The Pesky Word *Should*
Skill: Lose the Self-Judgment

Should is a sneaky little word. It sounds harmless, but it often carries a heavy dose of judgment. Every time we say I *should*, we are subtly telling ourselves that what's happening right now isn't good enough. Over time, that builds pressure, guilt, and frustration rather than motivation or growth.

Learning to drop *should* takes practice and compassion. This worksheet will help you notice where *should* shows up in your thoughts and conversations, and guide you toward gentler, more empowering language—language that comes from understanding and self-awareness instead of judgment.

Observe

Write down at least three statements you've made recently to yourself where you used the word "should."

1.

2.

3.

Do you notice a pattern?　☐ *Yes*　☐ *No*

If yes, are you critical about your appearance, relationships, motivation, or something else?

Challenge

Pick one of your should statements and ask yourself these questions:

How does this statement make me feel?

WHO says I should do this (me, others, society)?

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Do I actually WANT to do this, or do I feel PRESSURED to do this?

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What happens if I don't do this?

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Would I expect someone I care about to do this?

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Reframe

Rewrite this statement using the word COULD instead:

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Notice

Does this COULD statement feel different? ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

If yes, how? Does it change your mood, motivation, or something else?

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If no, why not? Can you reframe your SHOULD statement differently?

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Practice

Change the following SHOULD statements by finishing the suggested COULD statements.

I should eat better.

> *I could make*

I should be over this by now.

> *I could give*

I should have known better.

> *I could learn*

Conclusion

Pay attention to your thoughts and how you speak to yourself. Use the space below to keep track of self-critical SHOULD statements. After each one, try to reframe it into a more positive COULD statement.