments that usually catch you without enough time to think.

This worksheet is not about predicting one exact event. It is about identifying a cluster of situations that tend to create the same kind of pressure, then deciding and practising how you want to handle them.

1 Identify Your Cluster of Difficult Moments

Look for situations that have enough in common that learning how to handle one would probably help with the others. These are often moments people do not normally prepare for.

BEING PUT ON THE SPOT

A personal question, criticism, challenge, or demand for an immediate answer.

UNEXPECTED CONFLICT

Someone becomes angry, disappointed, accusatory, defensive, or confrontational.

FEELING EXPOSED OR SOCIALLY THREATENED

A mistake, embarrassment, exclusion, disapproval, or discovering others have been talking about you.

What kinds of moments tend to catch you unprepared?

2 Identify the Two Things You Are Trying to Protect

A value is something that matters enough to you that you do not want to lose or violate it. Difficult situations often become harder when two values point toward different responses.

Examples: honesty + kindness | privacy + being cooperative | standing up for yourself + not escalating conflict

One thing I am trying to protect is:

If I protect the first one, I am likely to want to:

Another thing I am trying to protect is:

If I protect the second one, I am likely to want to:

Decide How You Want to Handle the Conflict

3 Choose the Rule That Will Guide Your Response

A value is something you care about. A principle is the rule you decide to follow when two things you care about pull you toward different responses.

EXAMPLE

Values: privacy + being cooperative

Principle: I can be helpful without answering questions I consider private.

When these two things conflict, what rule do I want to follow?

4 Work Out What That Choice Will Require

Choosing a rule does not make the other concern disappear. Identify what will probably make your preferred response difficult to carry out.

If I follow this rule, what might I have to let go of?

What uncomfortable feeling or reaction might I have to tolerate for a while?

Examples: not getting reassurance; being misunderstood; someone staying annoyed; tension; uncertainty; guilt; not having the last word; resisting the urge to fix the situation immediately.

Turn the Decision Into Something You Can Use

5 Decide What This Would Actually Look Like

Imagine one of the situations from your cluster happening tomorrow. Make the response observable enough that you could tell whether you actually did it.

What might I say?

What might I do?

What would I try not to do?

If the other person reacted badly, what would I try to do next?

What uncomfortable feeling would I allow to be there without immediately trying to fix it?

6 Put It Into Your Own Words

Take what you wrote above and make it sound like you. Your own wording is easier to remember than somebody else's. It does not need to sound polished. It needs to be something you could imagine thinking, saying, or doing when you are upset.

Example: "They can be annoyed. I still do not have to explain this." Or: "I can answer tomorrow. I do not have to figure this out while I am upset."

My actual words:



Practise It Until It Is Easier to Reach

7 Build a Reminder That Shows Up at the Right Time

Your reminder should be an early sign that tells you: this is one of those situations. It may be something happening around you or something you notice in yourself.

Examples: someone challenges me; I start talking faster; I want to explain immediately; my face gets hot; I want to send the message now; I urgently want the discomfort to stop.

My early warning sign:

When I notice that, what do I want to remember?

What is the first thing I want to say or do?

9 Use It, Then Adjust It

After you use the plan in real life, reflect on how it went. Keep revising until the unnecessary obstacles become smaller and the response is easier to execute, even if it is still uncomfortable.

What worked? What felt uncomfortable? Where did I get stuck? What should I change before next time?



MASTER PRACTICE MINUTE

One intentional minute can shape the rest of your day.

Today, I will spend one minute:

☐ Rehearsing my plan

☐ Saying my words out loud

☐ Visualising a situation

☐ Reflecting on how I will choose to respond

RECOGNIZE | DECIDE | PRACTISE | USE | ADJUST