

Union of Saints

Reclaiming Authority from “Shoulds”

Cognitive Distortions, Overwork, and the Right to Rest

Purpose

This document serves as an educational reflection for members, readers, and allies of the Union of Saints. It addresses a common but often unspoken harm, the quiet loss of personal authority through cognitive distortions, especially “*shoulds*,” social ordering, and cultural overwork.

Our aim is not to accuse, but to restore clarity, dignity, and agency.

1. What Are “Shoulds”?

“Shoulds” are internalized commands that replace discernment with obligation.

They sound like:

- I should be doing something.
- I should be more productive.
- I should respond immediately.
- I should not rest yet.

These statements do not arise from truth or necessity. They arise from learned pressure.

When repeated, “shoulds” become a form of internal governance, where the individual no longer chooses, but complies.

2. When Authority Is Quietly Taken

Authority is not always taken through force.

Often, it is surrendered through:

- Unspoken expectations
- Artificial urgency

- Guilt framed as concern
- Productivity framed as virtue

This creates an environment where a person feels *ordered*, even without commands.

The result:

- Anxiety during rest
- Hyper-vigilance
- Difficulty saying no
- A belief that stillness is failure

This is a conditioned response, not a character flaw.

3. The American Overwork Pattern

Many Americans are not simply busy, they are over-activated.

We are culturally trained to believe:

- Worth equals output
- Rest must be earned
- Availability equals goodness
- Stillness equals falling behind

This belief system is not natural.

It is industrial, not human.

When this pattern goes unexamined, even neutral requests can feel like demands, and rest can feel unsafe.

4. A Union of Saints Reframe

The Union of Saints affirms the following truths:

- Rest is not avoidance
- Stillness is not disobedience
- Slowness is not failure
- Being alive is not the same as being useful

We do not exist to be constantly activated. We exist to live with rhythm, discernment, and care.

5. Reclaiming Internal Authority

Replace “should” with choice.

Instead of:

- I should be doing something

Consider:

- What does my body, mind, or spirit require right now?

Instead of:

- They expect this of me

Consider:

- Do I consent to this expectation?

Instead of:

- I cannot rest yet

Consider:

- Rest is part of my responsibility to myself.

Authority returns when choice is restored.

6. Boundary Language (Calm and Non-Confrontational)

Union of Saints encourages low-drama, high-clarity boundaries:

- I will return to this later.
- This does not require immediate action.
- I am not available right now.
- I am choosing a slower pace today.
- I will decide when I have capacity.

These statements do not explain or apologize.

They re-center authority where it belongs.

7. A Closing Reflection

Overwork is often mistaken for virtue.

In truth, it is frequently fear, fear of being seen as insufficient.

Letting go of “shoulds” is not laziness.

It is:

- **Nervous system repair**
- **Cultural unlearning**
- **Spiritual maturity**
- **Self-respect**

The Union of Saints affirms:

You are not required to be constantly active to be worthy.

You are allowed to rest, and to choose. You are allowed to be human.
