

HONORING ALL PARTS · A SEAT FOR EVERY VOICE

The 45 protective voices

Every voice here learned to keep you safe. Read them slowly, notice which ones sound like you when things get tense, and know that each one has a place at the table.



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The voices at the door

The voices are gathered under the five protective parts: Fawn, Fight, Flight, Freeze and Flop. Tap a part or a voice to go there, and tap the top line of any page to come back here.

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PROTECTIVE PART 1 OF 5 · PROTECTING BY APPEASING

Fawn

“If I make them feel okay, maybe this will go away. If I stay agreeable, I will stay safe.”

It learned that the safest way through threat is to smooth, accommodate and keep others comfortable. This is relational intelligence, formed where belonging was conditional. **What it guards:** Belonging and connection.

Smiling while tense

Tight throat, soft voice

Attention fixed on others

1

The quick yes

“Sure, no problem.” “Of course, I can do that.” “Yes, what do you need?”

It shows up as an automatic yes, often before the question has fully landed. It is often the voice of the fear of disappointing others and the belief that a no will cost you the connection.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Disappointing someone, and the distance or disapproval that once followed a pause or a no.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Connection that stays, even when you say no.

2

The disappearing need

“Whatever works for you.” “I’m easy.” “Don’t worry about me.”

It shows up when your own wants quietly step aside for everyone else’s. It is often the voice of the belief that your needs are too much, and the expectation that they will not be met anyway.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being too much. Needs that were once met with irritation, or not met at all.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

To have your needs welcomed, and to know you are not too much.

3

The pre-emptive apology

“Sorry, this is probably a silly question...” “Sorry to bother you.” “Sorry, just quickly...”

It shows up as an apology before you have even made a request. It is often the voice of the fear of being a burden and the perception that you are in the way.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Blame. It gets there first, so no one else has to tell you that you are in the way.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

To take up space without having to earn it.

4

The softener

“I might be wrong, but...” “Just a thought, feel free to ignore.” “Totally fine if not!”

It shows up when you have something true to say but wrap it in layers of softness. It is often the voice of the fear of conflict and the expectation that saying it plainly will cause a rupture.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being the one who caused the rupture, and the cost of saying the true thing plainly.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Honesty that feels safe, and relationships that can hold the truth.

5

The mood reader

“Are you okay? You seem tense.” “Is everyone happy with this?” “What do you need from me?”

It shows up as close attention to everyone else's mood, often before your own. It is often the voice of the perception that the room could turn at any moment, and the need to feel safe.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being caught off guard. If you read the storm early, you might steer it before it reaches you.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Safety, and the chance to tune into yourself too.

6

The inherited courtesy

“You go first.” “I'd feel bad asking.” “Never mind, it doesn't matter.”

It shows up as stepping back and letting others go first. It is often the voice of the belief that asking is selfish and the fear of being seen as ungrateful.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being seen as selfish or ungrateful, and losing a place that depended on being good.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Belonging that makes room for your needs too.

7

The over-giver

“I’ll take care of it.” “Leave it, I’ve got it.” “It’s nothing, really.”

It shows up as doing more: staying late, remembering everything, taking care of what others leave behind. It is often the voice of the belief that you have to be useful to belong, and the need to be valued.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being unnecessary. If you are useful, you cannot be left behind.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

To be valued for who you are, not only for what you do.

8

The inner voice

“Don’t make it a thing.” “They’ll think you’re difficult.” “Who are you to ask for that?”

It shows up on the inside, just before a need is spoken. It is often the voice of the fear of being seen as difficult and the expectation that asking will lead to rejection.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Rejection, by stopping the need before it is ever spoken.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Permission to want, and to ask.

9

The voice after

“Why did I agree to that?” “I’m so tired.” “It’s fine. It’s fine.”

It shows up after the yes has been given and the moment has passed. It is often the voice of tiredness and resentment, and the need for rest and care that went unmet.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Feeling the full weight of what the yes cost. It quiets the anger so the connection survives.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Rest, care, and the chance to say no next time.



PROTECTIVE PART 2 OF 5 • PROTECTING BY PUSHING BACK

Fight

“I must protect myself. I won’t be silenced. I will not be diminished again.”

It rises when dignity, safety or the right to take up space feels threatened. This is not aggression as personality. It is the body defending a boundary. **What it guards:** Dignity, respect and the right to be heard.

Clenched jaw, tight fists

Heat in the face and chest

Racing heart

10

The line in the sand

“That’s not okay.” “No. Absolutely not.” “I won’t let that slide.”

It shows up as a firm no the moment something crosses a line. It is often the voice of the fear of being erased and the need for your dignity to be respected.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being erased. If you don’t push back now, you may lose the ground for good.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Dignity, respect, and to be taken seriously the first time.

11

The defender

“That’s not what I said.” “Let me finish.” “You’re not listening.”

It shows up when you feel misunderstood and need to set the record straight. It is often the voice of the perception that you are being dismissed, and the need to be heard.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being dismissed, in places where quieter words were once ignored.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

To be heard and understood.

12

The controller

“I’ll just do it myself.” “This isn’t good enough.” “We’re doing it my way.”

It shows up as taking over and holding things to a high standard. It is often the voice of the belief that others will let you down, and the fear of what happens when things fall apart.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being let down again, and the exposure that comes when things fall apart.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Trust, reliability, and being able to put the weight down.

13

The sharp edge

“Seriously?” “Oh, great idea.” “Whatever.”

It shows up as sarcasm, a sharp reply or a dismissive tone. It is often the voice of the fear that your softness will be used against you, and the need to feel protected.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Your softness being seen, and used against you.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Safety to be soft, and to be met with care.

14

The lone defender of what’s right

“Somebody has to say it.” “This is wrong, and you all know it.” “Am I the only one who cares?”

It shows up when you see something unfair and feel you must speak up. It is often the voice of the belief that no one else will protect what matters, and the need for fairness.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Harm going unnamed, and the fear that no one else will protect what matters.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Fairness, solidarity, and not having to carry it alone.

15

The blamer

“This is your fault.” “Look what you made me do.” “If you’d listened, this wouldn’t have happened.”

It shows up as pointing to someone else when things go wrong. It is often the voice of shame or helplessness that feels too heavy to hold, and the perception that someone else should carry it.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

The shame or helplessness underneath. Someone else carrying it feels safer.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Compassion for yourself, and the chance to be imperfect without losing your worth.

16

The competitor

“I have to win this.” “Second place is losing.” “Watch me prove them wrong.”

It shows up as the need to win, to be first, to prove yourself. It is often the voice of the belief that only the strongest are respected, and the fear of being overlooked.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being overpowered or overlooked, in places where only the strongest were respected.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Respect, and a worth that doesn't have to be earned.

17

The inner voice

“Don't let them get away with it.” “Never again.” “Don't you dare look weak.”

It shows up on the inside as the tension rises. It is often the voice of the fear of being diminished again, and the expectation that you will be hurt if you let your guard down.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being diminished again. It remembers every time it happened before.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Safety, and the sense that the past is not repeating.

18

The voice after

“Why did I say it like that?” “They pushed me to it.” “I'm so tired of fighting.”

It shows up after the moment, when the adrenaline drains. It is often the voice of shame and exhaustion, and the need for the older hurt underneath to finally be seen.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

The older hurt underneath the anger, which still has not been seen.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Repair, rest, and for the older hurt to be seen.



PROTECTIVE PART 3 OF 5 · PROTECTING BY MOVING AWAY

Flight

“I need to get away. This is too much. I can’t stay here.”

When things feel like too much, it moves: out of the room, into busyness, into the future. Speed keeps feelings at a distance. **What it guards:** Safety, through space and pace.

Restless legs, buzzing energy

Shallow, quick breath

Eyes scanning for exits

19

The busy one

“Can’t, I’m slammed.” “Let me just finish this first.” “No time, sorry.”

It shows up as constant busyness and never quite having time to stop. It is often the voice of the fear of what might surface if you slowed down.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Whatever might surface if you stopped.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Rest that feels safe.

20

The planner

“What’s plan B?” “I need to think through every scenario.” “What if it goes wrong?”

It shows up as planning for every possible outcome. It is often the voice of the expectation that things will go wrong, and the need to feel prepared.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being caught unready, in a world that once felt unpredictable.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

To feel prepared, and to trust that you can handle what comes.

21

The exit

“I need some air.” “I should head off.” “Can we talk about this later?”

It shows up as the urge to leave when a conversation gets close or heavy. It is often the voice of the perception of being trapped, and the need for space to breathe.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being trapped in something too big to hold.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Space to breathe, and the freedom to come back.

22

The subject changer

“Anyway...” “Moving on!” “Let’s not get into that.”

It shows up as a joke or a new topic just when things start to go deeper. It is often the voice of the fear that the feelings will flood you if you stay with them.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Feelings that might flood you if you stayed with them.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Safe ways to feel deeply, a little at a time.

23

The achiever

“Just one more thing.” “I’ll rest when it’s done.” “I work better under pressure.”

It shows up as working harder and pushing rest further away. It is often the voice of the belief that your worth depends on what you get done.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

The fear that your worth disappears the moment you slow down.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Worth that doesn't depend on output.

24

The worrier

“What if...?” “I can’t stop thinking about it.” “Something is going to go wrong.”

It shows up as thoughts that keep looping through what could go wrong. It is often the voice of the fear of being caught off guard, and the need to feel safe.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being blindsided. If you worry about everything, nothing can surprise you.

WHAT IT'S HUNGRY FOR

Safety, steadiness, and trust that you can cope.

25

The cheerful bypass

“It’s fine! Let’s stay positive!” “Everything happens for a reason.” “No point dwelling on it.”

It shows up as jumping quickly to the bright side. It is often the voice of the fear of sitting with pain that has no quick fix, and the expectation that it will be too much to bear.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Sitting with something painful that has no quick fix.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Permission to feel pain, and someone to sit with it.

26

The inner voice

“Keep going.” “Don’t stop now.” “If you slow down, it will all fall apart.”

It shows up on the inside, urging you to keep moving. It is often the voice of the belief that stillness is not safe, and the fear that everything depends on you.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being overwhelmed, in a body that learned stillness was not safe.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Safety in stillness.

27

The voice after

“Where did the day go?” “I’m exhausted, but I can’t switch off.” “Why can’t I just relax?”

It shows up in the quiet, once the rushing finally stops. It is often the voice of restlessness and the need for rest, with tiredness and grief waiting underneath.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

The tiredness and grief waiting underneath the speed.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Deep rest, and room for what was outrun.



PROTECTIVE PART 4 OF 5 • PROTECTING BY HOLDING STILL

Freeze

“I can’t move. I don’t know what to do. I am stuck here.”

When fighting and leaving both feel impossible, the body goes quiet and waits for the danger to pass.

What it guards: Staying unseen until it is safe.

Held breath, stiff muscles

Heavy limbs, cold hands

Words that disappear

28

The blank

“I... I don’t know.” “Sorry, I lost my train of thought.” “Can I get back to you?”

It shows up when your mind goes blank just as you need to speak. It is often the voice of the fear of getting it wrong, and the perception that the moment is too much.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Saying the wrong thing in a moment that feels dangerous.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Time, space and safety to find your words.

29

The stuck one

“I don’t know where to start.” “I’ll decide tomorrow.” “Every option feels wrong.”

It shows up as difficulty deciding or getting started. It is often the voice of the fear that any choice will make things worse.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Choosing wrong, at a time when one mistake once cost too much.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Trust in yourself, and room to make mistakes.

30

The invisible one

“I’m fine here at the back.” “I don’t really have anything to add.” “Don’t mind me.”

It shows up as staying in the background and keeping quiet. It is often the voice of the belief that being seen is not safe.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being seen, in places where visibility once drew harm.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

To be seen, safely and on your own terms.

31

The numb one

“I don’t really feel anything about it.” “It is what it is.” “I guess it’s okay.”

It shows up as a flatness, as if your feelings are far away. It is often the voice of overwhelm, and the perception that feeling it all would be too much.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Pain too big to feel all at once.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Gentle safety for feelings to return, a little at a time.

32

The drift

“Just five more minutes.” “I’ll start after this episode.” “Where did the afternoon go?”

It shows up as time slipping away into screens, scrolling or daydreams. It is often the voice of the need to wait out what feels threatening until it passes.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

A demand that feels like too much to meet right now.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Relief, rest, and a gentler way in.

33

The watcher

“I’m just observing.” “Let me see how this plays out.” “I’ll wait and see.”

It shows up as stillness and close watching before you act. It is often the voice of the need to know it is safe before you move, and the expectation that moving too soon will cost you.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Moving before you know it is safe.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Safety, and enough understanding to trust.

34

The doubter

“I can’t trust what I’m feeling.” “Maybe I’m overreacting.” “I don’t know what’s real anymore.”

It shows up as doubting your own feelings and perceptions. It is often the voice of the belief that your inner signals cannot be trusted, often after having your experience questioned or dismissed.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Trusting your own perception, when it was once dismissed or punished.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

To trust your own knowing, and to be believed.

35

The inner voice

“Don’t move.” “Stay quiet and it will pass.” “Whatever you do will make it worse.”

It shows up on the inside, telling you to stay still and quiet. It is often the voice of the belief that doing nothing is safer than doing the wrong thing.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Drawing attention, when neither fighting nor leaving felt possible.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Safety, and the sense that you have options.

36

The voice after

“Why didn’t I say anything?” “I just froze.” “What is wrong with me?”

It shows up after the moment, when you wish you had responded. It is often the voice of shame about freezing, and the expectation that you should have been able to act.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Feeling how frightened you were. Blaming yourself can feel easier than feeling the fear.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Compassion, and understanding for how frightened you were.



PROTECTIVE PART 5 OF 5 • PROTECTING BY LETTING GO

Flop

“What’s the point? I am too tired to try again.”

When every other protection has been used up, the body releases readiness altogether. This is not laziness. It is the system conserving what is left. **What it guards:** Your last reserves of energy.

Heaviness, very low energy

Dizzy or faint

Loose muscles, slowed breath

37

The what’s-the-point

“What’s the point?” “Nothing I do makes a difference.” “Why bother?”

It shows up as giving up before trying. It is often the voice of disappointment, and the expectation that nothing you do will change anything.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Another round of effort that ends in disappointment.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Hope that feels safe, and small signs that things can change.

38

The collapse

“I can’t.” “I have nothing left.” “I just need to lie down.”

It shows up as a sudden heaviness, with no energy left. It is often the voice of a body that has carried too much, and the need for rest.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being pushed past what you can survive.
Collapse is the body’s last way to conserve.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Deep rest, care and support.

39

The faraway one

“I’m here, but not really here.” “It all feels far away.” “I don’t recognise myself right now.”

It shows up as feeling far away from yourself and the room. It is often the voice of the perception that being fully present is too much right now.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

An experience too heavy to be fully present for.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Safety, grounding, and a gentle way back.

40

The giving in

“Fine. Whatever you want.” “Do what you like.” “It doesn’t matter anyway.”

It shows up as going along with whatever others want. It is often the voice of emptiness, and the belief that your voice would not change anything anyway.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

A fight you no longer have the energy to win.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Energy, and a voice that counts.

41

The hiding away

“Cancel everything.” “I’m not up for it.” “I’ll just stay in bed.”

It shows up as canceling plans and pulling away from people. It is often the voice of overwhelm, and the need to withdraw until you have something left to give.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Being asked for more when there is nothing left to give.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Rest, and gentle company that asks for nothing.

42

The body that stops

“I always get sick after a big push.” “My body just shuts down.” “I slept twelve hours and I’m still tired.”

It shows up in the body, as illness or exhaustion after a long push. It is often the voice of the need for rest that was postponed for too long.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Carrying on past your limit. The body stops you when nothing else could.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Rest before the crash.

43

The switch-off

“I just need to switch off.” “Wake me up when it’s over.” “I don’t want to feel anything tonight.”

It shows up as the wish to switch off and feel nothing for a while. It is often the voice of overwhelm, and the need for a break from all of it.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

The full weight of exhaustion and grief, arriving all at once.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

A break, and gentle ways to feel again.

44

The inner voice

“You’re too tired to try again.” “Nobody is coming.” “This is just how it is.”

It shows up on the inside when your energy is low. It is often the voice of hopelessness, and the expectation that no one will come to help.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Hoping again, and being let down again.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

Hope, and someone who shows up.

45

The voice after

“I’ve wasted so much time.” “Everyone else is coping.” “I’m failing at everything.”

It shows up as a voice after the heaviness slightly settles. It is often the voice of shame about the exhaustion and the weight of other people’s expectations.

IT PROTECTS YOU FROM

Grief that has never been witnessed. The shame keeps it hidden.

WHAT IT’S HUNGRY FOR

To have your exhaustion understood, and your grief witnessed.