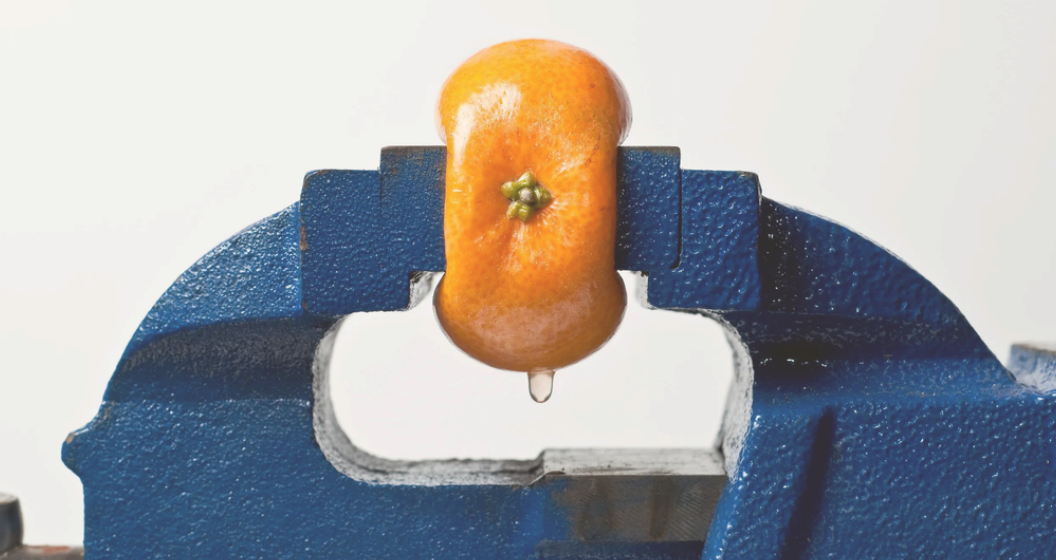




WORKPLACE SQUEEZE ASSESSMENT

Identifying Conditions that Quietly
Drain Capacity at Work

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SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

Most people are not exhausted because they lack motivation or resilience. They are exhausted because there are conditions at work that are rarely named. When systems pull people in opposing directions, pressure moves faster than clarity. Priorities compete. Decisions blur. Accountability spreads without authority.

We call these **squeeze conditions**. Squeeze conditions can be **structural, relational, or self-imposed, often operating together**.

Squeeze conditions are not about workload alone. They emerge when work asks people to hold unresolved contradictions just to keep functioning. In those conditions, people do what makes sense. They apply extra effort, absorb tension, and adjust themselves to keep things functioning.

This assessment helps you identify where squeeze conditions are present and where pressure is concentrating in your work.

SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

What This Assessment Is

This is a short diagnostic designed to surface patterns in the environment around you. It focuses on conditions – structural, relational, and self-imposed, not personality. It looks at what work is asking of people, not how people should behave.

What This Assessment Is Not

It is not:

- A personality test
- A resilience or burnout score
- A measure of competence or commitment

It does not judge the individual. It does not assign blame. It does not tell you what to fix.

How to Use It

Answer based on your current reality, not how things are supposed to work.

Choose the response that best reflects your experience most of the time. Do not overthink your answers. Overthinking is often part of the squeeze.

SECTION 2: HUMAN RESPONSE TO CONDITIONS

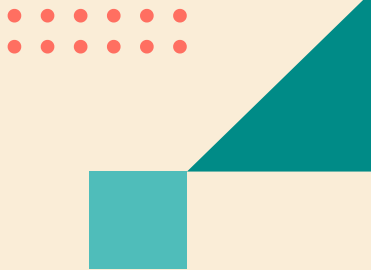
Squeeze conditions create pressure by pulling people in opposing directions and leaving contradictions unresolved. So people adapt. Over time, pressure goes somewhere. Often, it's absorbed through human effort, relational adjustment, and self-regulation.

This assessment focuses on identifying squeeze conditions. not the squeeze plays that later emerge in response to them. It does not identify or diagnose individual responses.

What We Call Squeeze Plays

Across many organizations, we observe predictable ways that people respond when squeeze conditions persist. We refer to these responses as squeeze plays.

Squeeze plays are the deliberate, often intelligent strategies people use – individually and relationally to keep work moving when conditions stop making sense. They are ways people adapt in order to function, succeed, or stay viable within the system they are operating inside.



SECTION 3: ABOUT THE QUESTIONS

These questions help identify squeeze conditions that arise when work creates competing demands. They focus on what your work, relationships, and expectations regularly require of you.

How to Complete

Move through the prompts quickly and answer based on your immediate experience, not what you think should be happening. There are no right answers. The goal is to notice patterns, not analyze them perfectly.

A Note on Accuracy

This assessment works best when responses are honest. If a question feels familiar, uncomfortable, or slightly absurd, note that reaction. Those responses are often signals worth returning to.

Squeeze conditions don't affect everyone in the same way. How they are experienced depends on role, context, relationships, and what has worked before. Responses are often deliberate and understandable, even when they become costly over time.

SECTION 4:

THE QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you notice how squeeze conditions show up day-to-day.

Reflective Questions

Directional Reflection

Looks at how clarity becomes unstable, shaping how priorities are set, shifted, or interpreted.

1. Where do I spend time guessing what matters?
2. What decisions feel harder than they should?
3. Where am I recalibrating repeatedly due to shifting priorities?

Structural Reflection

Looks at how unresolved organizational tensions shape how decisions are made, delayed, or revisited.

1. Where do I rely on workarounds to get work done?
2. What responsibilities have I taken on informally because they aren't clearly owned?
3. Which unresolved trade-offs or system gaps have I learned to bridge?

Reflective Questions

Relational Reflection

Looks at how tension shows up between people, including how you interpret reactions, avoid certain conversations, or adjust how you engage.

1. Where am I containing or smoothing tension between people or groups?
2. What am I holding privately so conflict or confusion doesn't surface publicly?

Self-Imposed Reflection

Looks at how internal expectations become conditions you operate within, including the standards you set for yourself and the pressure to meet them.

1. Where am I maintaining standards or expectations that no one has explicitly asked for?
2. What assumptions am I making about what is required to be seen as competent, helpful, or safe?

Reflective Questions

Capacity Reflection

Looks at how capacity strain pushes you beyond the scope of your role, shaping how you manage your time, energy, and attention across demands.

1. Where has sustained extra effort become normal?
2. What feels risky to stop doing, even temporarily?
3. What does rest fail to resolve right now?

Pattern Awareness

Looks at the broader pattern across your responses, including what feels familiar, what you've adapted to manage, what's helping, and may be costing.

1. Which questions felt immediately familiar?
2. What behaviors have I gotten good at in order to keep work moving?
3. What has working this way helped me accomplish?
4. What might this way of working be costing me, my team, or the work itself?

As you move through these questions, you may find it helpful to capture what stands out using the worksheet on the next page.

Stepping Back: Noticing the Pattern

As you move through the questions capture only what stands out, feels familiar, or creates friction.

Direction/Clarity	
What I'm noticing	
Where This Shows Up	
What Feels Harder Than it Should	
Structural	
What I'm noticing	
Where This Shows Up	
What Feels Harder Than it Should	

Stepping Back: Noticing the Pattern

As you move through the questions capture only what stands out, feels familiar, or creates friction.

Relational	
What I'm noticing	
Where This Shows Up	
What Feels Harder Than it Should	
Self Imposed Pressure	
What I'm noticing	
Where This Shows Up	
What Feels Harder Than it Should	

Stepping Back: Noticing the Pattern

As you move through the questions capture only what stands out, feels familiar, or creates friction.

Capacity/Load	
What I'm noticing	
Where This Shows Up	
What Feels Harder Than it Should	

Stepping Back: Noticing the Pattern

Review individual signals and notice the broader pattern emerging in how you are navigate your work.

What Felt Familiar?	
What have I got good at managing or working around?	
What has helped me accomplish or move things forward?	
What might this be costing me?	
If you had to describe the pattern in one sentence, what would you say is happening?	

SECTION 5: REVIEWING YOUR RESPONSES

When Squeeze Conditions Stack

When squeeze conditions stack, pressure compounds. Work becomes harder to navigate not because of workload alone, but because unresolved contradictions accumulate across roles, relationships, and expectations.

This does not mean something is wrong. It means the system is asking for more coherence than is currently being generated.

What This Is Showing You

Your responses are not a diagnosis or an instruction set. They are a map of pressure, not a map of action. This snapshot helps you:

- Notice patterns you may have normalized
- See where structural, relational, or self-imposed strain is concentrating
- Name experiences that have been difficult to articulate clearly

SECTION 5: REVIEWING YOUR RESPONSES

Reviewing Your Responses

As you look back, ask yourself:

- Which sections felt immediately familiar?
- Which questions were easiest to answer without much thought?
- Which ones created friction, discomfort, or a quiet sense of recognition?
- Where did you find yourself thinking, “Yes, that’s exactly it,” or “That explains a lot”?

Interpreting What Stands Out

The areas that stand out through familiarity, charge, or repetition point to where pressure is currently concentrating in your work.

You may notice more than one area emerging. This is common. Many people are operating inside more than one squeeze condition at the same time.

Closing Note

No conclusions are required yet. Seeing the pattern is enough for now.

Working With What You're Seeing

You may begin to notice these patterns not just in your own experience, but in conversations, meetings, and interactions with others.

Suggestion - use the below prompts in one-to-one conversations, with a small group, or as a team lead to open discussion.

Start by sharing your own observation, then invite others to reflect. This is not about diagnosing others, but making shared patterns visible.

Share

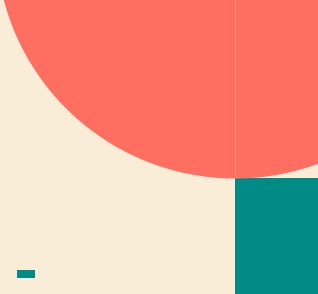
- One short pattern you've noticed in your own responses

Ask

- "How have you noticed this showing up for you or the team?"

Decide

- One small experiment to try next to see whether it reduces friction.



SECTION 6: BRIDGE FORWARD - FROM NOTICING TO PRACTICING

What This Assessment Opens Up

This not meant to stand on its own.

It is designed as an **entry point into a practice** – the practice of regaining orientation in complex, contradictory work environments.

Not orientation as a one-time insight. Not sensemaking as analysis or diagnosis. But orientation as something you return to, repeatedly, as conditions shift.

If completing this assessment helped you name pressures you've been carrying, notice contradictions you've normalized, or recognize patterns that suddenly feel less personal, then it's doing what it's meant to do.



Understanding squeeze conditions is a first step. What follows in the **Squeeze Course** and other BBHQ work, is learning how to stay with what you've noticed long enough to make sense of it, before deciding what, if anything, to do.

That work focuses on:

- interpretation before action
- orientation before optimization
- small, deliberate experiments rather than fixes
- understanding context rather than fixing behavior

This is developmental not prescriptive work. Reflective, not reactive. Grounded in real conditions, not idealized models.

A Note on Sensemaking and Satire

Our sensemaking uses humor, and absurdity to surface patterns that are difficult to see directly. When something sounds strange and you say it out loud, or hear it from others, or seems ridiculous when viewed from the outside. But that reaction is a signal.

Satirical sensemaking uses those signals as data, to help people regain perspective without blame or defensiveness. This assessment does not teach that practice fully. It introduces the logic behind it.

We Value Your Perspective

This assessment is part of an ongoing investigation into modern work and the humans navigating it.

We'd love to know:

- What stood out to you?
- What felt accurate?
- What surprised you?
- What felt unclear or incomplete?

Your feedback helps shape what we explore next. Please reach out to hello@behavingbadlyhq.com.

An Invitation

If this assessment resonated, it's not because you're behind or struggling. It's because you're noticing. And noticing in environments that reward speed, certainty, and performance is increasingly rare.

This assessment is an invitation to continue developing that capacity, at your own pace, and in ways that fit your context. Whether you go further now, later, or simply return to these questions when work starts to feel compressed again, the practice remains available. We'll keep investigating. Fellow traveller, you're welcome to continue with us.

ABOUT BEHAVING BADLY HQ

Behaving Badly HQ is an ongoing investigation into modern work and the humans navigating it.

We study patterns that emerge when systems lose coherence and people quietly absorb the strain.

Our work focuses on naming what often goes unspoken, so individuals and organizations can understand pressure more clearly before trying to fix it.

We're not here to optimize people.
We're here to understand the conditions they're operating inside.

This assessment is part of an ongoing investigation into modern work and the humans navigating it.

Behaving Badly HQ
www.behavingbadlyhq.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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FOUNDER, BBHQ



Charleen Johnson is the founder of Behaving Badly HQ, a sensemaking studio and a key player in the InSpark Group's research program which explores how people navigate complexity, contradiction, and pressure in modern work and life.

After two decades working inside large organizations across leadership, culture, and transformation, she began noticing a recurring pattern: capable people adapting intelligently to conditions that no longer made sense, often at personal cost. Her work now focuses on making those conditions visible, legible, and discussable.

Through Behaving Badly HQ and Behaving Badly Books™, Charleen develops field papers, frameworks, and learning experiences that use humor, absurdity, and close observation to support orientation rather than optimization. Her approach treats organizations as living systems and behavior as a rational response to context, not a personal flaw to be fixed.

Her ongoing research examines how people maintain orientation under pressure, and how practitioners and leaders can work more effectively with the conditions shaping behavior.