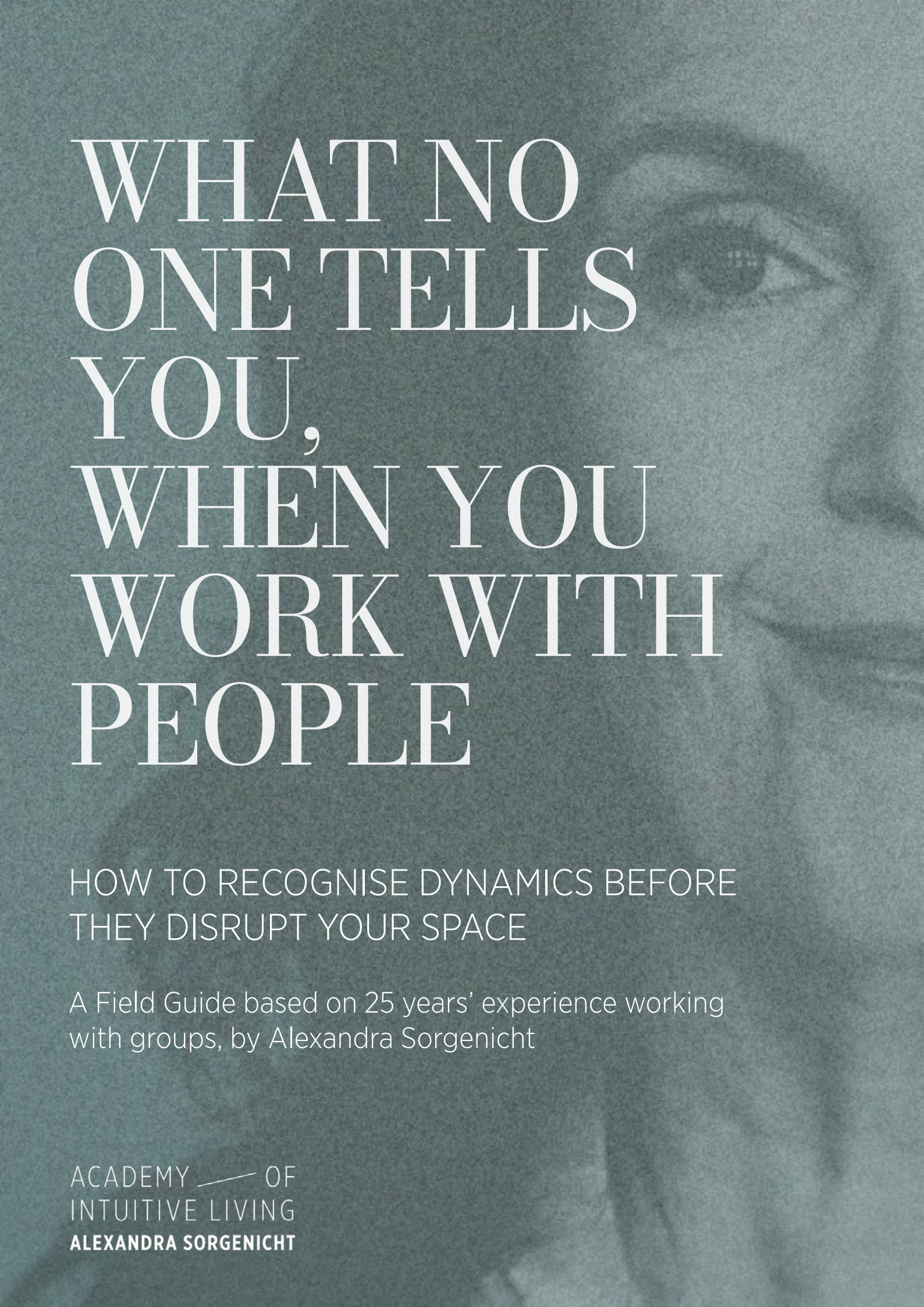

WHAT NO ONE TELLS YOU, WHEN YOU WORK WITH PEOPLE

HOW TO RECOGNISE DYNAMICS BEFORE THEY DISRUPT YOUR SPACE

A Field Guide based on 25 years' experience working with groups, by Alexandra Sorgenicht

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PREFACE

The Field Guide I Wish I'd Had 25 Years Ago

I started working with intuition while I was still in training myself. At the time, I was on my way to becoming a filmmaker, and on the side I ran workshops for women in Munich. From the beginning, I brought what I was learning about intuition into those workshops. Something that had accompanied me all my life, something I had barely had words for, suddenly took shape. I could talk about it, work with it, teach it. Long before I could have explained why, I knew: this work had to go out into the world.
So I worked. A few years later, I was deputy managing director of a film production company in Cologne, and the groups in my intuition training were still quite small. When I became fully self-employed and founded the Institute for Intuition Training, everything changed. The work grew almost entirely through word of mouth, and my training courses and programmes were packed.

I was excited. And I was naive.
I assumed we all wanted the same thing: development, insight, greater freedom, a more self-directed life. I assumed everyone was like me.

I knew about group dynamics, projection, conflict and the psychological processes that emerge when people work together over time. But there was something I had not understood deeply enough: not everyone who enters a developmental space is necessarily there for the same reasons.
I had taken other people's willingness to develop for granted. And for a long time, I kept approaching difficult dynamics as though more understanding, another conversation or a better intervention would eventually lead to change.

I tend to take too much responsibility. I am highly empathic and highly sensitive, and some of my neurodivergent traits make me particularly perceptive in certain situations and particularly vulnerable in others. I see people's potential very quickly, and for a long time I believed it was my job to help that potential become real. That made me a good facilitator. It also made me vulnerable.

I allowed people to take advantage of me. I set boundaries too late and held on to people for too long. I tolerated things when I already knew something was wrong. I made mistakes as a leader.

So I learned: about groups, leadership, power, trauma and myself. I sought supervision, continued my professional training, worked through my own history, developed my own method over the years, the INTUITIVE HUMAN METHOD™, and began to understand that some of our greatest strengths are also exactly where we can become vulnerable. Even so, for a long time I believed that everything that went wrong was ultimately down to me. I was the leader, after all…

What I had been observing, and only gradually came to understand in its full extent, surprised me: teachers I respected deeply knew these experiences too. People had idealised them and later devalued them. Long-term students had left in conflict and afterwards told a radically distorted version of their time together. Boundaries had been experienced as a lack of care, decisions as abuses of power, and human mistakes, or simply being human, as proof that someone should never have been in a position of leadership in the first place.

Why the hell had nobody told me this?

During one supervision session, I asked one of my teachers. His answer, roughly, was this: Some people arrive angry and leave angry. Afterwards, they may speak badly about you. We cannot always prevent that. And it does not necessarily mean that we have done something wrong. I remember how relieved and unsettled I felt at the same time. You know this? Everyone goes through this?? Then why does nobody talk about it? This Field Guide grew out of that question.

I have now been working with people for around 25 years, and the vast majority of them do not appear in this Field Guide. I have worked with people who wrestled seriously with their own development. People who disagreed, cried, struggled and made mistakes. They took responsibility and carried what they learned into medicine, psychotherapy, education,

nursing, coaching, midwifery, law and their own professional work. They changed relationships, founded companies, left jobs that were making them miserable and began to live differently. They were not always easy. Neither was I.

This Field Guide is about the other situations: the dynamics in which development is no longer what the space is really organising itself around, and how we can learn to recognise that sooner.

This is not a manual for weeding out difficult people, and it is not a collection of diagnoses. It is what I wish I had had back then: a map. A map that helps you recognise earlier what is happening. So that you can remain compassionate without making yourself responsible for everything, and set boundaries before you are so exhausted or hurt that the only boundaries you have left are hard ones. And so that you learn to trust your own perception sooner.

I needed this Field Guide back then. So I'm writing it now.

I'M WRITING THIS *AS A WOMAN*

For everyone who leads groups. From one particular perspective.

This Field Guide is for anyone who leads groups or takes responsibility for developmental spaces: in coaching, therapy, consulting, bodywork, spirituality, education or organisations. Most of the dynamics in these pages occur among people of all genders.

But I am writing this as a woman, and that changes the perspective. Leadership can hurt. If you are visible, you become a surface for projection. If you take responsibility, you will be criticised. If you set boundaries, not everyone will love you for it. In my experience, women in leadership face an additional set of expectations: we are expected to care, to be available, to be warm. We are expected not to display our authority too clearly. We are allowed to have feelings, but preferably not in ways that might cause anyone to call us emotional. And sooner or later, a mother enters the room, whether we want that role or not.

Social-psychological research has described this double bind for decades. Women who appear competent and assertive are more likely to be perceived as unlikeable, while women who appear warm and caring can more easily be perceived as less competent. I know this pattern from my own work. It is from that position that I write the short sections throughout this Field Guide titled "When You Lead as a Woman". The relevant research is listed in the references at the end.

Many women respond to these expectations by controlling themselves twice over. We carry more because carrying is expected of us and because we are good at it. We weigh every no because a woman's no is more readily interpreted as coldness. We try not to appear emotional and, in doing so, sometimes lose touch with the very perception that makes us good at working with people. Surprisingly, I rarely talk about this with other women in leadership. Talking about it does not make us less suited to lead. I have come to believe it is one of the conditions for not wearing ourselves out in the process.

Where being a woman changes the dynamic in a meaningful way, you will therefore find a short section under some of the types: When You Lead as a Woman.

Men who lead encounter different projections and different traps: the father figure expected to be unshakeable; authority that may be accepted more readily and at the same time read more quickly as dominance; closeness that can come under suspicion sooner. I have observed some of these dynamics in male colleagues. I do not know them from the inside. So I will name what I have seen and leave the inside view to those who have lived it.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Why Types?

Any typology is a simplification, because people are not types. The figures on the following pages are condensed versions of dynamics I have encountered repeatedly in my work. In places I have deliberately sharpened them: like a caricature, one feature is drawn larger so that you can recognise it.

A person may show several of these dynamics, and some only in one particular relationship. People can change, and a difficult dynamic does not make anyone a bad person. So the question here is not “What is wrong with this person?” but: What is happening right now? With the other person, with me, between us, and with the space I am responsible for?
Reflective people sometimes lose clarity at exactly this point. We look for our own part, examine our projections, question our reactions and want to be fair. That is as it should be. It becomes difficult when self-reflection turns into the method by which we invalidate our own perception. These pages are meant to turn a vague feeling back into information, and information, eventually, into a decision.

And the Other Direction

The tools I describe here can also be used against the people we work with. Abuse of power in developmental spaces is real, and many people who leave angry have good reasons. That is why Part II explicitly turns the lens around: What if the leader is the problem? It is one of the most important chapters in this Field Guide. If you immediately think of particular people while reading the types, read that chapter early.

A Word About the Names

The figures are written as women and men. They describe dynamics, not genders, and almost all occur across genders. I have deliberately kept two figures female: The Needy Favourite and The Exorcist are dynamics I have so far encountered in this form only among women. That is an observation from my own rooms, which for many years were predominantly female. It is not a statement about women.

A Word About the Examples

I am not retelling the stories of former participants. The examples are abstracted and condensed from many years of practice. I am interested in the dynamic, not in who did what. I therefore deliberately leave out specific roles, functions, timelines and biographical details. Where I reproduce individual sentences verbatim, they have been removed from their original context. No one is meant to be portrayed here. The pattern is what should become recognisable.

Two Terms

By developmental space I mean any setting in which people work on themselves over an extended period and give someone trust and influence: a training programme, a year-long group, a coaching programme, a retreat, a team. By the field I mean what emerges when several people are in that space: the atmosphere, the unwritten rules, who gets how much room.

What This Field Guide Cannot Do

This is an initial orientation, not supervision, therapy or legal advice. If someone in your space enters an acute crisis, poses a danger to themselves or others, or talks about suicide, safety comes before method: seek professional help, refer them to doctors, therapists or crisis services, and do not carry it alone. If you are dealing with allegations, copyright questions or contractual disputes, you need legal advice, not a field guide.

How This Field Guide Is Structured

Each type in Part I follows the same structure: a short snapshot of how the dynamic appears, what it is about, early warning signs, what helps, and a check with space for your own notes. Part II turns the focus towards you as the leader. Part III is your own workbook. At the end you will find all ten types at a glance and the phrases that have proved useful in difficult moments.

WHERE DO I START?

You do not have to read this Field Guide from the beginning. Start where it hurts right now.

I think more about someone's development than they do.
➔ 01 The Endless Loop · 10 The Rescuer · Worksheet 2

Someone who used to admire me has become cutting since I became more visible.
➔ 02 The Intimate Rival

I defend one participant more often than the others and make exceptions for her.
➔ 03 The Needy Favourite

I have to prove to an adult that something was agreed.
➔ 04 The Perpetual Innocent

Every no from me starts another discussion.
➔ 05 The Renegotiator

I feel responsible for another person's feelings.
➔ 06 The Entitled One

Someone is more interested in my methods than in their own process.
➔ 07 The Extractor

No matter how I respond, it is used against me.
➔ 08 The Moral Sniper

I'm told that "many people" in the group feel the same way.
➔ Worksheet 3: The Four-Way Check

After someone leaves, an entirely different story about me is being told.
➔ 09 The Exorcist · When It Goes Public

After conversations with one person, I repeatedly feel exhausted or confused.
➔ A Closer Look: Narcissistic Dynamics · Part of Me Already Knew

I'm wondering whether I am the problem.
➔ When the Leader Is the Problem

I'm considering ending a working relationship.
➔ When Is Enough Enough? · Worksheet 4

FOUR QUESTIONS

They run through the entire Field Guide.

1. What Belongs to Me?

My history, my triggers, my needs, my mistakes, my projections, my responsibility. Does this person remind me of someone from my past? Does competition make me nervous? Do I find it hard to disappoint someone? Do I need recognition or harmony myself? All of that belongs to me.

2. What Belongs to the Other Person?

Their history, feelings, expectations, decisions and behaviour. Not everything that is activated in relation to me was caused by me. Someone can be disappointed in me without my having done anything wrong. They can be hurt and still remain responsible for their behaviour. They can think my boundary is terrible and still have to respect it.

3. What Is Happening Between Us?

People create dynamics together. I become more and more explanatory while the other person becomes more demanding. I become more caring while she becomes more dependent. I withdraw while the other person becomes more intense. At that point I am less interested in who started it than in the loop we are building together.

4. What Is the Field Doing to Us?

This question is surprisingly easy to forget in groups. While we are trying to understand one person, other people are sitting there too. They watch, react and learn from what we allow: whose needs determine the room, which boundaries actually apply, which behaviour receives attention. Your responsibility therefore never applies only to the person who currently needs the most attention. It applies to the whole space.

Self-reflection is not the same as self-blame. You can take full responsibility for your part without taking responsibility for theirs as well.

PART I

PEOPLE WE MEET

In real life, dynamics do not wear name tags. We do not see “The Endless Loop”; we see someone who is suffering and whom we want to help one more time. We do not see “The Intimate Rival”; we see someone who admires us and wants to be close. And we do not see responsibility being displaced; we sit at home in the evening wondering whether our email really was unclear.

Often we do see the signs. We simply have not yet realised that they belong together. That is what the following types are for.

01



THE ENDLESS LOOP

01

THE ENDLESS LOOP

A great deal has been tried.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

The third conversation about the same issue this quarter. Again it is intense, again intelligent, and at the end there is a new sentence that feels like a breakthrough. Four weeks later, the conversation begins almost in the same place. And you notice that before it even started, you were already wondering which exercise you might offer this time.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

The Endless Loop initially looks like development. Someone caught in it reflects, understands connections, does exercises, has conversations, reads books and can often explain brilliantly why something is difficult. A great deal happens, yet very little changes. The issue returns in a new form with another insight attached to it, we work on it again, and a few weeks later we are standing in the same place.

For people who love supporting others, this dynamic is seductive. We think it needs one more question, one more exercise, one more conversation, and before long we are working harder on someone's development than they are. Development is not made of insight alone. At some point it demands a decision, a boundary, a conversation, a goodbye or a risk. **Then what matters is no longer what someone has understood, but what they do with what they now know about themselves.**

When Suffering Becomes an Exemption

Some people go through periods in which they need an extraordinary amount of support. Trauma, illness, loss or crisis can severely limit a person's capacity to act for a time. I have worked with severely traumatised people who needed a great deal of attention for a while. We made that transparent in the group, the others could understand why this person was taking more space at that moment, and sometimes everyone learned something valuable from it. The amount of suffering tells you nothing about whether someone is capable of development.

People have very different relationships with their own suffering. Some have to use almost all their strength simply to get through the day. Others turn suffering into fuel: it cannot go on like this, so something has to change. It becomes difficult when suffering permanently becomes the reason why no developmental demand should apply to this one person. Then someone wants to remain in the process while simultaneously explaining why what the process asks of them is impossible. In developmental work, the question is therefore not only how much someone suffers, but what they do with their suffering.

Suffering can make development almost impossible for a time. It can make development urgently necessary. And it can become the reason why nothing has to change. No one can be brave on your behalf.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Pay less attention to the intensity of the conversations than to what happens between them. Does insight lead to action at least sometimes? Does behaviour change? Does the person take responsibility for the next step? The most reliable warning sign is your own activity: you are thinking more often about their development than they are.

WHAT HELPS

Do not immediately offer the next solution. Name the repetition and return the responsibility.

> “We have understood this issue several times now. I’m less interested in the next insight than in what you are actually going to do with it.”

YOUR CHECK

Where am I currently working harder on someone's development than they are?

What would happen if I stopped offering the next solution?

02



THE INTIMATE RIVAL

02

THE INTIMATE RIVAL

I want to be close to you. And eventually your strength becomes a problem.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

Sometimes closeness begins to turn into position. It may be almost imperceptible: a small attempt to secure proximity, a comment after your talk that sounds like praise and still stings, a question about why you chose to support someone else. None of these moments means much on its own. What matters is the pattern they begin to form.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

The Intimate Rival usually begins with admiration. She values your work, wants to learn from you and seeks closeness. You get on well, you see something in her, support her, give her responsibility and make her visible. None of that is a problem. If you train people, you want them to grow. A student is allowed to become a colleague and to become as good as her teacher, or better, in some areas.

Healthy competition can hold both realities. I can see what you can do without feeling smaller. I can want what you have without believing I am entitled to it. I can become powerful without needing you to become less powerful.

With the Intimate Rival, something shifts. Closeness takes on a special meaning, and eventually it is no longer enough to be part of a circle. She needs special access, a special position or an equality that skips over real differences in role and experience. Does she want to be close to me, or does she need a special position near me?

The dynamic is usually tested when that position is not confirmed: when other people become important, someone else receives attention, you become more successful or visible, or a decision makes clear that you can be close and still not occupy the same role. Admiration can then turn into rivalry.

WHEN YOU LEAD AS A WOMAN

Competition between women can be difficult to name when solidarity and mutual support are strongly expected. We may genuinely want to support one another and still experience rivalry. That is precisely why rivalry is not always fought out openly. It can appear in closeness, small barbs and questions of loyalty. Many women in leadership instinctively make themselves smaller so as not to endanger the connection. The conflict may still come, only later and harder.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Do not only observe how she responds to your weaknesses. Watch how she responds to your strength. Can she be pleased about your success? Are other people allowed to matter too? Do small barbs, qualifications or devaluations appear between admiration and closeness? Do real differences repeatedly become relationship problems? One situation proves nothing. The information lies in the pattern.

WHAT HELPS

Do not let closeness replace clarity of roles. You do not have to make yourself smaller to meet her as an equal. If you suspect rivalry, check whether it might be coming from you. If you have honestly done that and the answer is no, you can trust your no.

“We may have grown closer, but our roles are still different.”

YOUR CHECK

What happens to this relationship when I am visible, successful or unequivocal in my authority?

Where am I making myself smaller in order to preserve closeness?

03



THE NEEDY FAVOURITE

03

THE NEEDY FAVOURITE

When care turns into special status.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

Clear, factual feedback in the group. Tears. Ten minutes later, the conversation is no longer about the behaviour but about the pain, and everyone, including you, is taking care of her. The original issue disappears. I learned over time that when someone strongly activates my impulse to care, the group may experience the relationship very differently from the way I do. What feels like connection to me can already look like special status to everyone else.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

This type is particularly difficult to recognise for people who naturally care for others. She appears vulnerable, insecure, cries easily and doubts herself, while at the same time we see her talent and potential. Something in us responds. I know that movement well and call it my maternal heart. There is nothing wrong with it. It becomes difficult when care gradually turns into a special relationship, and the relationship into special status.

Tears, vulnerability and trauma are not warning signs. What matters is what happens next. Can I raise something difficult and stay with the issue? Or does the person being confronted regularly become the person everyone must now care for? When that loop repeats, it changes not only the relationship between two people but the whole room. The group notices who gets more time, who receives exceptions and whom the leader is quickest to defend.

WHEN YOU LEAD AS A WOMAN

A woman leading a group can quickly become the mother, whether she wants that role or not. Mother projections bring old family patterns into the room: the favourite child, siblings competing for attention, the daughter who eventually has to separate. Sometimes we invite those projections ourselves because caring feels so natural. It helps to recognise the role before stepping into it: I am the leader here, not the mother, even if I have maternal qualities.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Often you first recognise this dynamic in yourself. You think about her more than the others, explain her behaviour more often, give extra chances, want to protect her and see very clearly who she could become. **Is my support increasing her independence, or mainly her attachment to me?**

WHAT HELPS

Stay caring and return responsibility. She is allowed to cry and still hear feedback. She is allowed to be disappointed and still respect a boundary. Noticing is not the same as being responsible. Care does not become smaller when it has boundaries. It becomes clearer.

> "I can see that this is affecting you deeply. We are still going to stay with the issue."

YOUR CHECK

Am I supporting her because she is ready for her next step, or because I can see so clearly who she could become?

How would the group describe my relationship with her?

04



THE PERPETUAL INNOCENT

04

THE PERPETUAL INNOCENT

The explanation changes. Responsibility remains elsewhere.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

An assignment is due by the next meeting. It is missing. First the deadline was unclear, then the task itself, then a message arrived too late. Twenty minutes later you are discussing your communication. And you catch yourself apologising for an ambiguity that did not exist.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

We all forget appointments, miss emails, misunderstand agreements and make mistakes. With the Perpetual Innocent, what matters is where responsibility goes afterwards. The explanation can change: the email never arrived, the information was unclear, the expectation was communicated too late, someone should have reminded them, the process was badly organised. Any one of those explanations may be plausible. Only repetition reveals the pattern: **at the end of every explanation, responsibility reliably lies somewhere else.**

It becomes particularly clear when the situation can be checked. There is an agreement, several people remember it, the email exists. Still there is no simple “You’re right, I missed that.” Instead the level shifts. The information was there, but the communication was wrong. The agreement was clear, but the expectation was unreasonable. You end up in the strange position of having to prove to an adult that their own responsibility exists.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Watch the small mistakes. Can he say, “That one was mine”? Or do his mistakes always require context while yours require consequences?

WHAT HELPS

Stop trying to prove reality down to the last detail. Name the agreement, the behaviour and the consequence. You can improve your communication, but perfect communication cannot manufacture responsibility in another person.

“That was agreed. You didn’t do it.
Now let’s look at how you deal with that.”

YOUR CHECK

Am I documenting sensibly, or am I now collecting evidence to prove he is responsible?

Which explanation did I last accept even though I did not believe it?

05



THE RENEGOTIATOR

05

THE RENEGOTIATOR

For her, no is the beginning of a conversation.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

A session ends on time. A decision has been made. An hour later, a long message arrives. The next day there is another, this time with a feeling instead of an argument. The following week, the relationship itself becomes the question. The no is not ignored. It is worked on until it starts to look like an open question again.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

A no may disappoint. The person receiving it may ask a question and even negotiate once. But a boundary is not an invitation to collaborative problem-solving. First and foremost, it is information: this is as far as I go. The other person may regret that and even think it is wrong.

The Renegotiator dynamic begins when a clear no does not end the matter but opens another round. The subject changes; the goal remains the same: the boundary is meant to reopen. A request for an exception becomes a discussion about equality. A decision about roles becomes a question about the quality of the relationship.

Often something very human sits underneath these rounds: fear, insecurity, an old experience of rejection. Understanding that can explain a great deal. It does not change the boundary. Empathy can make a boundary more humane. It does not make it negotiable.

Sometimes “I experience your decision as hurtful” quietly becomes “Your decision is hurtful”. The feeling is real. It does not automatically describe what happened.

WHEN YOU LEAD AS A WOMAN

In my experience, a woman's no can readily be experienced as a lack of care. Social expectations around female warmth and availability can make a clear decision feel relational in a way it might not otherwise feel. Many women therefore explain a no at length, cushion it and provide emotional aftercare. But every additional explanation can signal: there is still something to discuss.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

A clearly answered question returns in a new form, usually one level higher: first fairness, then feeling, then relationship, finally your leadership. The clearer signal is often in you. Before you say no, you are already thinking about how to soften the reaction you expect. At that point your professional judgement is no longer the only thing shaping your leadership; the other person's anticipated reaction is shaping it too.

WHAT HELPS

Explain a boundary well once. Then let it stand.

"I can see that my answer is affecting you.
The answer is still no."

YOUR CHECK

Which boundary have I explained more than once recently, and to whom?

Am I leading according to what I believe is right, or according to the reaction I am trying to avoid?

06



THE ENTITLED ONE

06

THE ENTITLED ONE

When someone's need becomes your responsibility.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

You say that the next one-to-one session is available in two weeks, as it is for everyone else. The response: he has just opened up, and now you are abandoning him. Suddenly you are defending a framework that applies to the whole group as though it were a personal rejection.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

People have needs, and there is no such thing as a developmental space without them. A need says: I need something right now. Entitlement says: you are responsible for making sure I get it. The difference is small enough to miss easily and large enough to change an entire group.

He feels unseen, and that may be true. He needs more safety, which is understandable, and wants more attention. The shift begins when the reality of the feeling automatically creates an obligation for everyone else. **A real feeling does not automatically create a legitimate claim.** Sometimes an emotional invoice is added: because I opened up to you, you owe me something now.

If the leader feels responsible for other people's inner states, eventually nothing they do can be right, because feelings cannot be permanently regulated by external adjustment. In groups, the others also notice that intense needs change the framework. Some become quieter, some make their own needs smaller, some withdraw. The room begins to organise itself around regulating one person rather than around its actual purpose.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

You do not recognise him by how much he needs, but by what happens when he does not get it. Can he express a need and leave your freedom intact? Or does “I need” quickly become “You must”?

WHAT HELPS

Acknowledge the feeling without taking over responsibility for it. A need can exist alongside another person’s freedom. Entitlement eventually cannot.

> “I can see that this is painful for you.
> I still cannot give you what you want from me here.”

YOUR CHECK

Where am I confusing compassion with responsibility?

Who in my group has become quieter lately?

07



THE EXTRACTOR

07

THE EXTRACTOR

He is not here to learn. He is here to extract.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

He takes notes, most carefully when you lead an exercise or explain an intervention. Questions about his own issue remain brief. Questions about your method become precise: How did you introduce that? Why that sequence? Over time, you may notice that his attention remains focused less on what the work is changing in him than on what can be taken away and used elsewhere.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

Some people enter a developmental space and pay very close attention. They listen carefully, observe a great deal, ask intelligent questions and take an interest in methods, interventions, language and connections. For a long time, I automatically took attentiveness as evidence of willingness to learn. Today, attentiveness alone no longer tells me that.

In supervision, I once heard a sentence that gave language to something I had been perceiving: She is not here to learn. **She is here to take something.** I do not use that sentence as a diagnosis of a person. I use it as a working question, and it applies to men as well as women.

Learning and Extracting Are Not the Same

Of course people enter developmental spaces to take something away with them. They invest time, money and trust and want to learn. But learning, to me, means that what is received enters a process of its own. A person tries things, allows themselves to be challenged, changes through the encounter, perhaps disagrees, discards something and eventually develops something of their own.

With extracting, attention shifts towards what can be used: How do you work? Which exercises work? How do you hold a room? What can I use

myself? From the outside, this can look just as engaged as learning. The difference often becomes visible only over time: material is absorbed quickly, while the person's own process remains strangely untouched. Questions of origin and acknowledgement can become part of the picture too. None of this proves anything about a person's character. It is information about how they relate to learning, influence and what they receive from others.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Notice whether interest in methods is greater than interest in the person's own process. Can they name what they have learned from others? Can they distinguish between what they adopted, what they developed further and what is genuinely their own? How do they speak about former teachers, mentors or training environments from which they clearly took a great deal?

WHAT HELPS

You do not have to hide your knowledge. In longer training programmes and professional contexts, however, establish early and in writing how materials, exercises and content may be used and shared. The professional question remains: Is this person genuinely engaging with their own learning process, or mainly collecting what is useful to them?

> "I'm glad when you work with what you learn here. What matters to me is that you can distinguish between what you adopted, what you developed further and what you created yourself."

YOUR CHECK

Am I confusing attentiveness with readiness for development?

How does this person relate to the sources of their own development?

Do I feel “petty” when I want to point to my copyright, even though doing so is entirely legitimate?

08



THE MORAL SNIPER

08

THE MORAL SNIPER

He sees your blind spot.
His own, considerably less clearly.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

In developmental spaces, visible humanity can be used against the leader. If you cry, you are suddenly “not healed”. If you are hurt, you are “not integrated”. If you become angry, you are “not embodied enough”. A mistake is no longer treated as a mistake but as evidence about the whole person or the entire body of work.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

This is what makes the dynamic difficult: the criticism may be entirely justified. Anyone who leads needs people who disagree and show us where our blind spots are and where we use power badly. Criticism becomes problematic when moral perception turns into a position from which only everyone else is examined. What actually happened, how he experienced it, how he interprets it and the moral judgement he draws from it begin to blur. The more serious the accusation, the more important those distinctions become.

The system becomes particularly closed when every response from the criticised person is treated as further evidence. Disagreement proves an inability to take criticism. Explanation becomes defensiveness. Withdrawal becomes avoidance. An apology is insufficient or is read as tactical. Is there any answer left in this conversation that cannot be used as evidence against me?

The Trap of the Fully Developed Leader

Leaders in developmental spaces sometimes encounter a peculiar expectation: they may be human as long as their humanity inconveniences no one. Feelings are fine, provided they are the right feelings. Mistakes are fine, provided nobody gets hurt. Boundaries are fine, provided everyone understands them. Of course people who work with others need to work on their own issues, and the greater their influence, the more important that becomes. Development does not make us invulnerable. Professiona-

lism does not mean having no human reactions. It means dealing with them responsibly.

WHEN YOU LEAD AS A WOMAN

In my experience, criticism of women in leadership often reaches beyond a decision and into judgements about disposition: too hard, too cold, not caring enough, in spiritual spaces not healed enough. The leader is judged not only by what she does but against an ideal of the perfectly caring female teacher that no one can fulfil. It helps to separate the two and ask which concrete decision is actually being criticised.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Can he examine his own interpretation as well? Can he receive criticism himself? Can he name a mistake you made without turning it into an explanation of your whole character? Above all: does the standard remain stable, or does it rise with every demand you meet?

WHAT HELPS

Examine the criticism. Take in what is true. Apologise when there is something to apologise for. That does not require handing them the final word on who you are. Valid criticism does not legitimise every behaviour of the person making it, and a problematic way of delivering criticism does not invalidate the criticism itself.

> "You are right about this point, and I'm sorry. I do not agree with your interpretation of what it says about me as a person."

YOUR CHECK

Am I examining myself, or defending myself before a court whose rules are set entirely by the other person?

What is true in his criticism, even if I dislike the way he is delivering it?

09



THE EXORCIST

09

THE EXORCIST

When leaving requires rewriting the story.

HOW THE DYNAMIC SHOWS UP

A relationship may have been experienced as valuable for a long time. There was trust, enthusiasm, perhaps deep admiration. Then comes a conflict, a boundary or a parting of ways. Later, the entire history is told differently: what once contained choice, value and genuine attachment is described as though it had always been only dependency. The person's own earlier decisions begin to disappear from the story.

WHAT IT IS ABOUT

The Exorcist is less a separate type than a possible escalation of other dynamics, particularly after intense closeness, idealisation or rivalry. People may reassess relationships afterwards. They may recognise that boundaries were crossed, leave a teacher, coach or organisation, and later see critically what they once experienced differently. That can be necessary and right. The fact that someone criticises a relationship after leaving is therefore not the issue.

Before the rupture, the relationship was often very close and the admiration may have been intense. All of that may have been genuine. The question is whether the shared history can still contain ambivalence. Can she say: I admired you and learned from you. I chose this relationship freely. Some of it was valuable, some of it I see critically now, and I no longer want to work with you?

With the Exorcist, the past becomes unequivocal. Individual problematic actions become the explanation of who the other person "really was". Earlier choices disappear from the story or are reclassified entirely as the result of manipulation. Leaving is no longer enough. The former relationship has to be exorcised.

Sometimes a relationship is factually over and still consumes enormous

attention years later. Devaluation can bind as tightly as admiration. The other person is gone and remains the centre of the story.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

One clue can be how someone speaks about former important relationships that ended badly. This is not a test, and certainly not a reason to dismiss reports of abuse or boundary violations. What interests me is whether the person can hold ambivalence. Are there people in her story who were both valuable and difficult? Can she still recognise her own earlier decision as her own?

WHAT HELPS

Examine your responsibility very carefully. Correct facts where necessary and apologise for what is genuinely yours. But do not confuse responsibility with an obligation to adopt the other person's entire story about you. Someone may tell a story about you in which you do not recognise yourself. If that story becomes public, read "When It Goes Public" in Part II.

"You are allowed to have your story about me. I am not going to spend my life living inside it."

YOUR CHECK

Which parts of her criticism do I need to take seriously even if I do not share her overall story?

How much space is this story still taking up in my life?

NARCISSISTIC DYNAMICS

You do not need to diagnose a narcissist. You need to recognise what is happening to the space you are responsible for.

Few psychological terms are now thrown around as freely as “narcissist”. That does not help when working with people. Current research understands narcissistic traits dimensionally; individual traits or difficult behaviour do not amount to Narcissistic Personality Disorder, and pathological narcissism is not the same thing as the clinical diagnosis. Diagnosis belongs in the hands of qualified professionals.

Grandiose and Vulnerable

The literature distinguishes above all between grandiose and vulnerable expressions. Grandiose patterns are more likely to appear as self-aggrandisement, dominance, entitlement and a need for admiration. Vulnerable patterns can look much more insecure: high sensitivity to slights, shame, withdrawal and strong fluctuations in self-esteem. Both can occur in the same person. Narcissistic dynamics therefore do not always look like obvious grandiosity.

What Happens Under Threat

At the centre is difficulty regulating self-esteem. Recognition, status or a special position can take on a powerful role in stabilising a person’s sense of self. What is revealing is therefore less how charming or confident someone appears than what happens when affirmation is withdrawn: under criticism, a no, competition or the loss of a special position. Research finds a stronger association between narcissism and hostile reactions under provocation and rejection. This explicitly does not mean that a person who feels hurt or slighted is narcissistic.

The capacity to engage with criticism is therefore a key criterion for me. Criticism is rarely pleasant. What matters is whether it can be processed: after the first hurt or defensive reaction, can someone return to the substance, examine their own behaviour and change something? Or is criti-

cism reliably deflected, reinterpreted or used as a reason to devalue the person who offered it?

Empathy is also more complicated than "present or absent". A person may be quite capable of reading others while having limited willingness to let another perspective stand when it conflicts with their own interests. A more useful question than "Does this person have empathy?" is: Does the other person's perspective remain real when it conflicts with what they want? Psychiatrist Reinhard Haller's "four Es" – in German Egozentrik, Empfindlichkeit, Empathiemangel and Entwertung, roughly egocentricity, oversensitivity, lack of empathy and devaluation – are a memorable aid, not a diagnostic instrument.

The Group and You as Instruments of Observation

If you are unsure, look not only at the person but at the room. Are people becoming more cautious? Are camps forming? Is more and more time spent regulating, mediating or calming? Do boundaries apply differently to one person than to everyone else?

Then look at yourself. After conversations, are you repeatedly unusually exhausted, confused, guilty or agitated? Do you replay conversations for hours and wonder how to set an ordinary boundary without provoking a massive reaction? None of these feelings proves anything. Over time, they are still information.

Do Not Diagnose. Decide.

A training programme is not therapy, a retreat is not psychiatric treatment, and a coaching programme cannot hold every psychological dynamic. I do not need to know whether someone has Narcissistic Personality Disorder. I need to know whether constructive collaboration is possible: whether feedback can be processed, responsibility can be taken, boundaries can hold and the space remains safe for everyone else. Capacity for the process is not a diagnosis. It is a condition of working together. More on this in Part II.

YOUR OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Observe concrete situations over several weeks, not diagnoses.

- **What happens when this person is not at the centre or loses a special position?**
- **What happens after constructive critical feedback, once the first emotional reaction has passed?**
- **Can they name their own part without immediately calculating someone else's part against it?**
- **Does another person's perspective remain real when it conflicts with their own interests?**
- **Do other people remain independent people, or do they become allies, opponents, an audience or obstacles?**
- **What happens to the group, and over time to you?**

The academic foundations for this section are listed under "References" at the end.

PART II

WHEN YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SPACE

So far, we have looked at dynamics that meet us. Now it becomes more uncomfortable, because some of them last as long as they do partly because they find something in us to attach to. For me, that was often my willingness to rescue. But before that comes the most uncomfortable question of all: What if the leader is the problem?

WHEN THE LEADER IS THE PROBLEM

Well-intentioned power is still power.

Anyone reading this Field Guide will think of particular people when they encounter some of the types. It would be dishonest not to name the other direction here. Abuse of power in developmental spaces is real: leaders who exploit dependency, interpret criticism as resistance, sexualise closeness, or bind people to themselves financially, emotionally or spiritually. Nothing in this Field Guide should ever be used to minimise such reports.

If you label every critic a Moral Sniper and every person who leaves an Exorcist, you have not built yourself a map. You have built armour.

WARNING SIGNS IN YOURSELF

- Among the people around me, criticism of me is treated more often as a problem with the critic than as information about me.
- There are people close to me who hardly ever disagree with me anymore.
- I make decisions about individuals that I would not want to justify to the group.
- The boundaries between teaching relationship, friendship, business and private life blur, primarily to my advantage.
- People stay in my programmes because they are afraid of losing belonging, not because they are still learning.
- I catch myself using the types in this Field Guide to classify someone quickly.

WHAT HELPS

Regular supervision or peer consultation with people who are not dependent on you. Clear written agreements about roles, money, complaints procedures and closeness. A contact person outside your own structure whom participants can approach when they cannot resolve something with you. And the willingness to ask about your own part even when the answer is uncomfortable.

“I should have handled that differently.”

YOUR CHECK

Who is allowed to disagree with me without paying a price for it?

Which criticism of me have I been too quick to assign to one of the types in this Field Guide?

10



THE RESCUER

10

THE RESCUER

When another person's potential becomes my assignment.

I see potential quickly, and for a long time I regarded that entirely as a strength. Today I know: it is a strength as long as I can distinguish between what I see in someone and what they themselves are willing to make of it. The Rescuer is no longer working with the person who is actually there, but with a future version of them. She gives one more chance because she knows what could be possible, explains once more, supports once more and holds on a little longer. The Endless Loop and the Rescuer form an almost perfect system: one person does not change, the other does not give up.

Others Often See It Earlier

Sometimes people in the group or on your team notice destructive behaviour before the leader does. The leader holds on longer because she believes development is possible and takes her professional responsibility seriously. In spiritual language: she wants to strengthen what is good in a person and help bring what is difficult into a form that can be worked with. That very attitude can make us keep treating something as changeable long after it has established itself as a repeating pattern. If several people you trust come to you independently and directly with the same observation, that is not betrayal. It is information. The situation is different when one person claims to speak for many; see Worksheet 3.

Potential Is Not an Obligation

A person is allowed not to realise their potential. That sentence was not easy for me. They are allowed to miss the great opportunity, to live smaller than I can imagine for them, to complete a training course and do nothing with it afterwards. I can see what might be possible, reflect it back and make offers. The other person is still allowed to say no, including through their behaviour. If I refuse to accept that no, my hope eventually becomes an intrusion.

The Hidden Contract

Rescue dynamics sometimes create an unspoken contract: I see you, I believe in you, I give you chances, and somewhere inside me an expectation appears: do something with it. Not for me, of course. And yet, a little bit for me. If that person later turns against me, the hurt can be especially deep: after everything I did for you? That thought is human. It also shows that my generosity may not have been quite as unconditional as I believed. Rescuing is a form of power too: I am the one who sees, gives and opens doors. That can feel better than admitting that this person may not need me at all for their development. Support must not create an invisible debt of loyalty.

WHEN YOU LEAD AS A WOMAN

For women in leadership, rescuing can become a socially acceptable way of exercising power. If we give, support and catch people, we can have considerable influence without being called dominant. Boundaries and clear decisions, by contrast, can cost affection. No wonder many of us would rather give one more chance than make a decision. It is worth asking honestly how much of my generosity is also authority that I permit myself only in this form.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

You talk more often about someone's possible future self than about their present behaviour.

WHAT HELPS

Separate what you see from what you carry. Reflect, yes. Take over, no.

"I see you. I see what is possible. And I trust you enough to let you decide what you make of it."

YOUR CHECK

If I did not know what potential this person has, would I tolerate the present situation for this long?

What am I secretly expecting in return for my support?

PART OF ME ALREADY KNEW

When the perception is already there and we carry on anyway.

Some warning signs were not subtle at all in hindsight. I had noticed them, but I had an explanation: difficult childhood, trauma, insecurity, talent, unusual sensitivity, a difficult phase of life. Sometimes the explanation was even correct. It did not change the information. Understanding is not the same as an all-clear. Someone can have good reasons for their behaviour and the behaviour can still be a problem.

Your Body Is Not a Court, but It Is a Witness

Sometimes the first information was physical. I tensed up, felt restless or tired, wanted to be alone after a conversation, or prepared for an encounter differently than I did for others. I would never derive a truth about another person from that, because the body is not an infallible oracle. Still, I would not ignore it anymore either. It is not a court. But it is a witness.

Observations Instead of Stories

It helps to write down what actually happened before interpretation begins. Not “He is manipulative”, but what can be observed: “I said no. She asked four more times in different forms.” “I gave her critical feedback. She then spent twenty minutes talking about my mistakes.” “He agreed to send the documents by Friday. On Monday he asked why nobody had reminded him.” That gives you data rather than stories. Over time you can see whether a pattern is really forming or whether you have connected three unrelated situations too quickly. For me, that is an adult way of trusting my perception: I believe it enough to examine it.

YOUR EARLY-WARNING

What sense of unease about a person have I already explained away more than once?

When does it appear: around boundaries, criticism, competition, responsibility or lack of attention?

Which positive qualities of this person make it harder for me to take problematic information seriously?

If I listened seriously to my perception, what consequence am I afraid I might have to draw?

Write it down. Not so that you have to act on it immediately, but so that you stop pretending you do not know it is there.

NOT EVERY PERSON BELONGS IN EVERY PROCESS

Selection is not exclusion. It is part of your responsibility.

Ein Tagesworkshop ist etwas anderes als eine zweijährige Ausbildung. JeA one-day workshop is different from a two-year training programme. Someone may benefit from your work and still not fit into a fixed group, work beautifully in one-to-one sessions and be unsuited to a long process, or be highly gifted and still not be able to carry the responsibility that later comes with certification. The longer a process lasts, the more important the question becomes whether someone can carry it: not financially and not intellectually, but in relationship with other people. That is what I mean by capacity for the process: the ability to remain in a demanding developmental process while staying in relationship with other people.

The Intake Conversation Is Not Only a Sales Conversation

Of course I want people to be excited about my work and I want to sell programmes; I am an entrepreneur. But when the programme is long and intensive, the intake conversation has a second function. The other person is not the only one assessing me. I am assessing too, and I say that openly. I am interested not only in what someone wants to achieve, but in what happens when I disagree or name a boundary, and whether they can hear something that does not fit their self-image.

One question I would ask much earlier today is: Tell me about your former teachers. Not as a trap, but because relationship histories contain information. Someone may have had bad experiences, even very bad ones. I am interested in how they talk about them. Can someone say, “I was hurt there, and I also learned a great deal”? Or does their history consist strikingly often of relationships in which, by the end, only the other people were ever the problem? That is not an exclusion criterion. It is information. How someone responds to small boundaries during the application process tells you a lot. Enthusiasm is lovely. Frustration is more informative.

CAPACITY FOR THE PROCESS: AN INTAKE CHECK

- ☐ Hear a no without turning it into a relationship crisis
- ☐ Take responsibility for their own mistakes
- ☐ Process critical feedback after the first emotional reaction
- ☐ Allow other perspectives to exist alongside their own
- ☐ Speak with ambivalence about relationships that ended badly
- ☐ Remain stable when someone else receives attention or recognition
- ☐ Express needs without assigning responsibility for meeting them to others
- ☐ Repair after conflict

Am I seeing this person's actual capacity for the process, or mainly their potential?

How You Know a Process Is Working

This Field Guide spends a lot of time looking at what goes wrong. So here is the other side, because in most rooms it is the norm. A process is working, even when it is difficult, when conflicts are addressed openly and not only during breaks. When people disagree and still stay. When repair follows rupture. When individuals can need more space without everyone else disappearing. When people can tease you, criticise you and still take you seriously. And when you are tired after a demanding day, but not empty.

WHEN IS ENOUGH ENOUGH?

Ending can be more responsible than continuing to support.

I am good at staying with things, and I do not want to change that. People do not have to function for me. They are allowed to doubt, be angry, regress and question me. Difficulty is not proof that a process has failed. The question is whether movement is still possible.

It is different when the same dynamic returns unchanged despite clear conversations, agreements never stick, boundaries are repeatedly renegotiated, and more and more energy is needed to create less and less stability. At some point, enough is enough. The most dangerous thought at that point is: maybe this time. People do change, and I have often seen something become possible after a long time. Eventually, however, I have to distinguish hope from evidence and ask what has actually changed in behaviour since the last conversation.

Your Part Stays With You

Perhaps you made mistakes too. Then they belong to you. You can apologise, change structures and learn. That does not mean the process has to continue. An apology is not a new contract.

The Group Has a Right to an Ending Too

If a conflict permanently consumes the room, everyone else pays: in time, attention, energy and sometimes safety. Leadership can no longer ask only what one person needs. It must ask what the space needs. You do not have to make the other person understand your ending. They are allowed to think your decision is unfair, harsh or wrong, and later tell the story very differently from you. A boundary that only applies once the other person agrees is not a boundary. You do not need permission to end a working relationship. You are responsible for how you do it.

"I have decided to end our work together. You do not have to agree with my decision. I will still do it as fairly as I can."

THE FINAL CHECK

- ☐ Have I clearly named what is problematic, and does the other person know what would need to change?
- ☐ Was there a real opportunity to respond?
- ☐ Have I examined my own part?
- ☐ Am I asking for development rather than submission?
- ☐ Am I ending because a repeating dynamic is no longer sustainable, rather than because someone disagrees with me?
- ☐ Am I protecting the space rather than only my ego?

Am I still using these questions to examine my decision, or am I already using them to avoid making it? We can end too early and we can end too late. Not deciding is a decision too.

WHEN IT GOES PUBLIC

First aid when people are talking about you.

In the past, after a rupture, people told their friends. Today it may happen in reviews, comments, community group chats or a long public post. It hits differently because it can no longer be resolved in a conversation. A few principles have helped me:

- ☐ Do not respond immediately. The first answer you want to write is almost never the one you will still like a week later. Sleep on it for at least one night.
- ☐ Check first, then respond. Is any of it true? Then that part belongs to you, even if it arrives in a form that hurts.
- ☐ Document rather than comment. Take screenshots with dates before content disappears. You may never use them. You should still have them.
- ☐ Do not stay alone. Speak with your supervisor or a trusted person outside your community before you do anything publicly. If statements are defamatory or factually false, get legal advice.
- ☐ Do not build a counter-narrative. You do not have to refute every version. A short factual statement, if any, is almost always stronger than a long one. Silence can also be the better choice, even when what is being said may be legally relevant, including under criminal law. Ask yourself how much energy you want to put into something that, in the larger picture, is relatively unimportant. That decision is always yours.
- ☐ Protect the space. If your current group is affected, inform them briefly and without details about the other person.

In the long run, your work speaks louder than any post. That is no comfort during the first week, but it is true.

PART III

MY OWN FIELD GUIDE

So far, much of this Field Guide has been about people we meet. Now it is about you, and not about becoming even better at analysing other people. Your most personal Field Guide grows out of the situations after which you eventually thought: Deep down, I already knew.

MY PERSONAL EARLY-WARNING SYSTEM

Early warning signs are rarely spectacular. Often it is only a faint unease, a thought, a physical reaction or the observation that you behave differently around one particular person.

MY BODY

When a relationship or dynamic becomes difficult, I often notice it first in:

MY BEHAVIOUR

I typically begin to:

- ☐ explain more
- ☐ become more cautious
- ☐ justify myself
- ☐ delay boundaries
- ☐ defend the other person to third parties
- ☐ give additional chances
- ☐ feel guilty
- ☐ collect evidence
- ☐ become especially understanding

My own pattern:

MY BLIND SPOTS

With which kinds of people do I find it hardest to trust my own perception?

Which qualities make me more likely to downplay warning signs?

Which explanation do I repeatedly use even though my discomfort remains?

MY RULE

When the same unease appears for the third time, I stop treating it as three separate events and ask: **What if this is a pattern?**

WHERE AM I WORKING HARDER THAN THE OTHER PERSON?

Choose one person, process or conflict that is currently consuming a lot of energy.

Name or initials:

What is it about?

WHAT AM I DOING?

- ☐ I think about it a lot.
- ☐ I look for solutions and make new offers.
- ☐ I prepare conversations.
- ☐ I explain repeatedly.
- ☐ I change structures.
- ☐ I give more chances.
- ☐ I try to repair the relationship.

WHAT IS THE OTHER PERSON ACTUALLY DOING?

Not what is promised or understood. What is actually happening.

What has changed in the last four weeks?

Who is currently working harder on this development?

☐ The other person ☐ Me ☐ Roughly equal

If, from today, I took only as much responsibility as the other person does, what would I stop doing?

That could be your next step.

THE FOUR-WAY CHECK

When you no longer know what is really happening, return to the four questions.

WHAT BELONGS TO ME?

What from my own history, triggers, wishes and projections is relevant here?

WHAT BELONGS TO THE OTHER PERSON?

What might I be trying to carry for them?

WHAT IS HAPPENING BETWEEN US?

What loop have we built together, and what would change if I stopped feeding my part of it?

WHAT IS THE FIELD DOING TO US?

Who becomes quiet, who becomes loud, who withdraws? Which behaviour is rewarded by my decisions?

WHEN SOMEONE SPEAKS FOR "MANY"

When someone says, "Many people here feel the same way," I take the content seriously and separate the voices again: Who is speaking for whom? I ask the person to speak for themselves and invite the others to say for themselves what they are experiencing. Criticism should be able to reach me directly in my space without one voice prematurely becoming an invisible majority.

Which of these four levels have I considered least so far?

WORKSHEET 4

MY BOUNDARIES AND DECISIONS

Not every moment of unease needs an immediate conversation. But some things do not improve simply because we wait three months.

What will I address earlier in future?

Which boundaries are non-negotiable for me?

In how people treat me:

Within a group:

In professional agreements:

WHEN SOMETHING BECOMES DIFFICULT

Does it need a conversation? Is there genuinely something that has not yet been said or understood?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Braucht es eine Grenze? Ist längst klar, worum es geht, und muss ich jetzt sagen, was ich tun oder nicht mehr tun werde?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it need a boundary? Is the issue already clear, and do I now need to say what I will or will no longer do?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does it need a consequence? Has a boundary already been named and repeatedly crossed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What has already been agreed, and what actually happened afterwards?

What could one more conversation realistically change?

Which decision might I be postponing by offering one more conversation?

A boundary whose violation has no consequence eventually becomes information about what is really allowed.

WORKSHEET 5

WHAT NOBODY TOLD ME – AND WHAT I KNOW NOW

Now it is your page. Not my answer. Yours.

What do I wish I had known before I started working with people?

What have I learned about responsibility and boundaries?

Which perception will I take more seriously in future?

What will I no longer take over for other people?

This Field Guide is not meant to make you more suspicious. Do not lose your curiosity, your generosity, your compassion, your delight in people or your ability to see potential.

What do you never want to lose simply because you have learned to protect yourself better?

If I were starting again today, working with people, I would tell myself:

IN CLOSING

This is your Field Guide. Not the typologies, not my experiences and not the people who tested you to your limits, but what you know now.

You will still get it wrong again. You will misjudge people, sometimes stay too long and sometimes leave too early. You will set boundaries too late and support someone who later disappoints you, and perhaps you will distrust someone who deserved your trust. Experience does not make us infallible. It can do something better: it can make sure we no longer abandon ourselves when things become difficult.

You do not have to hold every person, save every relationship, refute every criticism or realise every potential. You do not have to wait until you are completely certain. You have to be willing to look: at the other person, at yourself, at what is happening between you, and at the space for which you have taken responsibility.

That will not always be enough to make the right decision. But it is a hell of a lot more than I had 25 years ago.

AUF EINEN BLICK

Typ	Das Muster	Frühsignal
01 The Endless Loop	A great deal of insight, little change	You think more about their development than they do
02 Die intime Rivalin	Nähe wird zur besonderen Position	Kleine Spitzen, wenn du sichtbar oder erfolgreich bist
02 The Intimate Rival	Closeness becomes a special position	Small barbs when you are visible or successful
03 The Needy Favourite	Care turns into special status	The person confronted repeatedly becomes the person being cared for
04 The Perpetual Innocent	Responsibility always lies elsewhere	Their mistakes need context; yours need consequences
05 The Renegotiator	A no opens another round	The same question returns at a higher level
06 The Entitled One	A need becomes your responsibility	“I need” becomes “You must”
07 The Extractor	Attention is focused on what can be used	Interest in methods exceeds interest in their own process
08 The Moral Sniper	Criticism without an examinable standard	Every response you make becomes further evidence
09 The Exorcist	Leaving by rewriting the story	Former relationships are told without ambivalence
10 The Rescuer	Another person’s potential becomes your assignment	You talk more about their future self than their present behaviour

PHRASES THAT HELP

For the moments when words disappear
under pressure.

WHEN NOTHING MOVES

"We have understood this issue several times now. I'm less interested in the next insight than in what you are actually going to do with it."

WHEN CLOSENESS BECOMES POSITION

"We may have grown closer, but our roles are still different."

WHEN TEARS REPLACE THE ISSUE

"I can see that this is affecting you deeply. We are still going to stay with the issue."

WHEN RESPONSIBILITY MOVES

"That was agreed. You didn't do it. Now let's look at how you deal with that."

WHEN YOUR NO IS RENEGOTIATED

"I can see that my answer is affecting you. The answer is still no."

WHEN A NEED BECOMES ENTITLEMENT

"I can see that this is painful for you. I still cannot give you what you want from me here."

WHEN SOMEONE IS MAINLY EXTRACTING

"I'm glad when you work with what you learn here. What matters to me is that you can distinguish between what you adopted, what you developed further and what you created yourself."

WHEN CRITICISM BECOMES A VERDICT

"You are right about this point, and I'm sorry. I do not agree with your interpretation of what it says about me as a person."

WHEN SOMEONE SPEAKS FOR "MANY"

"I want to hear first how you experience it. I invite the others to speak for themselves."

WHEN THE STORY IS REWRITTEN

"You are allowed to have your story about me. I am not going to spend my life living inside it."

WHEN YOU WANT TO RESCUE

"I see you. I see what is possible. And I trust you enough to let you decide what you make of it."

WHEN YOU MADE A MISTAKE

"I should have handled that differently." A complete sentence. It does not mean the other person is right about everything else.

WHEN YOU END

"I have decided to end our work together. You do not have to agree with my decision. I will still do it as fairly as I can."

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IF YOU WANT TO GO DEEPER

This Field Guide is a map. The book I am working on begins where this map ends. It goes further into power and projection, closeness and competition, idealisation and devaluation, group dynamics, responsibility and the particular demands of leadership, especially for women. Above all, it asks how we can remain open and human without losing ourselves in the work of supporting other people.

“WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU WHEN YOU WORK WITH PEOPLE”

➔ Warteliste

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