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**Underlined reasons that keep the nervous system in survival**

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## Underlined reasons that keep the nervous system in survival mode:

### 1) Loss of Safety

#### What it looks like

- Client says: “I’m fine,” but their body shows tension, shallow breath and hypervigilance.
- They struggle to relax, sleep deeply, or feel safe in calm environments.
- They may “scan” people’s faces, tone, or text messages for threat. (even subconsciously)

#### Nervous system impact

- Body stays in **sympathetic activation** (fight/flight) or flips into **shutdown** (freeze).
- The brainstem learns: **neutral = unpredictable** → therefore dangerous.
- Healing is blocked because the body prioritizes survival over repair (digestion, immunity, hormones).

#### Spiritual roots counselors can explore:

- A worldview formed by trauma: “The world is unsafe; I must protect myself.”
- Safety becomes a *self-made refuge* rather than God as refuge.
- Difficulty receiving comfort, help, or nurturing (even from God).

#### Thought patterns

##### Conscious:

- “I must stay alert.”
- “If I rest, something bad will happen.”

##### Subliminal / pre-verbal:

- “I’m not safe.”
- “No one will protect me.”
- “Danger can come anytime.”

#### Scripture anchors

- Psalm 4:8 — “*In peace I will both lie down and sleep...*”

- Psalm 91:1–2 — *“He who dwells in the secret place...”*

### Counselor tools

- **Safety ladder:** Identify “1% safe” situations; build up slowly.
- **Orienting practice:** Look around the room slowly; name 5 safe things.
- **Somatic yes/no:** Body check to relearn discernment: “Does this feel safe enough for today?”

## 2) Broken Trust (God, Authority, Self)

### What it looks like

- Suspicion of people’s motives; difficulty surrendering control.
- Fear of spiritual authority, church, prayer, or “hearing God.”
- Difficulty trusting their own decisions; chronic second-guessing.

### Nervous system impact

- Hypervigilance around relationships = constant stress chemistry.
- Trust injuries keep the body in “prepared for betrayal.”
- The vagus nerve’s **social engagement system** becomes impaired → isolation.

### Spiritual roots

- God gets emotionally associated with the behavior of humans.
- “If leaders hurt me, God will too” (implicit association).
- Confusion between **fear-based submission** vs **secure trust**.

### Thought patterns

#### Conscious:

- “People always let you down.”
- “If I trust, I’ll get hurt.”

#### Subliminal:

- “Authority is dangerous.”

- “I can’t trust myself to choose well.”
- “Love always comes with strings.”

#### Scripture anchors

- Psalm 118:8 — *“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.”*
- Proverbs 3:5 — *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart...”*

#### Counselor tools

- **Trust timeline:** Map trust injuries and what was concluded at each event.
- **Repair practice:** Safe relationship experiments (tiny honest disclosure → observe response).
- **Discernment training:** Teach difference between red flags vs nervous system fear triggers.

### 3) Identity Confusion (False Identity Agreements)

#### What it looks like

- Client over-identifies with roles: rescuer, strong one, helper, invisible one.
- Shame when they rest; anxiety when not productive.
- They don’t know what they like, want, or need.

#### Nervous system impact

- Identity built on performance keeps cortisol elevated.
- The body never fully settles because “being” feels unsafe.
- Chronic tension patterns develop (jaw, shoulders, pelvic floor).

#### Spiritual roots

- Identity rooted in wounds instead of God’s truth.
- Confusing identity with gifting, function, or suffering.
- “If I’m not useful, I’m not valuable.”

#### Thought patterns

#### Conscious:

- “I must prove my worth.”
- “I need to be strong.”

#### Subliminal:

- “Who I am isn’t enough.”
- “If I’m seen, I’ll be rejected.”
- “I only matter if I perform.”

#### Scripture anchors

- Isaiah 43:1 — *“I have called you by your name; you are Mine.”*
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 — *“New creation...”*

#### Counselor tools

- **Role vs self worksheet:** “What I do” vs “Who I am.”
- **Identity triggers:** Notice when identity threat appears (criticism, conflict, rest).
- **Name the younger self:** Help client locate when identity agreement formed.

### 4) Shame & Self-Condensation

#### What it looks like

- Client apologizes excessively, struggles with eye contact.
- They “know” truth but feel dirty, wrong, or unworthy.
- They avoid intimacy, prayer, or receiving love.

#### Nervous system impact

- Shame drives **collapse** (freeze) or **appease** (fawn).
- It reduces vagal tone (less connection capacity).
- It increases inflammation long-term via chronic stress pathways.

#### Spiritual roots

- Accusation becomes internalized as identity.

- Religious conditioning can intensify shame: “God is angry with me.”
- They confuse discipline with rejection.

### **Thought patterns**

#### **Conscious:**

- “I’m a failure.”
- “I always ruin things.”

#### **Subliminal:**

- “I am bad.”
- “If I’m truly seen, I’ll be abandoned.”
- “Love is not for me.”

### **Scripture anchors**

- Romans 8:1 — *“No condemnation...”*
- Zephaniah 3:17 — *“He will rejoice over you...”*

### **Counselor tools**

- **Shame exposure in tiny doses:** Speak one shame belief out loud; regulate; return to safety.
- **Compassion practice:** Hand on heart; slow breath; “This is hard and I’m not alone.”
- **Truth + body:** Ask, “When you read this verse, what happens in your body?”

## **5) Survival Vows & Inner Agreements**

### **What it looks like**

- Rigid independence, control, perfectionism.
- “I don’t need anyone” but deep loneliness.
- Panic when outcomes are uncertain.

### **Nervous system impact**

- Vows create internal pressure → constant threat scanning.

- Control becomes the nervous system's "regulator."
- When control fails → collapse, anger, or anxiety spikes.

### **Spiritual roots**

- Vows replace trust with self-protection.
- Inner agreements can become strongholds of fear.
- Often formed in a moment of pain, then reinforced for years.

### ***Thought patterns***

#### **Conscious:**

- "I can only rely on myself."
- "I must stay in control."

#### **Subliminal:**

- "Dependence is dangerous."
- "If I don't manage everything, I will suffer."
- "I will be betrayed."

### **Scripture anchors**

- Matthew 11:28–30 — *"Come to Me... I will give you rest."*
- 2 Corinthians 10:5 — *"Take every thought captive..."*

### **Counselor tools**

- **Vow discovery question:** "What did you decide about life right then?"
- **Renounce + replace:** Release vow, then install a truth statement.
- **Parts work:** Identify the "protector part" that insists on the vow; honor it and update it.

## **6) Unhealed Grief & Loss**

### **What it looks like**

- Emotional flatness, fatigue, "I don't feel anything."



- Difficulty bonding, joy feels distant.
- They minimize losses: “It wasn’t that bad.”

### **Nervous system impact**

- Grief held in the body becomes dorsal shutdown.
- Hopelessness is a *protective adaptation* to repeated disappointment.
- Inflammation increases when sorrow is suppressed long-term.

### **Spiritual roots**

- Belief that grief is weakness or lack of faith.
- Pressure to “move on” blocks mourning.
- Unprocessed grief can distort how they experience God’s closeness.

### ***Thought patterns***

#### **Conscious:**

- “It’s too late.”
- “Nothing will change.”

#### **Subliminal:**

- “Hope is dangerous.”
- “If I feel it, I’ll break.”
- “My pain doesn’t matter.”

### **Scripture anchors**

- Psalm 34:18 — “*Close to the brokenhearted...*”
- Matthew 5:4 — “*Blessed are those who mourn...*”

### **Counselor tools**

- **Grief layers:** What they lost (safety, childhood, voice, dignity, belonging).

## 7) Generational & Learned Patterns

### What it looks like

- “This is how we do it in our family.”
- Repeating cycles: fear, anger, addiction, emotional suppression.
- Strong loyalty binds: fear of “betraying the family” by healing.

### Nervous system impact

- Patterns are embedded through modeling + stress imprinting.
- The body repeats familiar chemistry because it recognizes it.
- Healing feels unsafe because it breaks belonging to the old system.

### Spiritual roots

- Inherited fear scripts and relational strongholds.
- Family altars of control, secrecy, perfectionism, or suppression (language varies by belief system).
- Generational trauma without repair.

### *Thought patterns*

#### Conscious:

- “I can’t change.”
- “If I heal, I’ll be alone.”

#### Subliminal:

- “Belonging requires staying the same.”
- “Safety = conformity.”
- “My family’s pain is my identity.”

### Scripture anchors

- Ezekiel 18 (personal responsibility and breaking cycles)
- Galatians 3:13 (redemption language many counselors use as a hope anchor)

### Counselor tools

- **Genogram:** Track patterns across generations.
- **Loyalty bind work:** “What do you fear would happen if you healed?”
- **New belonging:** Build community support so change doesn’t equal isolation.

### **A Practical “Session Flow” You Can Use (Faith-Based + Somatic)**

1. **Regulate first:** breathe, orient, soften jaw/shoulders
2. **Name the pattern:** fight/flight/freeze/fawn
3. **Locate the belief:** “What does your body believe right now?”
4. **Trace the origin:** “When did you first learn this?”
5. **Release the agreement:** renounce, forgive, grieve (as appropriate)
6. **Replace with truth:** scripture + embodied safety
7. **Practice a new response:** tiny action experiment for the week

## **Possible Tools for a Client**

### **1. Body Awareness (Somatic Tools)**

Helps bring subconscious patterns into conscious awareness.

- Body scan: notice tension, heaviness, numbness
- Hand-on-heart or hand-on-belly grounding
- Naming sensations without judging them (“tight,” “warm,” “heavy”)

#### **Purpose:**

The body often reveals what the mind avoids.

### **2. Breath Regulation**

Helps calm the nervous system so emotions can release safely.

- Slow nasal breathing (inhale 4, exhale 6)

- Long exhales to reduce cortisol
- Gentle sighing or humming

**Purpose:**

Regulation must come before reflection.

### **3. Thought Pattern Journaling**

Helps identify subconscious beliefs.

- “When I feel triggered, I often think...”
- “The belief underneath this feeling might be...”
- “I learned this belief when...”

**Purpose:**

Brings hidden agreements into awareness.

### **4. Emotion Naming**

Helps reduce overwhelm and emotional confusion.

- Naming emotions without fixing them
- Using an emotion list if words are hard to find
- Allowing emotions to pass without judgment

**Purpose:**

Emotions lose power when they are named safely.

### **5. Grounding & Orientation**

Helps return the body to the present moment.

- Naming 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear
- Noticing physical support (chair, floor)
- Gentle movement (stretching, walking)

**Purpose:**

Signals safety to the nervous system.

**6. Truth Replacement (Belief Shifting)**

Helps replace subconscious lies with truth.

- Identify the old belief
- Gently speak a new truth aloud
- Notice how the body responds

**Purpose:**

The nervous system learns through repetition, not force.

**7. Prayer or Reflection**

Helps integrate emotional, spiritual, and nervous system healing.

- Short daily prayers (not long or intense)
- Sitting quietly after prayer to notice body response
- Scripture or affirmations spoken slowly

**Purpose:**

Creates internal alignment and safety.

**8. Self-Compassion Practice**

Helps soften shame and self-criticism.

- “This makes sense given what I’ve been through.”
- Speaking kindly to the younger self
- Allowing rest without guilt

**Purpose:**

Safety grows through kindness, not pressure.

## 9. Pattern Tracking

Helps recognize repeated cycles.

- When does this emotion show up?
- What situation activates it?
- How does my body respond?

### **Purpose:**

Awareness breaks automatic reactions.

### **Closing paragraph**

The nervous system remains in survival not because a person is broken, weak, or unwilling to heal, but because it learned—often early in life—how to protect against threat, loss, and overwhelm.

Unresolved grief, broken trust, shame, false identity agreements, survival vows, and a loss of safety become embedded patterns that once served a purpose but no longer reflect present reality.

These underlying reasons operate below conscious awareness, shaping emotions, thoughts, and bodily responses automatically.

Healing begins when these roots are gently identified, compassionately acknowledged, and met with safety, truth, and regulation. As the nervous system learns that danger has passed, it becomes possible to move out of survival and into restoration, connection, and rest.

