

OBSERVABLE SIGNALS TABLE

OBSERVABLE SIGNALS ARE INFORMATION ABOUT CONDITIONS, NOT CHARACTER.

OBSERVABLE SIGNAL	POSSIBLE CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS SIGNAL	WHAT TENDS TO SUPPORT CHANGE	
 Irritability Short fuse, easily agitated.	Load may be exceeding available capacity. Stress recovery may be incomplete.	• Reduce demands • Restore recovery	• Lower overall load • Increase predictability
 Withdrawal Pulling back, disengaging.	Capacity may be reduced. Recovery, space, or reduced stimulation may be needed.	• Create space before pressure • Lower expectations temporarily	• Offer connection without pressure • Reduce demands
 Hypervigilance Scanning, alert, easily startled.	The nervous system may still be responding as though threat is present. Safety has not yet been fully established.	• Increase predictability • Reduce uncertainty	• Create consistent safety • Support regulation
 Over-explaining Providing excessive detail or justification.	May reflect anticipated misunderstanding, uncertainty, or a need for reassurance and clarity.	• Provide clarity • Reduce ambiguity	• Respond with consistency • Avoid unnecessary criticism
 Numbing Flat, distant, checked out.	Capacity may be overwhelmed. The nervous system may be conserving energy through protective shutdown.	• Prioritize recovery • Reduce stimulation	• Restore regulation • Re-engage gradually
 People-Pleasing Difficultly saying no. Prioritizing others over self.	May reflect learned strategies for maintaining safety, connection, or approval.	• Encourage healthy boundaries • Reinforce personal agency	• Offer choice • Normalize saying no
 Avoidance Delaying, postponing, steering clear.	May reflect overwhelm, uncertainty, insufficient capacity, or anticipated discomfort—not necessarily unwillingness.	• Reduce overwhelm • Break work into smaller steps	• Increase predictability • Build momentum gradually
 Heightened Reactivity Big reactions, difficult to settle.	The nervous system may be operating outside its current window of tolerance.	• Slow the pace • Support co-regulation	• Reduce competing demands • Restore predictability
 Shutdown Freeze, disconnect, unable to respond.	Capacity has likely been exceeded. The nervous system is prioritizing protection over performance.	• Do not increase pressure • Offer safety and time	• Support recovery first • Re-engage gradually



OBSERVABLE SIGNALS PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT CONDITIONS.
 THEY DO NOT EXPLAIN THE WHOLE PERSON, PREDICT INTENT, OR DEFINE CHARACTER.
Understanding the conditions often changes the conversation.

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