



JONATHAN STEIN
HOLISTIC MIND & LIFE COACH

www.jonathanstein.org
jsteinamite@gmail.com
(617) 515-0327

Working With Your Mind

A Shared Language for Our Sessions

This handout offers simple terms we may use in our work together. They are not labels for who you are. They are just names for patterns, so we can see them more clearly and relate to them differently.

Use this as a reference between sessions. You can circle what feels familiar, add notes, or bring questions to our time together.

The Self-Judge

What it is:

The inner voice that criticizes, compares, doubts, or tells you you are “too much” or “not enough.” It often sounds like a harsh, familiar commentator in your mind.

How it shows up:

- Replaying conversations and picking yourself apart
- Assuming you have done something wrong
- Measuring yourself against others and always coming up short

Why we name it:

Seeing it as **The Self-Judge** helps us remember it is a pattern the mind learned, not the truth of who you are.

The Guilt Loop

What it is:

A repeating cycle of self-blame, regret, and “I should have known better.” It keeps you stuck reviewing the past instead of responding to the present.

How it shows up:

- Replaying a mistake long after it is over
- Feeling responsible for other people’s feelings
- Finding it hard to let yourself off the hook

Why we name it:



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When we call it **The Guilt Loop**, it becomes something we can step out of, not a life sentence.

The Urgency Trap

What it is:

The feeling that something must be fixed right now or everything will fall apart. Your body may feel revved up, even if nothing urgent is actually happening.

How it shows up:

- Rushing to answer messages or make decisions
- Feeling behind, even when you are on time
- Struggling to rest because “there is always more to do”

Why we name it:

Naming **The Urgency Trap** helps us pause and ask, 'Is this truly urgent, or is my mind just running ahead of what's actually here?'

The Should Fog

What it is:

A mental fog created by all the “shoulds” in your mind. It makes it hard to feel what you actually want or know.

How it shows up:

- Thoughts like “I should be further along” or “I should be grateful”
- Feeling torn between options and unable to decide
- Confusing other people’s expectations with your own direction

Why we name it:

Seeing **The Should Fog** as a pattern lets us gently separate the “shoulds” from your own honest sense of what is right for you.

The Reactivity Gap

What it is:

The space between something that happens and how you respond. At first this gap can feel very small or invisible.

How it shows up:



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- Snapping, shutting down, or people-pleasing before you even realize it
- Feeling like your reactions “just happen” to you
- Only noticing what you did after the fact

Why we name it:

By noticing **The Reactivity Gap**, we slowly widen it. Even a little more space can give you more choice in how you respond.

The Tightening

What it is:

The felt sense of fear, pressure, or self-attack in the body. Often noticed as tension in the chest, throat, stomach, jaw, or shoulders.

How it shows up:

- A clench in your body when you make a mistake or imagine worst-case scenarios
- Physical bracing before a conversation, email, or decision
- A sense of shrinking, freezing, or wanting to disappear

Why we name it:

Calling it **The Tightening** lets us notice it early, as body data, instead of letting it silently run the show.

The Return

What it is:

The gentle shift from noise, self-attack, or fear back to a steadier, clearer sense of yourself. It is not dramatic. It is a small, repeatable turn in a kinder direction.

How it shows up:

- Remembering, “Oh, this is The Self-Judge talking,” and softening even a little
- Taking one slower breath before responding
- Seeing a familiar pattern and choosing not to follow it as strongly

Why we name it:

The Return is the heart of our work. You do not have to stop difficult thoughts from arising. We focus on how you come back when they do.



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Steadiness

What it is:

A way of being with your own mind and life that feels more grounded, spacious, and trustworthy, even when things are still imperfect or uncertain.

How it shows up:

- Reacting a little less quickly
- Feeling a bit more room to breathe in tense moments
- Trusting yourself more when decisions feel messy

Why we name it:

We are not aiming for perfection or constant calm. We are aiming for **Steadiness**: a more reliable, lived sense that you can be with your own experience.

Shared Language

What it is:

The set of terms and images we build together so we can talk about your inner experience in simple, clear ways.

How it shows up:

- Saying, “This feels like The Guilt Loop,” and both of us knowing what that means
- Having a short phrase for a pattern that used to feel confusing or overwhelming
- Being able to recognize familiar moves of your mind without harshness

Why we name it:

A **shared language** makes the work more practical. It turns vague discomfort into something we can see, name, and work with together.

How to Use This Handout

- Notice which terms feel familiar.
- Bring this handout to sessions if it helps you point to what is happening.



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- You can always disagree with a word or term. We can adjust the language so it feels true to you.

This is not a test and not a diagnosis. It is simply a map we build together so your inner world becomes easier to navigate.