

My Instruction Manual

A GUIDE TO ME

Many of us are expecting ourselves and others to show up and work as though we're small countertop appliances and not complicated human beings whose capacity changes regularly. It would be great if everyone we knew came with a set of instructions as specific as they are...but we *can* write our own. But it's hard to let other people know what we need when we've barely had the time to think about it ourselves.

This is an exercise in self-awareness, so write freely without self-editing and remember that you are constantly updating and these answers reflect the version of you who is showing up today.

WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL

- What are the habits, behaviors and choices you consistently employ?

Are you well-rested? Connecting with friends and family? Exercising regularly?

- How do you like to communicate and receive information?

Do you prefer calls or text messages? Do you read the news or watch it?
Do you like your "bad" news directly?

- What makes you feel loved and valued?

- How would people describe you at your best?

- How do you show love and appreciation?

- What is your social capacity when you're at your best?

WHEN THINGS ARE NOT GREAT

- What are the signs you're starting to break down?

- What are your unhealthy coping mechanisms?

- How does your communication style change?

- What helps when you're feeling overloaded?

- What doesn't help?

- How do you think people would describe you at your worst?

- How do you want to be supported when you're not well?

- What does your social capacity look like when you're not at your best?

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Check your story...

We don't always see ourselves clearly. Ask people you trust how you show up at your best or your worst.

- What have they observed that you've missed?
- What do their answers tell you about yourself? Your relationships?
- What patterns do you see?

Write your instruction manual.

Your manual is as specific as you are, so use your notes from the prompts above to write out a guide to you. For example:

When I'm at my best, I wake up after 7 or 8 hours of sleep and eat breakfast with my family before I go to work. I don't check my email before I get in the car, but by the time I'm at my desk I'm ready to jump into my day. I like to have my camera off for zoom calls because it's easier for me to concentrate on what's being said. I prefer a phone call to a million emails.

OR...

When I'm at my best, I wake up and check my email before I'm even out of bed. I like to know what the day ahead is going to look like and I like to start my day before anyone else. Phone calls don't bug me, but I'd much rather get an email or a text if it's outside of regular work hours.

Okay, so what do I do with this information?

That's up to you. This exercise could be just for your own eyes, or something you share with the people who could benefit from knowing what makes you tick and what ticks you off.