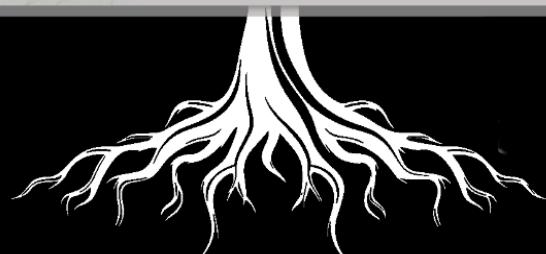


Depathologizing Neurodivergence:



Healing the Distance
Between Us

Workbook/Handouts - Audiobook

SIR AARON MASON



C.E.T. Workbook & Integration Guide

SECTION 1 — BEING

Safety, Belonging, and the Foundation of Self-Worth

This section invites you to slow down and return to the most fundamental question your nervous system is always asking:

Am I safe right now?

Before insight.

Before change.

Before healing.

There is **Being**.

You are not here to fix yourself.

You are here to listen.

Take your time with this section. You may complete these exercises over several days or weeks. There are no right answers—only honest ones. If anything feels overwhelming, pause, ground, or return later. Safety always comes first.

1.1 — The Safety Scan

Purpose:

To identify what safety feels like *in your body*, rather than what you have been taught safety “should” feel like.

Directions:

Read each prompt slowly. Notice your body before writing. You may respond with words, phrases, or metaphors. If a sensation feels neutral, unclear, or absent, that is information—not failure.

In my body, safety feels like:

Breath: _____

Shoulders: _____

Jaw: _____

Stomach / gut: _____

Heart rate: _____

Thoughts: _____

Energy: _____

People who feel regulating to me:

People who feel activating or unsafe to my body:

Places where my nervous system softens:

Places where my nervous system tenses:

1.2 — The Belonging Inventory

Purpose:

To gently track where you feel able to exist as you are—and where you feel pressure to shrink, perform, or disappear.

Directions:

Answer with curiosity rather than criticism. Masking is not a failure; it is a survival strategy. This exercise is about awareness, not self-judgment.

Where I feel the most belonging:

Where I feel pressured to perform:

Where I tend to mask:

What parts of me feel welcome there?

What parts of me get exiled?

1.3 — Being Practices

Purpose:

To choose small, embodied practices that support safety and self-worth at the nervous system level.

Directions:

You do not need to do all of these. Choose one or two that feel supportive right now. You may change them each week. The goal is not discipline—it is gentleness and consistency.

Check what you want to practice:

- Quiet mornings
- Sensory-friendly space
- Grounding rituals
- Predictable transitions
- No-masking zones
- Breath and pace awareness
- Slowing instead of rushing

Gentle Reminder

If your body resists this work, listen. Resistance is often protection, not avoidance. You are allowed to move slowly. You are allowed to rest. You are allowed to come back later.

Being is not something you earn.
It is something you remember.

SECTION 2 — SURVIVAL

Nervous System Literacy, Triggers, Shutdowns, and Protective Patterns

Purpose of this section:

This section helps you understand how your nervous system learned to survive. Survival responses are not flaws or failures—they are intelligent adaptations shaped by your history, culture, and environment. This work is not about fixing yourself. It is about naming what your body learned to do in order to stay safe.

Move slowly. You do not need to complete everything at once. Pause if your body signals overwhelm. Regulation comes before insight.

2.1 — The C.E.T. Nervous System Map

Purpose:

To build awareness of how your nervous system feels across different states—before overwhelm, during activation, and during shutdown.

Directions:

Answer these prompts based on felt experience, not theory. There are no “right” answers. If you are unsure, notice what comes closest.

- **Baseline State:** Describe how your body feels when you are relatively neutral or regulated—not happy or calm, just *okay*.
- **Activation Signs:** Identify early cues that tell you your system is moving toward overwhelm (before full dysregulation).
- **Shutdown Signs:** Notice how your body communicates collapse, numbness, or disconnection.
- **What brings me back into regulation:** List people, practices, sensations, environments, or rhythms that help your system settle.

If this feels hard, that itself is information. Many people were never taught to notice their internal states

2.2 — Trigger Pathways

Purpose:

To identify patterns—not to relive trauma.

Directions:

Choose your top five triggers gently. A trigger is anything that shifts your nervous system into activation or shutdown faster than the present moment alone would explain.

For each trigger:

- Name the **body sensation first** (tightness, heat, pressure, dissociation, buzzing, etc.).
- Then identify the **emotion** that tends to follow.
- Finally, explore whether this reaction connects to a **past experience**, family pattern, or historical/cultural trauma.

You do not need certainty. “I’m not sure, but it feels old” is enough.

Stop if your body feels flooded. This is mapping, not exposure.

2.3 — Survival Style Identification

Purpose:

To recognize the strategies your nervous system learned to use automatically.

Directions:

Check all survival responses that apply. Most people use more than one, depending on context.

When answering the reflection questions:

- **Where did I learn this?** Consider family dynamics, school environments, cultural expectations, identity-based safety concerns, or systemic pressures.
- **What did it protect me from?** Survival responses always served a purpose.
- **What does it cost me now?** Notice impacts without judgment.

This section is about compassion, not self-critique. Survival patterns are not who you are—they are what you learned

Gentle Reminder

If at any point you feel overwhelmed:

- Pause
- Ground in your body
- Return to Section 1 practices
- Or step away entirely

Survival awareness is powerful work. It becomes healing when paired with safety, pacing, and self-respect.

SECTION 3 — PSYCHOLOGY

Identity, Story, Meaning-Making, and Internal Narratives

Purpose of this section:

This section explores how meaning formed around your nervous system experiences. Psychology, in C.E.T., is not about pathology—it is about story. It is about how your experiences were interpreted, named, misunderstood, or silenced, and how those interpretations became beliefs about who you are.

This work is about separating **what happened** from **what it came to mean**.

Go slowly. You are not required to remember everything. What emerges is enough.

3.1 — Identity Excavation Timeline

Purpose:

To trace how identity was shaped over time by experience, environment, culture, and relationship.

Directions:

This is not a complete autobiography. It is a **meaning map**.

As you mark your timeline:

- Focus on *moments that shaped how you saw yourself*, not just what happened.
- You may cluster events rather than listing them chronologically.
- Write brief phrases, not full stories.

When noting:

- **Early moments of being “different”:** These may be subtle—sensory, emotional, social, or cognitive.
- **Masking memories:** Times you hid, adapted, performed, or shrank to belong.
- **Shame moments:** Experiences that taught you something was “wrong” with you.
- **Resistance moments:** Times you pushed back, stayed true, or refused to disappear.
- **Cultural messages:** Explicit or implicit messages about race, gender, ability, emotion, productivity, or worth.
- **Family emotional rules:** What was allowed, discouraged, punished, or ignored emotionally.
- **First time you felt understood:** Even briefly.

- **First time you were misinterpreted:** Especially by authority figures or systems.

Use the **Timeline notes** space to reflect on patterns you notice—not conclusions.

3.2 — Neurodivergence Meaning-Making Worksheet

Purpose:

To consciously reclaim meaning instead of unconsciously carrying inherited narratives.

Directions:

Answer from your current perspective, not from who you were taught to be.

There is no pressure to be positive or inspiring. Honesty matters more than optimism.

As you reflect:

1. **What does my neurodivergence make possible?**

Consider perception, creativity, depth, pattern recognition, empathy, justice sensitivity, or intuition.

2. **What strengths are embedded in my sensitivity?**

Sensitivity is information, not weakness.

3. **What narratives about myself do I want to return?**

These may be identities you abandoned to survive.

4. **What narratives do I want to retire?**

Especially those rooted in shame, comparison, or compliance.

5. **What meaning do I choose for this identity going forward?**

This is not denial of difficulty—it is authorship.

You are allowed to change this meaning later.

3.3 — Shame vs. Truth Reframing

Purpose:

To distinguish internalized shame from embodied truth.

Directions:

These phrases are not random—they are among the most common shame narratives carried by neurodivergent people.

When rewriting:

- Do not force affirmations.
- Replace shame with **context, compassion, or accuracy**.
- Neutral truth is powerful.
- Examples of reframing may include:
 - adding nervous system language
 - naming context instead of character
 - shifting from permanence to pattern

Let your rewrites feel *believable*, not performative.

Gentle Reminder

Psychological insight without nervous system safety can become self-criticism.

If you notice spiraling:

- Pause
- Ground
- Return to the body
- Or skip ahead

You are not required to excavate everything to be whole.

This section prepares you for **Systems**—where you will begin to see that many of these stories were never yours alone.

SECTION 4 — SYSTEMS

Family, School, Organizational, and Cultural Analysis

Purpose of this section:

This section widens the lens. Many of the beliefs, behaviors, and nervous system patterns you explored in earlier sections did not originate inside you—they were shaped by systems you had to survive.

C.E.T understands systems as living nervous systems of their own. Families, schools, workplaces, religions, and cultures regulate—or dysregulate—through rules, roles, power, and silence.

This work is not about blame.

It is about *context*.

And context creates compassion.

Move slowly. If emotions arise, return to your body. Awareness without regulation can become overwhelm.

4.1 — Cultural Constellation Map

Purpose:

To visualize the systems that shaped your identity and nervous system over time.

Directions:

Imagine yourself at the center of a circle. Place each identity, system, or influence around you based on how close or distant it feels *emotionally*, not how important it “should” be.

Include:

- Family
- Community
- Race / ethnicity
- Religion or spirituality
- Gender and gender expectations
- Neighborhood
- Institutions (school, foster care, medical, justice)
- Ancestry
- Cultural norms
- Unspoken emotional rules

There is no correct placement. Distance often reflects safety.

After placing them, reflect:

- Who feels close?
- Who feels distant?
- Where did you feel seen?
- Where did you feel monitored, corrected, or misunderstood?

Notice patterns without forcing conclusions.

4.2 — Family Survival Map

Purpose:

To understand how trauma and survival strategies travel through generations.

Directions:

List patterns you recognize—not diagnoses. These roles often protected families in dangerous or unpredictable environments.

When naming:

- You may write initials, roles, or descriptors instead of names.
- Some people appear in more than one category.
- Absence is also a pattern.
- After listing:
 - Which roles did you inherit without choosing?
 - Which roles did you consciously or unconsciously reject?
 - Which roles cost you the most?
 - Which once kept you safe?

Survival roles are not personality traits—they are adaptive responses.

4.3 — Educational System Reflection

Purpose:

To reframe school experiences through a nervous system lens rather than a moral or behavioral one.

Directions:

Check all that apply. Many people experienced both harm and affirmation.

When reflecting on what was “actually happening”:

- Consider sensory load
- Emotional safety
- Racialized or gendered expectations
- Punishment vs. support
- Pressure to mask or perform

You are not rewriting history—you are reinterpreting it with fuller information.

4.4 — Organizational Nervous System Audit

Purpose:

To assess how adult systems regulate—or dysregulate—your nervous system now.

Directions:

Rate your current or most recent workplace based on lived experience, not policy statements.

When identifying:

- **Highest area of harm:** Name the condition that most impacts your regulation.
- **Immediate changes needed:** Focus on *systemic shifts*, not self-sacrifice.

If your nervous system consistently struggles in an environment, that is data—not weakness.

Gentle Reminder

Systems shape behavior.

Behavior does not exist in isolation.

You were not “too sensitive.”

You were responding to systems that did not know how to regulate themselves.

This section prepares you to move beyond survival toward **Soul**—where meaning, purpose, and coherence begin to emerge.

SECTION 5 — SOUL

Purpose, Coherence, Future Identity, and Ancestral Repair

Purpose of this section:

In C.E.T., *Soul* is not about belief systems or perfection. It is about **coherence**—the alignment of body, meaning, identity, and direction. It is the place where survival no longer defines the future, and where awareness and sensitivity begin to move together with intention.

This section is about *integration*:

- past and future
- body and story
- inheritance and choice

There is no urgency here. Soul work unfolds over time. Return to these pages as often as needed.

5.1 — Coherence Check-In

Purpose:

To notice alignment—or misalignment—between knowing, feeling, and meaning.

Directions:

This is a snapshot, not a verdict. Answer based on *today*, not who you think you should be.

- **Head-brain Awareness:** What feels clear, named, or understood right now?
- **Gut-brain Sensitivity:** What sensations, emotions, or intuitive signals are present today?
- **Heart-brain Coherence:** Where do knowing and feeling overlap—or where do they need gentleness to meet?

If the answers conflict, that does not mean something is wrong. Coherence grows through listening, not forcing.

5.2 — Purpose Mapping

Purpose:

To trace purpose without romanticizing pain.

Directions:

Purpose in C.E.T. does not require suffering—but it often emerges from *how suffering was metabolized*.

When answering:

- Do not rush to meaning.
- Pain does not need justification to matter.
- Wisdom may be quiet, unfinished, or still forming.

Consider:

- What your pain taught you about systems, people, safety, or truth
- How your sensitivity shaped what you notice or protect
- Whose lives are made safer when you live unmasked

What kind of world feels *regulating* to imagine

Purpose is not a job description. It is a direction of care.

5.3 — The Ancestral Repair Letter

Purpose:

To consciously interrupt inherited survival patterns and restore choice.

Directions:

Choose one ancestor—known or unknown—whose survival strategies you recognize in yourself.

This letter is not about blame or absolution. It is about *continuity and change*.

As you write:

- Name the patterns you inherited with respect.
- Acknowledge what those patterns protected against.
- Clearly state what you are releasing.
- Clearly state what you will carry forward with intention.
- Speak from honesty, not obligation.

You are not responsible for healing the past.
You are responsible for not unconsciously repeating it.

5.4 — Your Future Self Declaration

Purpose:

To claim authorship over who you are becoming.

Directions:

Write these statements slowly, in the first person. Let them be aspirational *and* grounded.

Do not aim for certainty. Aim for truth-in-motion.

These declarations are not affirmations—they are commitments to coherence.

If your words feel shaky, that means they are alive.

Closing Reminder

Soul is not an escape from the body.

It is the body finally being heard.

You are not erasing your history.

You are choosing how it continues.

This is not the end of the work.

It is the beginning of living it forward.

SECTION 6 — 30-DAY INTEGRATION JOURNEY

Practicing Awareness, Sensitivity, and Coherence in Daily Life

Purpose of this section:

This 30-day journey is not a challenge or a test. It is an invitation to *live the work* in small, sustainable ways. Integration happens through repetition, gentleness, and consistency—not intensity.

You may move slower or faster than the timeline suggests. You may repeat weeks. You may skip days. The goal is not completion—it is embodiment.

Choose one or two practices per week. Return to safety if overwhelm arises.

Week 1 — Awareness

Noticing without judgment

Focus: Learning to observe your nervous system, identity patterns, and sense of belonging with curiosity.

Nervous system tracking

Brief daily check-ins: What state am I in? What cues am I noticing?

Belonging scan

Notice where you soften and where you tense across environments, relationships, and roles.

Identity excavation

Reflect on moments of difference, masking, or recognition as they show up in daily life.

Week 2 — Sensitivity

Responding to what you notice

Focus: Honoring sensory, emotional, and relational signals in real time.

Sensory inventory

Track which sounds, lights, textures, rhythms, or demands support or overwhelm your system.

Emotional literacy

Practice naming emotions with accuracy and compassion, especially subtle or mixed states.

Attunement pause

When activation rises, pause before reacting. Breathe. Soften. Name what is happening internally.

Week 3 — Story

Rewriting meaning with context

Focus: Understanding personal experience through family, culture, and systems—without self-blame.

Family Survival Map

Notice inherited patterns showing up in current reactions or relationships.

Cultural Constellation Map

Reflect on how identity and systems influence your sense of safety, voice, and belonging.

Meaning-making

Gently choose interpretations that honor truth rather than shame.

Week 4 — Regulation & Repair

Practicing coherence in relationship

Focus: Applying nervous system awareness to real-life interactions and boundaries.

Co-regulation practice

Seek or offer regulation through presence, pacing, tone, and shared grounding.

Repair conversation

Practice naming impact, acknowledging harm, or restoring connection—without self-erasure.

Boundary building

Identify one boundary that protects your nervous system and honors your capacity.

Closing Reflection

Integration is not something you finish.
It is something you practice.

Every pause you take...
Every boundary you honor...
Every time you choose regulation over self-judgment...

You are living Cultural Effectiveness Training.

Return to these weeks as often as needed.
The work continues—not as effort, but as alignment.

SECTION 7 — C.E.T. DAILY PRACTICE PROMPTS

Small Check-Ins for Ongoing Integration

Purpose of this section:

Healing does not happen only in reflection—it happens in rhythm. These daily prompts are designed to support regulation, awareness, and repair without overwhelm. They are meant to be brief, repeatable, and humane.

You may answer in a sentence, a word, or not at all. Presence matters more than completion.

Morning — Orientation & Intention

What does my nervous system need today?

(Examples: slowness, movement, predictability, softness, quiet, structure, connection, rest.)

Let this guide how you pace yourself, not how much you produce.

Evening — Connection & Meaning

Where did I experience connection today?

(Connection may be internal, relational, environmental, or momentary. It does not have to be dramatic to count.)

Notice where your body softened, even briefly.

Night — Repair & Release

What needs repair before I sleep?

(Repair may include an apology, a boundary, a compassionate reframe, rest, or simply letting something go.)

You do not need to resolve everything tonight. You only need to signal safety.

Closing Reminder

Consistency creates safety.

Gentleness creates change.

Returning to these questions—again and again—is how C.E.T. becomes lived, not learned.

SECTION 8 — FOR NEURODIVERGENT CREATORS

Creativity as Regulation, Voice, and Cultural Contribution

Purpose of this section:

For many neurodivergent people, creativity is not a hobby—it is a nervous system language. It is how insight moves through the body, how meaning forms, and how regulation is restored. This section invites you to understand your creative process not as something to discipline, but as something to *support*.

Your process does not need to look linear, efficient, or polished to be valid. It needs to feel *honest*.

Creative Regulation Reflection

What helps my creativity regulate?

(Consider sensory conditions, pacing, solitude or collaboration, movement, safety, rhythm, emotional permission, or reduced pressure.)

Process Awareness

How does my neurodivergence shape my process?

(Notice patterns such as nonlinear thinking, bursts of intensity, pauses, embodied insight, emotional attunement, pattern recognition, or story-based meaning.)

Your process is information, not a problem.

Tool Alignment

What tools support—not replace—my voice?

(Tools may include voice notes, AI, visual mapping, collaboration, timers, body-based practices, accessibility supports, or structural scaffolding.)

Support is not cheating.

Translation is not dilution.

Accessibility is not a compromise.

Closing Reflection

Neurodivergent creativity does not exist to meet external standards.
It exists to tell truths the world has not yet learned how to hear.

When your nervous system feels supported, your voice becomes clearer—not quieter.