

# **Borrowed Eyes**



**Groundbreaking Approach to  
Discovering Your Best Self through Others' Eyes**

By Lili Castille

Published by Montego Books, LLC

© Copyright 2025. Montego Books. All rights reserved.

The content contained within this book may not be reproduced, duplicated or transmitted without direct written permission from the author or the publisher.

Under no circumstances will any blame or legal responsibility be held against the publisher, or author, for any damages, reparation, or monetary loss due to the information contained within this book. Either directly or indirectly. You are responsible for your own choices, actions, and results.

#### Legal Notice

This book is copyright protected. This book is only for personal use. You cannot amend, distribute, sell, use, quote or paraphrase any part, or the content within this book, without the consent of the author or publisher.

#### Disclaimer Notice

Please note the information contained within this document is for educational and entertainment purposes only. All effort has been executed to present accurate, up to date, and reliable, complete information. No warranties of any kind are declared or implied. Readers acknowledge that the author is not engaging in the rendering of legal, financial, medical or professional advice. The content within this book has been derived from various sources. Please consult a licensed professional before attempting any techniques outlined in this book.

By reading this document, the reader agrees that under no circumstances is the author responsible for any losses, direct or indirect, which are incurred as a result of the use of the information contained within this document, including, but not limited to errors, omissions, or inaccuracies.

Introduction: Why Your Mirror Lies .....	4
Chapter 1: The Power of Borrowed Eyes .....	6
Chapter 2: Gathering Borrowed Eyes Feedback.....	12
Chapter 3: Challenging the Imposter Syndrome .....	17
Chapter 4: Identify Your Unique Value .....	22
Chapter 5: Confidence in Action .....	28
Chapter 6: Healing from Toxic Family Messages.....	33
Chapter 7: Cultivating a Positive Support Network .....	39
Chapter 8: Transforming Negative Self-Talk .....	44
Chapter 9: The Influence of Social Media on Self-Image .....	50
Chapter 10: Developing Emotional Intelligence .....	57
Chapter 11: The Power of Vulnerability .....	63
Chapter 12: Setting Boundaries for Self-Care .....	68
Chapter 13: Visualizing Success .....	72
Chapter 14: Taking Action Against Fear.....	76
Chapter 15: Building Resilience .....	80
Chapter 16: Masking and Mimicry .....	85
Chapter 17: Celebrating Neurodivergent Brilliance .....	91
Chapter 18: Creating Your Confidence Toolkit.....	96
Closing Chapter 19: Becoming Your Own Mirror .....	100
References.....	108

## Introduction: Why Your Mirror Lies

If you're autistic, ADHD or both (AuDHD), you face the world with invisible differences. You might have spent years learning to mask your natural ways of thinking, feeling, or communicating, just to fit in. Maybe you've been told you're too much, too sensitive, too quiet, or too intense. Or perhaps you've always felt just a little out of sync, or like a creative idea generator who sometimes misses social cues, or a deep feeler who struggles with overwhelm.

Yet, even when people close to you notice your strengths, your creativity, empathy, honesty, or out-of-the-box thinking, there's often a stubborn gap between how they see you and how you see yourself. Maybe a friend says, "You're so resilient", or a partner admires your insight, and your first instinct is to brush it off, doubting whether they really mean it. You might even wonder, "Are they talking about me?"

Here's something important: For many neurodivergent people, self-perception can be like living with a funhouse mirror, distorted, exaggerated, and unreliable. Years of social misunderstanding, criticism, or feeling different can make it easy to zoom in on your struggles and downplay your gifts. You may replay moments of social slip-ups or executive function challenges, while dismissing the very real strengths and wins others see in you. Meanwhile, the people who care about you often see a completely different picture: someone capable, creative, and inspiring, even if you can't always feel it yourself.

Why is it so hard to believe the good things others see in us, especially when we've spent so much time adapting, masking, or feeling like outsiders? Why do compliments feel awkward or suspicious, while criticism sticks like glue? What would happen if, just for a moment, you could borrow someone else's eyes, someone who truly gets you, and see yourself as you really are?

This book is about closing that gap. It's about learning to trust the perspective of people who support and understand you, and using their view to build confidence,

break free from self-doubt, and embrace your authentic self, not the person you think you're supposed to be, but the real, remarkable you.

You'll discover science-backed strategies for gathering meaningful feedback, receiving it without resistance, and translating it into a new, more accurate self-image. You'll practice mirror moments, try on borrowed beliefs, and learn how reflecting others' strengths can help both you and your neurodivergent community thrive.

You don't have to go it alone or keep guessing at your worth. You just have to be willing to see yourself through borrowed eyes, especially the supportive eyes of people who understand the AuDHD journey.

# Chapter 1: The Power of Borrowed Eyes

## **Why Is It So Hard to See Your Strengths?**

For many AuDHDers, the brain's natural negativity bias (our tendency to remember criticism and overlook compliments) is intensified by years of social rejection and unmet neurotypical expectations. Positive feedback can fade quickly, while mistakes and negative moments linger, fueling self-doubt and imposter syndrome.

Masking and adapting to fit in can leave you disconnected from your authentic self. This cycle is not your fault; it's a response to living in a world that often misunderstands neurodivergent ways of thinking and being.

## **How the Borrowed Eyes Technique Can Help**

Research shows that intentionally seeking out and reflecting on others' positive perspectives (what psychologists call the "Reflected Best Self" approach) can help rewire your brain. By gathering stories and feedback from people who genuinely appreciate you, you activate neural pathways linked to reward, trust, and self-acceptance. Over time, this practice can reshape your self-image and foster resilience.

Supportive feedback from people who understand neurodivergence is especially powerful. It counters years of masking and self-criticism, helping you reconnect with your own strengths and unique contributions. If you don't know a lot of people, even one person you trust can make a difference.

## **The Blind Spot Phenomenon**

Everyone has blind spots: areas where we overlook our strengths or talents. For AuDHDers, these blind spots are often shaped by years of masking, missed cues, and focusing on struggles. Trusted friends, family, or fellow neurodivergent peers can help reveal these hidden strengths, offering a truer reflection than your inner critic ever could.

## **Changing Your Inner Narrative**

You don't have to rely solely on your self-perception. By intentionally seeking and internalizing the positive reflections of others, you can quiet your inner critic and build a more accurate, compassionate view of yourself.

This isn't just a feel-good idea. Science shows it can truly change how you think, feel, and grow.

## **Maria and Mark's Stories**

Maria is a graphic designer who always worried she was awkward in meetings. Her coworkers, though, saw her as creative, insightful, and a natural leader. When Maria finally asked for honest feedback, she was surprised: "I never realized you all thought I was good with clients", she said. Their words filled in the missing pieces of her self-view.

Mark is a software engineer who often felt like an imposter. When a colleague asked for his thoughts on a tricky problem, and then praised him for his answer, Mark realized others really did value his expertise. That moment changed how he saw himself, and gave him the courage to speak up more.

Most of us live like Maria and Mark. We brush off compliments or think people are just being polite. But research shows that friends, family, and coworkers often see us more clearly than we see ourselves.

## **Research Insights**

Self-doubt is a common experience and is especially prevalent among people who feel different from the majority, including those with AuDHD (autism and ADHD). Research shows that chronic self-doubt can erode self-esteem and increase anxiety (Leary et al., 2000). Neurodivergent individuals, like those with AuDHD, may experience heightened self-doubt due to frequent misunderstandings, social challenges, and negative feedback from their environment (Russell et al., 2022). Recognizing self-doubt as a normal but manageable feeling is an important first step toward building confidence.

## **The Benefits of the Borrowed Eyes Technique**

When we listen to how others see us, it can be life-changing. People often notice strengths in us that we miss: our creativity, kindness, or ability to make others laugh. Even small compliments can become reminders of who we really are.

### **This technique can help you:**

- Build confidence and self-acceptance.
- Challenge imposter syndrome.
- See your strengths more clearly.
- Feel more connected and less alone.

### **Why it can help:**

1. Others Are More Objective: They aren't weighed down by your self-doubt or old stories.
2. They See Patterns: People you trust can spot strengths and abilities you overlook.



3. **Positive Feedback Changes Your Brain:** Hearing good things about yourself, especially from people who get you, can help your brain form new, more positive beliefs.

### **The Mindfulness Log**

Start a log just for positive feedback. When someone gives you a compliment, or thanks you for something, write it down. On hard days, reread your notes. Over time, you'll see patterns and discover strengths you didn't know you had.

### **Positive Feedback Exercise**

1. Think back over the past year. List compliments, positive feedback, or times someone appreciated you, big or small.
2. Write down who said it and what was happening.
3. Look for patterns. Are there strengths that come up more than once?
4. Pick one positive comment to try on today. For example, if someone called you a great listener, act as if that's true and notice how it feels.

### **Reflected Best-Self Exercise**

Make a list of 3–5 people you trust. These could be friends, family, or colleagues.

Ask them to share a time they saw you at your best. What were you doing? What did they notice?

Collect their stories and read them. Notice the strengths and qualities they mention.

Write a short description of yourself using their words. Keep it somewhere you can see when you need a confidence boost.

**Note:** If asking people feels uncomfortable, start by remembering past compliments or kind words and writing those down. Sometimes, just imagining what a supportive

friend or mentor would say can help. Before a big challenge, pause and ask yourself: "If my best friend were here, what would they say about my ability to handle this?" Write down their words and take them with you as a reminder.

### **Mirror Swap:**

With a friend, each person writes down three strengths they see in someone else. Exchange and discuss. Notice how others' views differ from your own.

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. Recall a time someone saw something good in you that you hadn't noticed. How did it feel?
2. Describe a situation where self-doubt held you back, but someone else believed in you. What did they see?
3. Reflect on a recent compliment. What made it meaningful?

### **Chapter Highlights**

- We often miss our own strengths and focus too much on our flaws.
- Borrowed Eyes can help us discover and believe in our positive qualities.
- Asking for and accepting feedback is a step toward greater self-confidence.
- Building a supportive community makes this process even stronger.
- The gap between how you see yourself and how others see you is natural, and can be bridged.

### **Integrating Borrowed Eyes and Internal Eyes**

Borrowed Eyes can show you what's good and true about you when your own vision is cloudy. As you practice, try this:

- **Notice:** After receiving supportive feedback, pause and let it in.
- **Reflect:** Ask yourself, "How would it feel to believe this about myself, even a little?"
- **Practice:** Write down the affirmation or compliment. Read it aloud to yourself, or say it in the mirror.
- **Try It On:** For a day, act as if you believed this positive perspective. How does it change things?
- **Repeat:** Over time, you may notice your own internal voice becoming gentler and more confident.
- **Remember:** The goal isn't to need others forever, but to let their kindness strengthen your own inner gaze. With practice, the affirming words of others can become your own.

### **Closing Thoughts**

This technique isn't about ignoring your challenges. It's about seeing your whole self, strengths, struggles, and all, with more kindness and truth. The more you practice, the more you'll trust in your own worth.

## Chapter 2: Gathering Borrowed Eyes Feedback

"You have no idea how much you inspire me". When my colleague Maya sent me that message, I almost brushed it off. Was she just being polite? Was she exaggerating? But what if, for a moment, I tried to see myself how Maya saw me?

Most of us automatically focus on our mistakes or what we think we lack. Compliments slip away quickly, while criticism sticks. But people who care about us often see strengths and gifts that we overlook.

### **Research Insights**

The inner critic, that harsh, self-judging voice, is shaped by early experiences, societal expectations, and repeated exposure to criticism. Cognitive-behavioral research demonstrates that this internal voice often mirrors external criticism or trauma (Beck, 1976). For people with AuDHD, years of masking, or trying to hide differences to fit in, can intensify the inner critic and lead to internalized negative beliefs (Raymaker et al., 2020). Learning to recognize and challenge the inner critic is a key step in self-acceptance and improved mental health.

### **The Compliment Deflection Reflex**

When someone compliments you, do you:

Downplay it? (Oh, it was nothing.)

Deflect it? (You're the one who's the real genius!)

Disbelieve it? (You can't really mean that.)

If so, you're not alone. Many of us do this, often to protect ourselves from disappointment or the fear of seeming arrogant. But this reflex can hold us back from real confidence and self-acceptance.

### **Try This Instead:**

When someone gives you positive feedback, pause. Take a deep breath and say, Thank you. That means a lot. Let the words land. Each time you do this, you're giving yourself a chance to truly receive the positivity others see in you.

### **Feedback Exercise**

1. Choose a trusted friend, a partner or few friends you trust (family, friends, coworkers, or mentors).

#### **2. Ask for Feedback**

Ask them one or more of these questions:

1. What's a strength you see in me that I might not notice?
2. What do you come to me for help with?
3. How would you describe me to someone who's never met me?

(Note: If it feels awkward, you can say, I'm doing an exercise from a book about self-growth. Would you be willing to help?)

#### **3. Collect Responses**

Write down what each person says, don't edit or argue, just record.

#### 4. Reflect

Which responses surprise you? Which are hardest to believe? Which feel good?

Often, our strengths feel invisible because they come naturally, or because our own worries drown them out. Practicing the Borrowed Eyes technique helps these hidden strengths come into view.

#### **Examples:**

Alex: "My sister said she calls me in a crisis because I stay calm. I always thought I was anxious".

Chelsey: "A coworker said I make everyone feel included. I didn't know that was special".

Derek: "My mentor said I'm great at breaking problems into steps. I thought everyone could do that".

#### **The Compliment Journal**

For one week, write down every compliment or positive comment you receive, big or small. This tool will help you see yourself more clearly and kindly.

At the end of the week, look over your list:

Which compliments surprised you?

Which do you resist believing?

Which do you want to try on this week?

#### **Why This Works**

Research shows that people often underestimate their positive qualities. Asking others for feedback helps you see yourself more clearly and boosts well-being.

Learning to accept compliments, without deflection, can increase confidence and mood. Borrowed Eyes is about giving your inner critic some competition, letting kind, honest words from others have a say in how you view yourself.

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. Who are the people in your life whose opinions you trust most? Why?
2. Write about a time you received feedback that surprised you. What did you learn?
3. How do you usually react to compliments or positive feedback?

### **Chapter Highlights**

- Choose feedback from people who are honest and supportive.
- Scripts and prompts can make asking for feedback less awkward.
- Receiving compliments graciously helps build a stronger self-image.
- Specific feedback is more meaningful than vague praise.
- Building a feedback network is a process, keep practicing.

### **Practice Scripts**

#### **Requesting Feedback**

1. I'd love your honest perspective, what do you see as my strengths?
2. Could you share a time you saw me at my best?
3. Is there something positive you've noticed in me lately?

## Receiving Compliments

1. Thank you, that means a lot.
2. I appreciate you noticing.
3. I'm learning to accept compliments, thank you.

## Closing Thoughts

Gathering Borrowed Eyes isn't just about collecting compliments; it's about building a new, kinder lens for self-understanding. Over time, as you gather and accept the good others see in you, your self-image will shift. You'll start to believe in your strengths, not just because you want to, but because you have real evidence.



## Chapter 3: Challenging the Imposter Syndrome

### **What Imposter Syndrome Feels Like**

Many neurodivergent people, especially those with histories of criticism or misunderstanding—whether from family, teachers, or peers—know what it’s like to feel like a fraud. You might chalk up your successes to luck, worry that you’ll be “found out,” or find it hard to believe positive feedback. These feelings can be reinforced by old family messages (“Why can’t you be more like your sibling?”) or a lifetime of not quite fitting in.

### **Imposter syndrome can look like:**

- Downplaying your achievements or brushing off praise
- Over-preparing or working extra hard to “cover up” perceived shortcomings
- Comparing yourself to others and feeling like you come up short
- Fear of being exposed as “not good enough,” even when you’re qualified

### **Sofia’s Story**

When Sofia was promoted, she felt dread instead of pride. “I was just lucky,” she told herself, brushing off every compliment. At a family dinner, her brother said, “Everyone at work talks about how you hold the team together. You earned this.” Sofia began keeping a Compliment Bank—saving kind words from others. On tough days, she returned to these reminders. Gradually, as she let herself believe what others saw, her confidence grew and her self-doubt faded.

## **Why Imposter Syndrome Sticks**

Our brains are wired to remember criticism more than praise, a survival instinct called negativity bias. For neurodivergent folks, this can be intensified by years of misunderstanding and negative feedback, especially from family or authority figures.

Research shows imposter syndrome is common, especially among high achievers and neurodivergent people (Bravata et al., 2020; Cassidy et al., 2021). Supportive feedback from others—especially those who understand and value your differences—can help break the cycle of self-doubt (Vergauwe et al., 2015; Feenstra et al., 2020).

## **A New Perspective**

You don't have to fight imposter syndrome alone. "Borrowing" the eyes of supportive people like friends, mentors, chosen family, can help you see your real strengths. Their perspective is often more accurate and kinder than your inner critic or old family messages.

## **Practical Exercises**

### **Compliment Reality Check**

1. When self-doubt strikes, pause and recall a genuine compliment you've received.
2. Write it down. Ask, "What evidence do others see that I'm missing?"
3. Revisit these words when you need a reminder of your worth.

### **Imposter Support Exercise**

1. Share a recent moment of self-doubt with a friend.
2. Invite them to reflect back your strengths or achievements.
3. Notice how these outside perspectives shift your self-image.

### **The Compliment Bank**

1. Keep a running list (digital or paper) of positive feedback and affirming words.
2. When your inner critic is loud, revisit your Compliment Bank.
3. If you'd trust this compliment about a friend, why not yourself?

### **Reality Testing**

1. When you think, "I don't belong here," ask a supportive person, "What makes you think I do?"
2. Let their honest feedback balance your self-doubt.

### **Learning to Accept Praise**

1. When complimented, simply say, "Thank you," and pause.
2. Imagine believing the praise—how would you act differently if you let it in?

### **Share Your Successes**

1. Tell a friend about something you're proud of.
2. Ask, "What stands out to you about this accomplishment?"
3. Let their reflections help you internalize your achievements.

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. Recall a time you felt like an imposter. What triggered it?
2. How did you respond to praise—did you let it in or brush it off?

3. Write a letter to yourself as if you were your own kind mentor, affirming your value and achievements.

## **Practice Scripts**

Addressing Imposter Feelings:

1. “Sometimes I feel like I don’t deserve my success/ my title/ my position. Can we talk about it?”
2. “What strengths do you see in me that I might overlook?”

Accepting Praise:

1. “Thank you. I’m learning to let that in.”
2. “I appreciate your recognition—it helps me see myself differently.”

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Imposter syndrome is common and especially strong when old family messages or criticism linger.
- Sharing your doubts and hearing supportive feedback can loosen imposter syndrome’s grip.
- Practicing acceptance and reflecting on positive feedback rewires your self-image.
- Community, self-compassion, and “borrowed eyes” are powerful tools for growth.

## **Closing Thoughts**

You're not alone in feeling like an imposter. Almost everyone does at times, especially those who've been misunderstood or criticized in the past. By intentionally collecting, reflecting on, and believing the supportive feedback from your community, you can break the cycle of self-doubt and learn to see your true worth. Until you fully believe in yourself, it's okay to lean on the borrowed eyes of those who do.

## Chapter 4: Identify Your Unique Value

Our true value emerges when we recognize and share the gifts that only we can offer.

### **Samuel's Story**

When Samuel sat down for his annual work review, he braced himself for criticism. Instead, his manager surprised him: You're the glue that keeps this team together. You spot problems before they grow, and you make everyone feel heard. Samuel had always thought these abilities were just being helpful. But when his coworkers shared stories of times he'd calmed meetings and solved problems quietly, he realized his real value wasn't in flashy achievements, it was in the steady ways he supported others. That night, Samuel started writing these comments in a journal. For the first time, he began to see his strengths the way others did: essential, and uniquely his.

### **Recognizing Your Strengths and Talents**

It's common to struggle with seeing your own strengths, especially if you experience self-doubt or imposter feelings. Sometimes, your internal critic is so loud that it drowns out real evidence of your talents. The Borrowed Eyes approach means intentionally asking others what they see in you, so you can discover gifts you might not notice yourself.

### **Research Insights**

Positive feedback from others is a powerful tool for building self-awareness and confidence. Most people, especially those with self-doubt or imposter syndrome, underestimate their strengths (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). Studies in positive psychology show that receiving genuine feedback from trusted people helps people

see hidden talents and increases confidence and engagement (Roberts et al., 2005; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). For people with AuDHD, who may receive more criticism than praise, intentionally gathering positive reflections can be especially transformative (Russell et al., 2022).

### **Achievement Journal with Reflected Strengths**

1. Think back to achievements, big or small.
2. Write down tasks you enjoyed or challenges you overcame.
3. Ask a trusted friend, family member, or colleague: What strengths did you see in me during these moments?
4. Write down their answers next to your own.
5. Notice any strengths they see that you missed.

When you see your achievements through both your eyes and theirs, you build a more accurate, and kinder, picture of yourself.

### **Celebration Notebook with Community Input**

1. Write down positive feedback, compliments, or proud moments, both your own and those others notice in you.
2. Revisit this notebook when you feel doubt.
3. Sometimes, ask someone you trust to add what they appreciate or admire about you.
4. Let their words remind you of your real value when your inner critic is loud.

Celebrating even small achievements, and letting others join in, builds confidence for everyone.

### **Activity: Make a Circle of Strength**

Surround yourself with people who lift you up.

Join groups or communities where everyone's talents are appreciated.

Make it a practice for everyone to share one thing they admired in someone else that week.

Listen and let these reflections help you see your unique value.

### **Why Feedback Changes How We See Ourselves**

Supportive feedback can reshape your self-image. Honest, caring feedback can show you strengths you would otherwise miss. Research shows that most of us underestimate our strengths, especially when we're struggling with self-doubt or imposter syndrome. But when we regularly seek out and reflect on positive feedback, we become more resilient and more likely to use our strengths in new ways.

Keeping a feedback journal is a small change that can make a big difference in how you see yourself.

### **Active Listening for Strengths**

When someone gives you feedback, listen for mentions of your strengths or positive impact.

Ask, "What's one thing you think I do especially well?"

Summarize what you've heard, and let yourself believe it, even if just for a moment.

### **Feedback Reflection with Peers**

Share feedback you've received with a trusted peer or mentor.

Ask, "Do you see these same strengths in me? Are there others you'd add?"



Let their perspective help you see the bigger picture.

## **Create and Own Your Personal Value Statement**

Your value statement is a short description of your unique strengths and what you bring to the world. The Borrowed Eyes approach makes your value statement richer and more truthful.

### **Collaborative Value Statement Exercise**

1. Write down moments when you felt proud or got positive feedback.
2. List the qualities or actions that led to those moments.
3. Ask 1 or 2 trusted people: What do you think makes me unique or valuable?
4. Combine your own reflections and others' input into one personal value statement.
5. Keep your value statement somewhere visible. Read it when you need a boost. Update it as you grow.

**Tip:** Use your value statement as a daily affirmation. Let the words others use to describe you become part of your own self-talk.

## **The Power of Community**

Self-confidence grows when you're supported by others. Share your value statement and achievements with friends or colleagues. Invite their feedback, ask, "Do you see new strengths in me as I grow?" Let their reflections remind you that you're not alone in your struggles or your progress.

### **Borrowed Eyes Mantra:**

"I allow myself to see what my supporters see in me. I honor the strengths they notice, even when I can't see them myself."

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. List three strengths or talents you believe you have. How did you discover them?
2. Write about feedback that helped you recognize a hidden talent.
3. Draft your personal value statement in one paragraph.

## **Pair Activity**

Strengths Spotting: Each person shares a recent accomplishment. The other points out the strengths they noticed.

Value Statement Workshop: Help each other draft value statements.

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Self-awareness is the foundation of confidence.
- Other people can see talents in us that we miss.
- Naming your unique value helps you find your direction.
- Your value statement can change as you grow.
- Knowing your strengths helps you go after new opportunities.

## **Practice Scripts**

Exploring Strengths:

1. What do you think I bring to our team/friendship?
2. Is there a talent or quality you see in me that I might overlook?
3. When have you seen me at my best?

### Sharing a Value Statement:

1. I believe my unique value is...
2. I'm learning that I'm really good at...
3. Based on what you've shared, I think my strengths are...

### **Closing Thoughts**

Building self-confidence is easier with support. By borrowing the eyes of those who appreciate you, you gain a more balanced, empowered view of your unique value. Let their reflections guide you, especially in moments of doubt. Over time, you'll start to see yourself through those same kind and truthful eyes.

## Chapter 5: Confidence in Action

### **Elena's Story**

Elena used to fear speaking up in meetings. Even with good ideas, her inner critic whispered, "You're not experienced enough. Let someone else talk". Then she started her Mindfulness Journal and noticed a theme: her friends and colleagues described her as thoughtful and insightful in group discussions. One comment stood out: "You always ask the question no one else thinks of, and it gets us unstuck".

At her next meeting, Elena reread that line. When the conversation stalled, she reminded herself, I am the person who gets us unstuck. She took a deep breath and spoke up. The discussion moved forward, and a coworker messaged her later: "Thanks for speaking up, that helped a lot".

Did Elena stop feeling nervous? Not right away, but recalling others' positive feedback gave her the courage to try. Each time she repeated the process, her confidence grew, not just in her mind, but in her real life. Confidence is not a character trait; it's a practice.

### **Research Insights**

Confidence is best built not just through reflection, but by taking action based on supportive feedback. Research in psychology shows that enactive mastery, taking action and seeing positive results, strengthens self-efficacy and confidence (Bandura, 1997). Visualization techniques, such as imagining oneself through the eyes of a supportive other, reduce anxiety and improve performance (Taylor et al., 1998). For neurodivergent individuals, practicing self-affirming actions and receiving genuine feedback can create lasting improvements in confidence and resilience (Creswell et al., 2005).

Studies show that confidence grows through action. When you try something new and see it work, your belief in yourself gets stronger (Bandura, 1997). Acting on positive feedback, especially when it highlights your unique strengths, makes you more likely to face challenges and bounce back from setbacks (Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

Visualization can help too. Imagining yourself acting from a place of confidence actually prepares your brain and body to do it in real life (Taylor et al., 1998; Creswell et al., 2005).

### **Moving from Reflection to Action**

You've collected feedback, started your journal, and practiced internalizing new beliefs. Now it's time for the real shift: bringing those new beliefs into your actions.

#### **Take- the- Challenge Exercise**

1. Pick one area where self-doubt holds you back.

Examples: Speaking in meetings, setting boundaries, sharing your work, reaching out socially.

2. Look through your Mindfulness Journal.

Find a strength or compliment that fits.

3. Commit to a small, specific action in this area.

- Speak up once in a meeting.
- Share an idea in a group chat.
- Show your creative work to a friend.
- Say no when you need to.

4. After you act, reflect.

- How did it feel to act with new confidence?
- What happened? What surprised you-

Repeat this challenge at least once a week, choosing a new strength and a new action.

### **Visualization Exercise**

1. Find a quiet space. Close your eyes and breathe deeply.
2. Picture an upcoming situation where you want to feel confident.
3. Imagine your supporter in the front row, nodding and smiling.
4. Hear their words: You've got this, I see how capable you are.
5. See yourself acting from that belief. Notice what you do, say, and feel.
6. When you open your eyes, write one thing you'll try differently based on this visualization.

### **When You Face Setbacks**

No one feels confident all the time. You'll have days when self-doubt creeps back in or a challenge shakes you. Remember: setbacks are information, not a final judgment. Use your Mindfulness Journal as a reminder of who you are to those who believe in you. Reach out for support if you need it. Every time you return to these practices, you build more resilience.

### **Chapter Highlights**

- Acting from borrowed eyes builds real-world confidence.
- Outside perspectives can unlock new solutions.

- Feedback isn't just for reflection, it's a tool for action.
- Practice turns borrowed eyes into a habit.
- Progress matters, even small steps count.

## **Practice Scripts**

Self-Talk: Before a tough situation, write down a sentence from your journal that you wish you believed about yourself.

Examples:

1. I am a calm problem-solver.
2. People trust me because I listen.
3. I bring people together.

Putting Feedback into Action:

1. Based on your feedback, I'm going to try \_\_\_\_ differently.
2. Your perspective gave me the confidence to take this step.
3. Can I check in with you after I try this?

Encouraging Others:

1. I'd love to hear what you do with this feedback.
2. Let me know how it goes, I believe in you.
3. Remember, I see strengths in you even when you don't.

### **Reminder: Integrate Borrowed and Internal Eyes**

- **Integrate** other people's positive feedback with your own internal voice
- **Notice:** After receiving supportive feedback, pause and let it in.
- **Reflect:** Ask yourself, "How would it feel to believe this about myself, even a little?"
- **Practice:** Write down the affirmation or compliment. Read it aloud to yourself, or say it in the mirror.
- **Try It On:** For a day, act as if you believed this positive perspective. How does it change things?
- **Repeat:** Over time, you may notice your own internal voice becoming gentler and more confident.
- **Remember:** The goal is to make the affirming words of others become your own.

### **Closing Thoughts**

The borrowed eyes technique isn't just for feeling better. It's a pathway to doing better, living braver, and connecting more deeply. Every small action you take from this new perspective is a vote for the person you are becoming. The more you act, the more real your new confidence becomes.



## Chapter 6: Healing from Toxic Family Messages

You are not the sum of other people's judgments. Sometimes the greatest act of self-love is learning to see yourself through gentler, kinder eyes than those you grew up with.

### **Why Family Messages Run So Deep**

Our earliest ideas about ourselves often come from family. For many neurodivergent people, family feedback can be especially powerful, sometimes shaping our self-esteem for years. If you grew up misunderstood, criticized, or pressured to be someone you're not, those messages can echo long after childhood. Maybe you were told you were "too much," "too sensitive," "lazy," or "not enough." You may have felt like the odd one out, always working harder to fit in or please others.

Sometimes, family members simply didn't understand your neurodivergence. Other times, their own unhealed wounds led them to criticize, control, or withhold love and approval. Whatever the reason, the result can be a persistent inner critic, a sense of never measuring up, or a fear of being your true self, even as an adult

### **Dana's Story**

Dana grew up in a family that valued conformity and emotional restraint. When Dana, who is AuDHD, struggled with sensory overwhelm, forgetfulness, or "running her mouth" about special interests, their parents responded with sighs, impatience, or sharp words: "Why can't you just act normal? You're such a Sarah Bernhardt" (drama queen). Stop overreacting." At every family gathering, Dana felt watched and judged for every quirk.

Even as an adult, Dana noticed their inner voice echoing their parents' criticism. Compliments from friends felt hard to believe. In stressful moments, Dana would hear, "You're just making excuses," or "Nobody else has these problems". Their lowered immune system from the stress brought on colds and headaches, but when they really didn't feel well and asked to stay home, they were told, "Sick again? You may as well go to school and learn something."

It wasn't until Dana started therapy and found an affirming neurodivergent community that things began to shift. With practice, Dana started to borrow the eyes of friends who saw creativity, empathy, and tenacity instead of problems. Slowly, Dana learned to let go of the old family messages and build a new, kinder self-image.

### **The Lasting Impact of Negative Family Feedback**

- Toxic or invalidating family environments can leave deep marks, such as:
- Harsh self-criticism or perfectionism
- Difficulty trusting your own feelings or needs
- Fear of making mistakes or disappointing others
- Shame about neurodivergent traits or behaviors
- Struggles with boundaries, people-pleasing, or self-advocacy

Family messages can become the voice of your inner critic, especially if you were rewarded for masking and compliance and punished for authenticity.

### **Research Insights**

Studies show that early family feedback shapes our self-esteem, especially when it's repeated or linked to core parts of our identity (Neff & McGehee, 2010). Negative or invalidating environments increase the risk of anxiety, depression, and shame,

particularly for neurodivergent people whose needs were misunderstood (Cassidy et al., 2020; Botha & Frost, 2020). Fortunately, research also shows that finding supportive, affirming relationships—where you are seen and valued—can help rewire these old messages, fostering self-compassion and resilience (Crompton et al., 2020; Neff & Germer, 2013).

## **Reflection**

When the old family voices get loud, pause. Ask yourself: “If a kind friend or mentor were here, what would they notice about me? How would they see this situation differently?” Sometimes the most healing thing you can do is let in a new perspective: one that honors your truth.

## **Practical Steps for Healing**

### **1. Identify the Old Messages**

- Write down the most persistent negative things you heard from family about yourself, especially about your neurodivergent traits.
- Notice when these messages show up in your self-talk.

### **2. Challenge and Reframe with Borrowed Eyes**

- For each message, imagine what a supportive friend, therapist, or chosen family member might say.
- Example: Old message: “You’re so lazy.”

Reframe: “You work incredibly hard, even when it isn’t visible to others. Your brain just works differently.”

### 3. Affirm Your Reality

- Remind yourself: “Just because someone said it doesn’t make it true.”
- List three qualities or strengths you have that contradict the old messages.

### 4. Build a New Support System

- Seek out friends, support groups, or communities that affirm and understand your neurodivergence.
- Let the acceptance and encouragement you receive from them become your new mirror.

### 5. Practice Self-Compassion

- When you slip into old patterns of self-criticism, pause and offer yourself the kindness you wish you’d received.
- Try a gentle affirmation: “It’s okay to be different. I am enough as I am.”

### **Healing Letter Exercise**

- Write a letter to your younger self, as if you are the loving, affirming adult they needed.
- Or, write a letter to yourself from the perspective of a supportive friend or role model.
- Read and revisit this letter whenever family criticism echoes in your mind.

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. What old family messages do you still hear in your self-talk? Where did they come from?

2. Who in your life now sees your strengths and uniqueness? What have they reflected back to you?
3. If you could give your younger self one message of acceptance, what would it be?

### **Group Activities**

- Supportive Reframing Circle: Share a family criticism or old message with your supportive group. Others offer affirming, alternative perspectives.
- Affirmation Chain: Each person states one trait their family shamed or misunderstood; the group responds with ways it's a strength or gift.

### **Chapter Highlights**

- Family feedback shapes early self-perception, but it doesn't have to define you forever.
- Borrowing the eyes of supportive, affirming people can help rewrite your self-story.
- Healing is possible—even slow, small steps toward self-compassion make a difference.
- You deserve to be seen, valued, and loved for who you truly are.

### **Practice Scripts**

1. "You are not too much. You are wonderfully, unapologetically you."
2. "Your needs are valid, even if others never understood them."
3. "You are not broken. You are brave for being yourself."

## **Closing Thoughts**

Some of the hardest work is learning to disentangle your worth from family criticism or toxic feedback. By intentionally seeking and internalizing affirming perspectives, you can quiet the old voices and discover your own. You are allowed to build a new story, one that celebrates your neurodivergent brilliance and your right to belong.

## Chapter 7: Cultivating a Positive Support Network

Surround yourself with people who see your light and reflect it back, even on your darkest days.

### **Why Community Matters for Confidence**

Building self-confidence isn't just about what happens inside your mind, it's also about who you have around you. Supportive relationships make it easier to take risks, express yourself, and grow. When the people in your life reflect your strengths and encourage you, it's like having a mirror that shows you your best side, even when you can't see it yourself.

### **Malik's Community Mirror**

When Malik moved to a new city, he felt invisible. But at his first local writers' group, someone said, Your feedback helped me see my story's strengths. You have a real gift for encouragement. Week after week, others welcomed Malik's insights. He started keeping a notebook of the group's affirmations and small wins. Over time, these borrowed eyes helped Malik see his own value. He spoke up more, submitted his writing, and even led meetings. Community gave him confidence he didn't know he had.

### **Research Insights**

Strong social support is one of the most consistent predictors of confidence, resilience, and well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). People who regularly engage with supportive friends or groups are more likely to try new things and recover from setbacks (Newman, Tay, & Diener, 2019). For those with AuDHD, who often face exclusion or misunderstanding, building a supportive community can buffer against

loneliness and foster a stronger, more positive self-image (Mason et al., 2021). Interventions that provide belonging and encouragement can significantly improve persistence and performance (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

## **The Supportive Community**

Seeing yourself through the encouraging eyes of friends, mentors, or peers helps you rewrite the story you tell yourself. Sharing your struggles with a trusted group often reveals that others feel the same way, normalizing your experience and breaking the cycle of self-doubt.

Every time you gather support, validation, or kindness from others, you lay another brick in the foundation of your confidence. Each small step, taken in community, makes you stronger.

## **Building a Supportive Community**

- Be intentional: Choose to spend time with people who inspire and encourage you.
- Look for positivity: Seek out groups or friendships where kindness, growth, and honest support are valued.
- Invest in relationships: Show interest in others, celebrate their wins, and be present during tough times. Mutual support builds trust and confidence for everyone.
- Notice red flags: If a relationship leaves you feeling drained or inadequate, it may not be healthy. Trust your instincts and set boundaries when you need to.



## **Community Confidence Journal**

After group meetings or check-ins, jot down compliments, encouragement, or positive feedback you receive. Revisit these notes when you feel doubt creeping in, they're proof of your strengths, seen and valued by others.

## **Accountability Partner**

Find an accountability partner. Schedule regular check-ins to share recent wins and positive feedback, both given and received. Make it a habit to notice and say aloud each other's strengths and progress. Meet for coffee, or have a call every couple of weeks to share your successes and the encouragement you've received. These small, consistent rituals help reinforce a sense of belonging and mutual support

## **Nurturing Mutual Support**

Support is a two-way street. When you encourage others, you build their confidence, and yours too. Every kind word or act of support strengthens your bond and helps both of you grow. When you feel seen and valued, it's easier to see and value yourself.

## **Community Reflection Week**

For one week, give specific, sincere positive feedback to at least one person a day. At the end of the week, reflect on how giving (and receiving) this positivity changes your relationships and your own self-view.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. Who makes you feel most supported? What do they do that helps?

2. Write about a time when a relationship drained your confidence. What did you learn?

3. Imagine your ideal support network. Who would be in it? What qualities would they have?

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Community is essential for building and sustaining confidence.
- Seek out relationships that uplift, support, and challenge you kindly.
- Mutual support leads to deeper trust and growth.
- Healthy boundaries keep relationships positive and supportive.
- Investing in your support network pays off in lasting self-confidence.

## **Practice Scripts**

Seeking Support:

1. I'm working on building a more supportive circle. Are you open to being part of that?
2. I appreciate how you encourage me. Thank you.
3. Can we check in with each other when we need a boost?

**Offering Support:**

1. I'm here if you ever need to talk or share feedback.
2. Let's celebrate each other's wins, big or small.
3. Your presence makes a difference to me.

## **Closing Thoughts**

By practicing the Borrowed Eyes approach, actively seeking, receiving, and reflecting the positive perspectives of your community, you transform your support network from a passive safety net into a source of confidence and growth. The more you connect and share, the more you'll see yourself as others already do: capable, valued, and never alone.

## Chapter 8: Transforming Negative Self-Talk

### **Why Negative Self-Talk Sticks**

Many of us are familiar with harsh thoughts like, "I'm not good enough", or "I always mess things up". These lines can run on a loop, especially when we feel anxious, different, or out of place. For AuDHDers, years of masking, criticism, or misunderstanding may make these thoughts even louder.

It's important to notice these patterns and how they shape your beliefs. Once you become aware, you can start to change them.

### **Maria's Story**

Maria dreaded team presentations. Her mind replayed every past mistake, and she was sure others thought she was incompetent. But after confiding in her friend Aisha, Maria was surprised: I've always admired how you make complex ideas easy to understand, even when you're nervous. Other teammates agreed: You make people feel at ease.

At her next meeting, Maria put these supportive words on a sticky note by her laptop. When her inner critic got loud, she paused and read her friends' words. Over time, her self-talk softened. She didn't get rid of her nerves, but she learned to borrow the voices of those who saw her strengths, and her confidence grew.

### **Research Insights**

Negative self-talk is a major barrier to self-confidence and well-being, but it can be changed. Cognitive-behavioral approaches show that reframing negative thoughts with realistic, supportive perspectives leads to lasting reductions in anxiety and self-

doubt (Beck & Dozois, 2011). Affirming feedback from trusted others activates brain pathways for reward and self-worth, helping to rewire the brain for greater self-acceptance (Eisenberger et al., 2011). For AuDHDers, who may internalize years of criticism, practicing self-compassion and using affirmations grounded in real feedback is especially beneficial (Neff & Germer, 2013).

Research shows negative self-talk drains our confidence and well-being. But when we reframe our thoughts with realistic, supportive perspectives, especially using positive feedback from others, we can reduce anxiety and self-criticism, and boost self-compassion. In fact, using affirmations or kind words from trusted people actually changes how our brains process self-worth, making it easier to believe in ourselves over time.

### **Recognizing and Interrupting Triggers**

Notice what sets off your negative self-talk. Is it criticism from someone else? A social situation? A tough day at work?

When you spot a trigger, pause and ask yourself:

- Was this feedback constructive, or just an opinion?
- Does it really define my worth?

Try writing about these moments in a journal or talking them through with a supportive friend. The more you recognize your triggers, the more power you have to change your response.

### **The Reality Check Exercise**

When you notice negative self-talk, pause and ask:

- Would someone who cares about me agree with this thought?
- What would my most supportive friend say about me right now?

Write down your negative thought. Then, counter it with a positive reflection from your Mindfulness Journal or from a real conversation. Keep a running list of these reality checks to revisit when self-doubt strikes.

### **The Power of Community Reflection**

Talking with others is powerful medicine for negative self-talk. When you share your doubts in a safe space, you'll often hear, Me too! or, That's not how I see you at all.

Consider joining or creating a support group where you can openly discuss self-doubt and share reflections of each other's strengths. The more you hear supportive voices, the more they become part of your inner dialogue.

### **Group Reframe Exercise**

1. In a small group or with a friend, one person shares a recent negative thought.
2. The group or partner responds with real examples or kind words that contradict the negative belief.
3. Rotate roles and notice how your perspective shifts.

### **Reframing Negative Thoughts**

When you catch a negative thought, challenge it. Ask:

- Is this really true?
- What evidence do I have from others that says otherwise?

Try keeping a thought journal. Next to each negative thought, write a positive counter-thought using compliments or feedback you've received. Over time, you'll build up evidence to counter your inner critic.

## **The Power of Affirmations**

Affirmations are positive statements that help you build a healthier self-image. The most powerful affirmations come from real feedback you've received. Turn these into I am statements, such as:

- I am a calming presence.
- I am a clear communicator.
- I am a supportive friend.

Repeat your affirmations when negative self-talk appears. Let the voices of your supporters bolster your own.

## **Affirmation Exchange Exercise**

1. In a group or with a partner, share affirmations with each other.
2. Each person offers an I see this in you... statement. The recipient turns it into an I am... affirmation for the week.
3. Practice these affirmations daily, and notice how it feels to use words others truly believe about you.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. What negative thoughts do you notice most often? Where do they come from?
2. Write about a recent time you caught yourself in negative self-talk. How did it affect you?
3. List three affirmations based on feedback from others. How can you use them each day?

## Chapter Highlights

- Negative self-talk is common, but you can change it.
- Catching and reframing negative thoughts builds confidence.
- Affirmations, especially those rooted in real feedback, change your mindset.
- Support from others helps reinforce healthier self-talk.
- Self-compassion is a skill you can grow with practice.

## Practice Scripts

### Reframing Negative Thoughts:

1. I noticed I often tell myself \_\_\_\_\_. How else could I look at this?
2. What would you say to a friend who had this thought?
3. Can you help me find a more encouraging perspective on this?

### Affirmations:

1. I am learning and growing every day.
2. My worth is not defined by my mistakes.
3. I am enough, just as I am.



## **Closing Thoughts**

Transforming negative self-talk isn't about ignoring reality; it's about including the evidence of your strengths and worth, especially from the people who know you best. By practicing the Borrowed Eyes approach, you turn the fight against self-doubt from a lonely struggle into a journey supported by community, compassion, and truth.

Let the voices of those who love and value you help rewrite your inner narrative. With time and practice, you can turn down the volume on your inner critic and embrace a more authentic, empowered version of yourself.

## Chapter 9: How Social Media Affects Self-Image

Your real worth is never measured by likes or followers, but by the way you're seen and valued by those who truly know you.

### **The Comparison Trap in the Digital Age**

Social media is woven into our daily lives, but it can play tricks on our self-esteem. As we scroll, we mostly see highlight reels, friends' promotions, adventures, and big wins. It's easy to start feeling like we don't measure up, and research shows these constant comparisons can fuel envy, sadness, and self-doubt. Each swipe can quietly chip away at our self-worth, especially if we're already struggling with feeling different or not good enough.

### **Jordan's Story**

Jordan used to check social media first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Seeing friends' vacations, job wins, and happy photos often left Jordan feeling less-than. One day, after seeing a colleague's big announcement, Jordan asked a close friend: What do you see in me that I might miss? The reply: You're my go-to for honest advice. You always find the bright side, even when I can't.

Jordan created a digital feedback file, a folder of kind messages and compliments from real friends. When self-doubt hit after scrolling, Jordan would revisit these reminders. Slowly, those old feelings of comparison faded, and Jordan's self-worth became rooted in the feedback of trusted borrowed eyes, not the highlight reels of others.

## **Research Insights**

Social media can intensify self-doubt through constant comparison to others' highlight reels. Research shows that social media comparison is linked to lower self-esteem, higher anxiety, and more symptoms of depression (Vogel et al., 2014; Lup et al., 2015). For neurodivergent individuals, who may already feel different, these effects can be even stronger (Mason et al., 2021). However, curating your online environment to include authentic, positive connections can improve mood and self-image (Meier & Schäfer, 2018). Grounding your self-worth in real-life feedback, rather than online metrics, is key to resilience.

## **Borrowed Eyes Perspective**

What we see online is rarely the full story. The Borrowed Eyes approach reminds us that our value isn't in likes or followers, but in the strengths and qualities noticed by people who truly know us.

When you catch yourself spiraling into comparison, pause and ask:

How would the people who care about me see this moment? What would they remind me of that I might be forgetting?

Remember: Everyone's life has low points and struggles, even if they're not shared online. You're only seeing a small piece of a much bigger picture.

## **What the Research Says**

Studies show that social media comparison often lowers self-esteem and increases anxiety or depression. Even a short time of comparing yourself to others' posts can make you feel worse about your own life. But research also finds that when people focus on authentic connections and gather positive feedback from real-life friends, it can protect against these negative effects.

## **The Reality Check Exercise**

- As you scroll, notice when you start to compare yourself negatively.
- Pause. Write down the thought you're having.
- Recall a recent compliment or kind word from someone who knows you well.
- Ask: Would this person agree with my negative self-assessment, or would they see something different in me?
- Let their words challenge the story your inner critic is telling.

## **Practicing Gratitude and Community Online**

To fight the comparison trap, practice gratitude for your own unique life. Take a moment each day to notice something you appreciate about yourself or your journey. Also, seek out online or real-life communities where people share honestly about both their struggles and successes.

## **The Feedback File Exercise**

1. Create a digital or paper folder where you save screenshots or notes of compliments, positive feedback, or encouragement from friends and trusted supporters.
2. When you feel self-doubt after scrolling, revisit your feedback file for a reality check.

## **Curating Your Online Presence for Positivity**

- **Share Your True Self:** Before posting, ask, Is this authentic to me? If you're unsure, check with a trusted friend. Let their feedback guide you.
- **Highlight Your Values:** Share not just your successes, but also what matters to you, your passions, honest moments, or even struggles.
- **Follow Uplifting Accounts:** Review who you follow. Unfollow anyone who makes you feel worse about yourself. Instead, fill your feed with people who are real, kind, and positive.
- **Engage Kindly:** Comment on posts that inspire or uplift you. Celebrate others' realness and share encouragement.

## **Curate Your Feed with Feedback**

- Go through your follow list and ask: Does this account help me see myself more positively, or does it fuel self-doubt?
- Replace at least three negative accounts with ones that support authenticity and self-acceptance.

## **Managing Social Media for Well-Being**

3. Limit time on apps that make you anxious or unhappy. Turn off notifications or schedule phone-free breaks.
4. Reach out by direct message to friends who uplift you, instead of posting to everyone.
5. Share personal thoughts only with trusted people if it feels safer.

## **Digital Detox with Reflection**

- Take a 24-hour break from social media.
- Notice how you feel without the constant comparison.
- Reach out to someone you trust and ask what strengths they see in you. Notice how their feedback feels compared to online likes or comments.
- Journal about the difference.

## **The Supportive DM Challenge**

- Message a friend, If you had to describe my strengths to someone who doesn't know me, what would you say?
- Save their response and revisit it next time comparison strikes.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. How do you feel after spending time on social media? Which accounts affect your mood?
2. Describe a time you compared yourself to someone online. What was the impact?
3. If you could design your ideal online presence, what would you share and why?

## **Group Activities**

- Feed Audit: With a partner, review your feeds and identify which accounts inspire you versus those that drain you. Set goals for curating your online world.
- Share Your Story: Each person shares a positive online experience. Discuss ways to use social media for building confidence.

## **Chapter Highlights**

6. Social media can distort self-image through constant comparison.
7. Curating your online environment is self-care.
8. Following authentic, positive accounts can uplift your mood.
9. Setting boundaries with social media helps reduce anxiety.
10. You have the power to shape your online experience and self-view.

## **Practice Scripts**

### Setting Boundaries:

- I'm taking a break from [platform] to focus on my well-being.
- I follow accounts that inspire and uplift me.
- I limit my scrolling to protect my mental health.

### Engaging Positively:

- I appreciate your honesty online, it inspires me.
- Your realness makes me feel less alone.
- I'm working on sharing more honestly, just like you.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Your self-worth is not defined by online metrics. The more you listen to the people who truly see and value you, your borrowed eyes, the stronger and more authentic your self-image becomes, both online and off. Curate your digital world with care, and let real connections shape your confidence.



## Chapter 10: Developing Emotional Intelligence

Sometimes we need others to point out the strength in our tears, the courage in our doubts, and the wisdom in our hearts.

### **What is Emotional Intelligence?**

Emotional intelligence means noticing, understanding, and managing your own feelings, and also recognizing and responding to the feelings of others. It helps you handle challenges, make good decisions, and build strong relationships. For AuDHDers, developing emotional intelligence can be especially important, as emotions sometimes feel overwhelming or hard to name.

When you practice emotional intelligence, you become more aware of what you're feeling, why you're feeling it, and how your emotions influence your actions. This awareness is the first step to building self-acceptance and breaking out of self-doubt.

### **Paula's Story**

Paula always tried to be logical and calm at work, but inside she often felt overwhelmed. When her project ran into trouble, she blamed herself for every mistake. During a call, her mentor said, "I see someone who owns her emotions and keeps the team steady, even when it's hard. That's resilience, not failure".

Paula was surprised. When she asked her friends and coworkers how she handled stress, they said, "You're a steady presence" and "You help us feel safe to share".

Paula realized that her emotional openness, something she thought was a weakness, was actually a strength. Borrowed eyes helped her see her own emotional intelligence.

## **Research Insights**

Emotional intelligence, the ability to notice, understand, and manage your own emotions as well as empathize with others, is foundational for self-acceptance and resilience. Research shows that people who reflect on feedback from trusted others are better at recognizing and managing their emotions (; Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). Empathy and support from community can reduce loneliness and increase confidence (). For AuDHDers, who may find emotions overwhelming or hard to read, supportive feedback and compassion training can foster self-acceptance and emotional growth (Singer & Engert, 2019).

## **Borrowed Eyes Perspective**

Sometimes our emotional strengths are invisible to us but clear to those who know us well. When you ask friends, mentors, or family how they see you handle emotions, you may discover qualities like resilience, kindness, or empathy you never gave yourself credit for.

Research shows that people who seek and reflect on feedback are better at recognizing and managing their emotions. Empathy, really listening to and understanding others, also helps you understand yourself. Supportive relationships make it easier to build confidence and bounce back from tough times.

When you learn to see yourself through the eyes of others, your brain actually grows more able to accept yourself and move past self-doubt.

## **Emotional Awareness Mirror Exercise**

1. At the end of a day with strong emotions, reach out to someone you trust.
2. Share one feeling you experienced. Ask, "Have you noticed this in me before? How do you see me handle it?"
3. Write down their response. Compare it to your own view, did they spot a strength or coping skill you missed?

## **Building Self-Awareness**

1. Keep a daily journal of moments that triggered strong feelings, good or bad.
2. Ask yourself: What happened? How did I feel? Why do I think I felt that way?
3. Over time, look for patterns. Notice which emotions come up often and what they're teaching you.

## **The Feedback Check-In**

1. Once a week, share a summary of your feelings with a trusted friend.
2. Ask them to point out strengths or examples of growth in how you handled your emotions.
3. Add their feedback to your journal. When self-doubt creeps in, reread these notes to balance your inner critic.

## **Practicing Gratitude for Your Emotions**

Try to thank yourself for feeling, even difficult emotions. All feelings are valid and can teach you something important. When you notice self-doubt or anxiety, ask: What is this feeling telling me about my needs?

By seeing your emotions as signals, not problems, you'll build self-compassion and resilience.

## **Empathy: Seeing Yourself in Others**

1. When you listen to others share their feelings, notice times when their emotions feel familiar.
2. Reflect: If I were my own friend, what would I say to me right now?
3. Write down kind or supportive words you'd give a friend. Practice saying them to yourself.

Empathy for others helps you be kinder to yourself and remember you're not alone in your struggles.

## **Empathy Exchange**

1. With a partner or in a group, share a recent emotional challenge.
2. Others reflect back the strengths or emotions they see, like courage, honesty, or resilience.
3. Notice how seeing yourself through their eyes changes your understanding of your own experience.

## **Managing Emotions to Build Confidence**

1. Practice mindfulness: Pause and notice what you're feeling, without judgment.
2. When negative self-talk starts, ask: What would I say to a friend feeling this way? Try offering yourself the same kindness.
3. Before a challenge, ask: How would my most supportive friend describe me in this moment? Write down their likely words and use them as encouragement.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. Write about a recent strong emotion. What triggered it? What did you learn?
2. How does showing empathy for others help you reflect on your own feelings?
3. List three ways you can better manage your emotions during tough times.

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Noticing and understanding your emotions is the foundation for self-acceptance and confidence.
- Empathy for others deepens your own self-reflection and connection.
- Managing emotions is a skill anyone can learn.
- Emotional intelligence helps you build resilience and better relationships.
- Practicing self-compassion during hard times makes you stronger over time.

## **Practice Scripts**

Expressing Emotional Awareness:

1. I noticed I felt \_\_\_\_ when that happened. I wonder why?
2. I'm working on naming my feelings instead of hiding them.
3. Can you help me reflect on how I reacted to this?

Empathic Support:

1. I hear you, and I can imagine how that must feel.
2. Thank you for trusting me with your feelings.
3. Is there a way I can support you right now?

### Remember to Integrate Borrowed and Internal Eyes

As you practice, try this:

- **Integrate** other people's positive feedback with your own internal voice
- **Notice:** After receiving supportive feedback, pause and let it in.
- **Reflect:** Ask yourself, "How would it feel to believe this about myself, even a little?"
- **Practice:** Write down the affirmation or compliment. Read it aloud to yourself, or say it in the mirror.
- **Try It On:** For a day, act as if you believed this positive perspective. How does it change things?
- **Repeat:** Over time, you may notice your own internal voice becoming gentler and more confident.
- **Remember:** The goal isn't to need others forever, but to let their kindness strengthen your own inner gaze.

### Closing Thoughts

By using the Borrowed Eyes approach, seeking and accepting the supportive perspectives of others, you deepen your emotional intelligence and build a more compassionate self-image. With each step, you gain confidence, resilience, and a sense of connection. Let empathy, community, and self-compassion be your guides as you keep growing.

## Chapter 11: The Power of Vulnerability

When you let others see your cracks, you give them permission to shine light into your life, and together, you become stronger.

### **Embracing Imperfection as Strength**

Vulnerability is often misunderstood as weakness, but it's actually a powerful source of connection and growth. When we dare to share our insecurities and fears with others, we create space for genuine relationships and deeper belonging. Each time you express your true self, even your struggles or doubts, you help break down the illusion of perfection that so many people try to maintain. This honest sharing encourages others to do the same, creating a supportive network where everyone can feel seen and valued.

Embracing imperfection isn't about giving up on growth. It's about accepting the quirks, flaws, and inconsistencies that make you unique. When you see your vulnerabilities as strengths, you invite others to show up authentically, too. This ripple effect builds a community where everyone is free to be themselves (Brown, 2006).

### **Marcus' Story**

Marcus always kept his struggles to himself, thinking that showing emotion at work would make him seem weak. After a particularly hard month, he finally opened up to a close colleague. Instead of judgment, he received empathy: You're always supporting everyone else. Let us support you for a change.

Marcus was surprised to find that being open actually deepened his relationships. Soon, others started sharing their own challenges, and trust in the team grew.

Marcus discovered that vulnerability wasn't a flaw to hide, but a bridge to real connection and true leadership.

## **Research Insights**

We can be our own harshest critics. When you catch yourself focusing on a flaw, pause and ask, How would a trusted friend or mentor see this part of me? Would they judge it, or see it as something that makes me unique and strong? Studies show that viewing ourselves through compassionate, supportive eyes helps reframe vulnerability as a source of strength and belonging (Brown, 2021; ).

Research confirms that vulnerability is vital for authentic connection and well-being. People who share their struggles and imperfections are more likely to experience close relationships, resilience, and self-acceptance (Brown, 2006, 2021). Group storytelling and sharing experiences also increase empathy and trust, while affirming feedback after sharing can reduce loneliness and boost self-compassion (; Seppälä et al., 2013).

## **Imperfection Appreciation**

1. Write down something you often feel insecure or vulnerable about.
2. Ask a supportive friend what they notice about this quality. Do they see it as a weakness or as a strength? How about your openness?
3. Record their response and reflect on how their perspective might challenge your self-criticism.

## **Sharing Your Story with Others**

Sharing your true story creates bridges. When you open up about your journey, you help others connect with their own experiences. Vulnerability dissolves isolation and builds belonging. You don't need to have a neat lesson or a perfect ending; just be real. Share your uncertainties and triumphs in your own words. Authenticity



encourages others to do the same, creating a safe space for support and understanding.

### **Building Trust Through Vulnerability**

Being open about your struggles and flaws creates stronger relationships. When you share, you create an environment where others feel safe to do the same. This mutual openness builds trust, compassion, and a sense of community. Vulnerability helps us all realize we're not alone, and together, we can lift each other up (Seppälä et al., 2013).

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. Describe a time when you were open about a struggle or mistake. What happened as a result?
2. What fears do you have about being vulnerable with others?
3. How might sharing your story help someone else?

### **Chapter Highlights**

- Vulnerability is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Sharing your story can inspire and help others.
- Openness fosters deeper, more trusting relationships.
- Embracing imperfection is key to real confidence.
- Trust grows through mutual vulnerability and support.

## **Practice Scripts**

### Expressing Vulnerability:

1. I'm struggling with \_\_\_\_ and wanted to share it with you.
2. I don't have all the answers, but I'm willing to learn.
3. Here's something I've been afraid to say, but I trust you with it.

### Responding to Vulnerability:

1. Thank you for trusting me with this.
2. I appreciate your honesty, it helps me feel less alone.
3. Your courage to share inspires me.

## **Closing Thoughts**

True strength is found in embracing vulnerability and imperfection, not as weaknesses, but as entrances to connection, support, and growth. By actively seeking and internalizing the compassionate reflections of others, your borrowed eyes, you'll learn to appreciate your real self and inspire others to do the same. Vulnerability, witnessed and affirmed by your community, becomes your greatest source of strength.

## Chapter 12: Setting Boundaries for Self-Care

Boundaries are gentle lines drawn in love, for yourself and others. They are a way of saying, 'I matter, too.'

If you are neurodivergent, you may have spent a lot of time masking, people-pleasing, or feeling like your needs are too much. Boundaries are not selfish, they are essential for your well-being. They help you save energy, protect your sensory needs, and maintain relationships that are healthy and respectful.

Boundaries tell the world what is okay and what isn't for you. They let others know how to treat you with kindness and respect. Most importantly, boundaries are how you show love and care for yourself.

### **Tasha's Story**

Tasha always wanted to help, so she often said yes even when her plate was already full. She noticed she was feeling tired and grumpy, but didn't want to let anyone down. One day, a friend gently asked, "Would you want me to push myself this hard?" Tasha realized she would never expect that from someone she cared about. With her friend's support, Tasha started setting small boundaries, like saying, "I need to rest" or "I can't do that today". When she shared this with her friend, she heard, "I respect you for knowing your limits". Each bit of encouragement made it easier for Tasha to honor her needs.

If you doubt your right to set boundaries, pause and ask yourself how you'd respond if a friend needed the same thing. Borrow the caring eyes of someone who loves you: would they want you to always say yes, or would they want you to feel safe, rested, and respected?

## **Research Insights**

Studies show that setting boundaries is vital for emotional health, especially for neurodivergent people, who may be more sensitive to overwhelm, burnout, or social pressure (Stevanovic et al., 2016). Affirmation from friends, family, or community helps people feel more confident and less guilty about communicating limits (Sünbül & Güneri, 2019). When you hear, I'm proud of you for taking care of yourself, it reinforces that boundaries are healthy, not selfish.

## **Supportive Perspective Exercise**

1. Before you set or express a boundary, imagine how your kindest supporter would react if you said, I need to take a break, or, I can't do that today.
2. Write down the encouraging words you think they'd say. Let those words guide you as you speak up for your needs.
3. Step 3: Afterward, if you feel guilt or doubt, revisit these words and remind yourself: you are worthy of care.

## **Communicating Your Needs**

It can feel scary to say no, especially if you're not used to it. Try using simple, honest phrases:

- I need some quiet time right now.
- I'm not able to help with that, but I care about you.
- I need to leave early to avoid getting overwhelmed.

Practice saying these out loud, or write them down for future reference. Remember: the people who truly care about you want you to feel safe and supported.

### **Practice: Boundary Buddy**

1. Find a friend or peer who is also working on boundaries.
2. Check in with each other regularly. Celebrate each step, even the small ones!
3. Share the supportive things you say to each other. Let these words become part of your internal self-talk.

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. Write about a time you wished you had set a boundary. What would a supportive friend say about your choice?
2. Describe what healthy boundaries look like for you.
3. List three ways you can gently communicate your needs.

### **Chapter Highlights**

- Boundaries are acts of self-care and self-respect.
- Support and affirmation make setting boundaries easier.
- Your needs are valid, just as valid as anyone else's.
- Practicing boundaries, even in small ways, builds confidence over time.

### **Practice Scripts**

- Thank you for telling me what you need.
- I'm glad you're taking care of yourself.
- Setting boundaries is an act of love, not rejection.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Boundaries are not walls, they are bridges to deeper self-worth and healthier relationships. When you doubt your right to take care of yourself, borrow the loving perspective of a friend or ally. You deserve rest, respect, and the freedom to honor your needs.

## Chapter 13: Visualizing Success

When you imagine your dreams, let the voices of your supporters remind you: you are capable, and your goals are within reach.

### **How Visualization Helps**

Visualization is more than wishful thinking, it's a gentle, practical tool for building confidence. When you picture yourself succeeding, your brain begins to believe that success is possible. For neurodivergent people who face a lot of external doubt, imagining success with the encouragement of others can be especially powerful.

Visualization can help calm anxiety, boost motivation, and make big goals feel less scary. It's like giving your brain a safe place to practice being confident, prepared, and proud.

### **Jamal's Story**

Jamal always felt nervous before presentations. His mentor once said, I wish you could see yourself the way your team does, clear, prepared, and inspiring. Jamal decided to try something new: before his next presentation, he closed his eyes and pictured his friends and coworkers in the audience, smiling and cheering him on. He imagined hearing their encouraging words in his mind. When the day came, Jamal still felt nervous, but those imagined voices made it easier to speak with confidence. Afterward, he realized he'd shown up just as his supporters believed he could.

### **Reflection**

When you visualize your goals, invite the affirming voices of your community into your mind. Imagine what they would say as you work toward your dream. Let their belief in you become part of your own vision.



## **Research Insights**

Research shows that visualization is most effective when it includes positive social feedback, imagining the encouragement or celebration of others (Cumming & Williams, 2012). For neurodivergent people, who may internalize criticism, this practice can help rewire self-talk and build new pathways to self-acceptance.

## **Supportive Visualization Exercise**

- 1: Before you visualize, write down one supportive thing someone has said about you.
- 2: Close your eyes. Picture yourself achieving your goal, finishing a project, handling a tough conversation, or trying something new.
- 3: Imagine your supporter there with you, offering encouragement. What do they say? How does it feel?
- 4: Carry those words into your day as a gentle anchor.

## **Making Visualization Practical**

You don't have to spend a long time on visualizing. Just a few minutes can help.

1. When you wake up, imagine one thing you want to do today, and picture it going well.
2. Before a challenge, picture yourself succeeding, with a supporter nearby, real or imagined.
3. At night, reflect on something you did well, and imagine a loved one celebrating with you.

## **Community Vision Board**

1. Gather images, words, or symbols that represent your goals and strengths.
2. Ask friends or family to contribute a picture or word that reflects how they see your potential.
3. Place your vision board somewhere you see it daily. Let it remind you of your goals and the belief others have in you.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. Write about a time someone's encouragement helped you see your dreams as possible.
2. Imagine your best supporter watching you succeed, what do they notice? What do they say?
3. If you could picture your best self, how would someone who loves you describe them?

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Visualization is more powerful when you include the supportive voices of others.
- Imagining yourself succeeding with encouragement can help build real-world confidence.
- Your goals are valid, and so is your way of pursuing them.
- Let your community's belief in you become part of your own self-belief.

### **Practice Scripts**

1. I can see you achieving this, you have what it takes.
2. Your strengths make your dream possible.
3. Can I share what I envision for you?

### **Closing Thoughts**

Visualization is a gentle, practical way to step into your own possibilities. Borrowing the encouraging eyes of your community can make your dreams feel closer, clearer, and more real. Trust that you are moving in the right direction, supported by those who believe in you.

## Chapter 14: Taking Action Against Fear

Courage is not about being fearless, it's about letting someone else's faith in you help you take the next step, even if you're scared.

Fear is a normal, human response, especially when you're trying something new or have been criticized for being different. For neurodivergent people, fear often comes with memories of being misunderstood or excluded. Remember: Fear is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign you care, and that you're stretching beyond your comfort zone.

### **Renato's Story**

Renato dreaded networking events, worried they'd say the wrong thing or stand out in a bad way. Before a big event, Renato shared their anxiety with a friend, who said, "You're great at making people feel welcome. Try to see yourself the way I do". Renato went to the event, holding onto those words. They still felt nervous, but afterward realized they'd made meaningful connections, just by being themselves. Over time, Renato learned that courage often meant borrowing a friend's faith until they could build their own.

### **Reflection**

When you're afraid, pause and ask: How would someone who cares about me describe my courage? Let their words help you take even a small step forward.

### **Research Insights**

Research shows that social support helps us face fears by providing encouragement and reducing isolation (Cohen & Wills, 1985). When you borrow supportive

perspectives, you're more likely to try new things, celebrate progress, and view challenges as growth opportunities (Lahey & Orehek, 2011).

### **Fear Reflection Circle**

- 1: Share a current fear with a trusted friend, group, or even in your journal.
- 2: Ask others (or imagine) what strengths they see in the way you face challenges.
- 3: Let their perspective remind you that you already have courage, sometimes you just need help seeing it.

### **Taking Gentle Steps**

Facing fear doesn't mean leaping into the unknown all at once. Start small:

- Break down the challenge into tiny steps.
- Celebrate each bit of progress, even if it feels small.
- Ask for encouragement, and let others remind you of your bravery.

### **Collecting Courage**

1. Each time you take a step that scares you, write down what someone supportive said about your effort, even if it's just, I'm proud of you.
2. Over time, create a courage file you can revisit when fear tries to hold you back.

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. When have you faced a fear, and what helped you do it?
2. Write about a time someone else saw your bravery, even when you felt scared.
3. What is one gentle, possible next step you could take, with encouragement?

## **Group Activities**

- **Courage Buddies:** Pair up and share a fear you want to face. Offer each other gentle encouragement and reflections on strengths.
- **Fear-to-Action Circle:** Each person names a fear, and the group brainstorms small, supportive steps and affirms each person's ability to try.

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Fear is not a sign of weakness, it's a natural part of growth.
- Borrowing the perspective of a supporter can help you move through fear gently.
- Taking action, even in tiny steps, is something to celebrate.
- Your community sees courage in you, even when you can't.

## **Practice Scripts**

1. From my perspective, you're already brave for trying.
2. I believe in you, even when you're scared.
3. Let's take this one step at a time, I'll support you.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Moving through fear is easier when you're not alone. Let the encouraging voices of your supporters be the wind at your back. Trust that your courage is visible, even if you can't always feel it yourself. Every small step is a victory, and every act of bravery, no matter how quiet, deserves to be honored.

## Chapter 15: Building Resilience

Resilience isn't about never struggling, it's about returning to yourself, again and again, with kindness and hope. Sometimes you need others to remind you how strong you already are.

Resilience is your ability to bounce back after setbacks, challenges, or disappointments. It does not mean you never feel frustrated, sad, or tired; it means you find ways to keep going, even when life feels heavy. For neurodivergent people, resilience can look different. It might mean advocating for your needs, trying new coping strategies, or simply resting and recharging when the world feels overwhelming.

Resilience isn't something you're born with or without, it's a skill you can nurture, especially with support.

### **Maria's Story**

Maria faced many bumps on her path, missed deadlines, misunderstandings at work, days when executive dysfunction made getting started feel impossible. After a tough week, she shared her struggles with a mentor. Instead of advice, her mentor said, I see how creative and determined you are. Even when things are hard, you find a way to keep showing up. Hearing this, Maria realized she'd survived many hard days before. She began to ask friends what strengths they noticed when she was having a rough time. Their words helped her see her resilience, even when she doubted herself.



## **Reflection**

When you feel stuck or discouraged, borrow the perspective of someone who believes in you. Ask, What strengths do you see in how I've handled tough times? Let their reflections soften your self-criticism and remind you of your endurance.

## **Research Insights**

Research shows that resilience grows in supportive environments (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). People who receive encouragement and validation from friends or mentors are more likely to see setbacks as chances to learn and grow, rather than personal failures (Neff & Germer, 2013; Dweck, 2006). For neurodivergent people, affirming feedback can help rebuild confidence after experiences of exclusion or misunderstanding (Liu et al., 2013).

## **Resilience Reflection**

- 1: Think of a recent setback or difficult moment.
- 2: Share your story with a trusted friend, family member, or group.
- 3: Ask them to reflect: What strengths or qualities did you notice in how I handled this?
- 4: Write down their responses and keep them somewhere you can return to on hard days. This is your Resilience File.

## **Learning from Setbacks**

Failure is not the opposite of success, it's part of growth. Every time you get up, adapt, or try again, you are practicing resilience. For many neurodivergent people, traditional paths may not work. That's okay. Your resilience might look like trying new routines, advocating for accommodations, or simply asking for help.

Try to see setbacks through the eyes of someone who cares about you. Would they judge you harshly, or would they see your courage and effort?

### **Setback Story Swap**

1. With a friend or support group, take turns sharing a recent challenge.
2. After each story, listeners reflect back the strengths, creativity, or determination they saw.
3. Notice how hearing these affirmations shifts your perspective.

### **Everyday Resilience**

Some days, resilience is loud: speaking up, starting over, making a big change. Other days, it's quiet: getting out of bed, eating a meal, or sending a message to a friend. All forms of resilience are worthy and real.

It's okay to rest. Resilience is not about pushing through exhaustion; it's about knowing when to pause and how to return gently to yourself.

### **Practice: Gentle Check-In**

- At the end of each week, check in with yourself: What was hard this week? What did I do to care for myself or keep going?
- Share one small win with a supporter, and let them reflect back your resilience.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. Write about a time you bounced back from a challenge. What did others notice about your approach?
2. When has someone encouraged you during a tough period? How did their support help?
3. List three qualities friends or mentors have named in you that help you get through difficult times.

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Resilience is built through support, encouragement, and self-compassion.
- Borrowing the eyes of others helps you see your strengths more clearly.
- Every small act of getting through a tough day counts as resilience.
- Community affirmation can help you rediscover hope and confidence, even after setbacks.

## **Practice Scripts**

1. I saw how you kept going, even when things were tough. That's resilience!
2. Your creativity and perseverance inspire me.
3. You bounce back stronger every time.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Resilience is not about being perfect or unaffected by struggle. It's about returning to your values, your community, and your self-worth, again and again. When you can't see your own strength, let the borrowed eyes of your supporters light the way. You are more resilient than you realize, and you never have to build that resilience alone.

## Chapter 16: Masking and Mimicry

Sometimes the clearest mirror is held by those who see and celebrate your differences.

If you're autistic, have ADHD, or experience the world in a way that feels different, you may know all too well what it's like to see yourself through the eyes of others, sometimes kindly, but often with pressure to change or hide. This chapter is for you: a space to gently explore the experience of masking, mimicry, and the journey toward seeing your true self with compassion.

### **Masking and Mimicry: Surviving in a Neurotypical World**

Many neurodivergent people learn, often from a young age, to mask their natural behaviors. This might mean:

- Forcing eye contact when it feels uncomfortable
- Suppressing stimming or fidgeting
- Rehearsing conversations for social situations
- Smiling or reacting in ways that don't feel authentic
- Hiding sensory needs or special interests

Masking is a survival strategy. It can help avoid criticism, bullying, or feeling left out. But it comes at a cost: exhaustion, anxiety, confusion about identity, and sometimes deep loneliness.

## **Liam and Maya's Stories**

Liam, Age 15 (Autism)

Liam practices smiling in the mirror so he'll fit in at school. He copies how classmates act, but by the end of the day, he's exhausted and overwhelmed. His teacher calls him well-behaved, but his parents see the meltdowns that come from working so hard to fit in.

Maya, Age 34 (Autism and ADHD)

Maya keeps a notebook of scripts to navigate office small talk. She mimics her coworkers, always worrying she'll slip up. She wonders if anyone sees the real her, or if she's become invisible behind her mask. In fact, she's not even sure who her real self is anymore.

## **Research Insights**

Masking and mimicry are common for autistic and ADHD people. Studies show that chronic masking can lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, and a loss of self (Hull et al., 2017; Botha & Frost, 2020). The more someone feels they must hide, the harder it is to feel truly known, or to know themselves.

But there's hope. Supportive relationships, self-compassion, and affirming spaces, where you can unmask and be seen for your real self, are linked to better mental health, more resilience, and a deeper sense of belonging (Crompton et al., 2020; Cooper et al., 2022).

## **The Emotional Cost, And the Path to Healing**

Masking may help you get by, but it can also leave you feeling disconnected or like an impostor. Many people describe not knowing who they really are underneath the mask. If this is your experience, you are not alone. Healing comes when you can

gently remove the mask, even just for a moment, and have your true self welcomed by understanding eyes.

It's natural to wonder what others think of you. The key is to find or imagine borrowed eyes that are kind, accepting, and see your unique strengths, not just your differences. This could be a trusted friend, a neurodivergent role model, a therapist, or a community of people who get it.

Learning to see yourself through these affirming eyes can help you:

- Reduce the urge to mask all the time
- Reconnect with your authentic self
- Recognize your strengths and needs as valuable parts of you

## **Practical Toolkit: Steps Toward Self-Acceptance**

### **Supportive Mirror Exercise**

1. Stand in front of a mirror. Imagine seeing yourself through the eyes of someone who loves and accepts you.
2. Say or write three positive things they would notice, especially about the things you usually hide.

### **Affirmation Collage**

1. Collect kind words, messages, or feedback you've received.
2. Make a collage, digital or physical, to look at when you feel the urge to mask or self-criticize.

### **Unmasking Timeline**

1. Draw a timeline of your life. Mark moments you remember masking.
2. For each, write what you wish someone had seen or affirmed about you.
3. Choose one, and rewrite it as if a supportive person had been there. What would they say?

### **Sensory Celebration**

1. Identify a sensory trait or stim you usually hide.
2. In a safe space, allow yourself to engage in it without judgment.
3. Journal about how it feels. Imagine a supportive friend describing it as a strength.

### **Borrowed Eyes Letter**

1. Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of a neurodivergent role model or someone who truly understands.
2. Save the letter and reread it when you feel unsure about being your authentic self.

### **Safe Unmasking Challenge**

1. Find a safe space (with a friend, online group, or solo).
2. Choose one behavior you usually mask, and practice doing it openly.
3. Reflect on how it felt, and write down any supportive feedback you receive.



## **Group Activities**

- Superpower Showcase: Share a neuro-special trait and let the group reflect on its value.
- Strengths Mirror Circle: Everyone shares a trait they usually mask; others name ways it could be a strength.
- Role Model Reflection: Watch or read about neurodivergent role models and discuss how they show self-acceptance.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. Whose eyes have I been borrowing lately? Are they kind or critical?
2. What would a loving, understanding friend notice about my differences?
3. When do I feel safest to be my unmasked self? Who helps create that safety?
4. What's one small way I can practice unmasking or self-acceptance this week?

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Masking is common, but it's exhausting and can disconnect you from yourself.
- Supportive, affirming borrowed eyes, real or imagined, can help you reclaim your true self.
- Unmasking, even in small ways, is a powerful act of self-acceptance.
- Your differences are strengths; you deserve to be seen and valued just as you are.

## **Practice Scripts**

1. I admire how your mind approaches the world differently.
2. Your honesty and uniqueness are refreshing.
3. You don't have to hide to be valued, you are enough, just as you are.

## **Closing Thoughts**

You deserve to live in a world where your authentic self is celebrated, not hidden. Borrowing the eyes of those who truly see and honor your neurodivergence can help you unwrap your strengths, release the weight of masking, and step into a softer, more accepting view of yourself. You are not alone, and you are worthy of being seen, just as you are.

## Chapter 17: Celebrating Neurodivergent Brilliance

Your differences are not deficits, they are the roots of your superpowers. Sometimes it takes the eyes of another to help you recognize your unique strengths.

Living in a world that often overlooks or misunderstands neurodivergent ways of thinking can make it hard to see your own gifts. Many neurodivergent people grow up hearing about what they lack or should change. But the truth is, your brain brings a perspective that is not only valuable, but often innovative, creative, and much needed.

Neurodivergence includes a spectrum of experiences, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and more. Each brings its own strengths, whether in pattern recognition, problem-solving, empathy, creativity, or deep focus. Often, what you might see as a quirk or flaw is actually a unique asset, one that friends, colleagues, or loved ones may already admire in you.

### **Max's Realization**

Max always felt out of sync in meetings, noticing details others missed but struggling to speak up. A coworker once said, "Your ability to see patterns in the chaos saves us so much time". Max was surprised, he thought of his attention to small details as a distraction, not a gift.

Encouraged, Max began to ask trusted teammates what they valued about his work style. He heard things like, "You connect ideas no one else does", and "Your hyperfocus brings our projects across the finish line". With each reflection, Max saw his different brain as a source of strength, not shame.

## **Reflection**

Our greatest strengths can be invisible to us, especially when the world asks us to fit in. When you're doubting your value, reach out to someone who appreciates you as you are. Ask, "What do you notice that I do differently, and how does it help?" Their answers may surprise and uplift you.

## **Research Insights**

Studies show that focusing on strengths, rather than only challenges, improves self-esteem, motivation, and overall well-being for neurodivergent individuals (Bailey et al., 2021; Armstrong, 2012). Supportive feedback from others is a powerful source of validation and can help reframe self-doubt into self-appreciation (Cooper et al., 2020). Neurodiversity-affirming practices, such as celebrating special interests and unique problem-solving skills, are linked to higher confidence and reduced feelings of isolation (Leadbitter et al., 2021).

## **Strengths Feedback Loop**

- 1: Ask a friend, colleague, or family member to share one thing they appreciate about how your brain works.
- 2: Write down their response. Reflect on how this strength has shown up in your daily life.
- 3: When self-doubt arises, revisit these words. Let them remind you that your differences are valued and needed.

## **Embracing Your Unique Path**

Everyone's journey looks a little different, and that's something to celebrate. You may have interests or routines that others don't understand. You might communicate, move, or process the world in ways that are uniquely yours. Rather

than trying to fix yourself to fit in, consider how these qualities have helped you and others around you.

Sometimes, the things you struggle with are the flip side of your gifts. For example, sensitivity to sensory input can also mean an incredible appreciation for beauty or detail. Difficulty with small talk might be balanced by a gift for deep, meaningful conversations.

### **Gifts Inventory**

- 1: List 3 things about yourself you've been told are different.
- 2: For each, ask someone who cares about you, "How do you see this as a strength or gift?"
- 3: Add these new perspectives to your journal, creating a personal strengths library.

### **Celebrating Together**

Sharing and affirming each other's neurodivergent strengths can be deeply empowering. In a group or with a friend, take turns naming one thing you appreciate about each person's unique way of thinking, feeling, or creating. Notice how these affirmations build a sense of pride and belonging for everyone involved.

### **Mindfulness Log**

1. What is one way your neurodivergence has helped you or others?
2. Write about a compliment or positive comment you've received about your unique perspective or skills.
3. How would you describe your gifts to someone who has never met you?

## **Group Activities**

- Strengths Roundtable: In a group, each person shares a different trait, and others reflect back how it's a strength.
- Compliment Chain: Pass around a card for each person, and everyone writes one appreciated quality or strength on it.

## **Chapter Highlights**

- Neurodivergent traits are valuable and bring unique strengths to the world.
- Borrowing the loving perspective of others can help you see your gifts clearly.
- Self-acceptance grows when you shift focus from fixing yourself to celebrating what makes you different.
- Community affirmation is a powerful antidote to loneliness and self-doubt.

## **Practice Scripts**

1. What's one thing you appreciate about the way my mind works?
2. Your ability to \_\_\_\_ is something I admire.
3. I used to think \_\_\_\_ was a flaw, but now I see it's a superpower.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Celebrating your strengths, especially the ones shaped by your neurodivergence, can transform your self-image. By seeking out and internalizing the affirming words of those around you, you can begin to see yourself as the world-changer you already are.

## Chapter 18: Creating Your Confidence Toolkit

Confidence is not a destination, but a practice. Build your own toolkit, and let the perspectives of others be your compass on days when self-doubt returns.

A confidence toolkit is a collection of strategies, reminders, and supports that help you reconnect with your strengths and worth, especially when self-doubt creeps in. It's designed to be practical and accessible, something you can turn to any time you need a boost. For neurodivergent folks, this toolkit can include personalized approaches that honor your unique needs and preferences.

### Building Your Toolkit

Everyone's toolkit will look a little different. Here are some suggested pieces to get you started, but feel free to adapt or add your own:

1. **Compliment Bank:** Keep a notebook, digital file, or box where you collect positive feedback, affirmations, and kind words from others.
2. **Strengths List:** Write down your unique gifts, skills, and qualities, especially those named by friends, mentors, or family.
3. **Sensory Self-Care:** Include items or activities that soothe or energize you, like noise-canceling headphones, fidget toys, or a favorite playlist.
4. **Visual Reminders:** Display affirming quotes, artwork, or photos of supportive people in your space.



5. **Scripts for Self-Advocacy:** Prepare simple, affirming statements for setting boundaries, asking for help, or expressing your needs (see script library below).

6. **Support Contacts:** List a few people you can reach out to for encouragement or perspective when self-doubt appears.

### **Toolkit Assembly**

1: Choose 2-3 items from the list above (or your own ideas) and gather or create them today.

2: Share your toolkit with a trusted supporter and ask, Is there anything you'd suggest adding, based on what you know about me?

3: Place your toolkit somewhere accessible. Use it whenever you need reassurance, comfort, or a reminder of your worth.

### **Adapting Your Toolkit Over Time**

Your needs may change, and so can your toolkit. Give yourself permission to update, swap out, or add new supports as you learn more about yourself. If a particular strategy isn't working, try something else. The most important thing is that your toolkit feels like a safe, affirming resource that is uniquely yours.

### **Practice: Supportive Check-Ins**

- Set a weekly reminder to check in with a friend or group: What's one way you saw me show strength this week?
- Add their reflections to your toolkit, reinforcing your confidence and sense of belonging.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. What tools or reminders help you most when you're feeling low or uncertain?
2. Write about a time when someone's encouragement helped you take an important step.
3. Describe your ideal confidence toolkit, what would it include to meet your unique needs?

## **Group Activities**

- Toolkit Show-and-Tell: Each person brings one item from their toolkit to share with the group, explaining how it helps.
- Affirmation Swap: Pair up and exchange affirmations to add to each other's toolkit.

## **Chapter Highlights**

- A confidence toolkit is a practical way to support yourself through self-doubt and challenges.
- Borrowing the eyes of supportive people makes your toolkit stronger and more personal.
- Your toolkit is a living resource, adapt it as your needs and self-understanding grow.
- Community and self-compassion are key ingredients in lasting confidence.

## Practice Scripts

1. I'm having a tough day. Can you remind me of something I'm good at?
2. Here's what I love about the way you approach challenges.
3. Your perspective always helps me see myself in a better light.

### Integrating Borrowed and Internal Eyes Reminder

As you practice, try this:

- **Integrate** other people's positive feedback with your own internal voice
- **Notice:** After receiving supportive feedback, pause and let it in.
- **Reflect:** Ask yourself, "How would it feel to believe this about myself, even a little?"
- **Practice:** Write down the affirmation or compliment. Read it aloud to yourself, or say it in the mirror.
- **Try It On:** For a day, act as if you believed this positive perspective. How does it change things?
- **Repeat:** Over time, you may notice your own internal voice becoming gentler and more confident.
- **Remember:** The goal isn't to need others forever, but to let their kindness strengthen your own inner gaze.

## Closing Thoughts

You deserve tools and support systems that honor your individuality and guide you back to self-acceptance when the world feels overwhelming. Let your toolkit be a gentle reminder that you are strong, capable, and never alone, especially when you see yourself through the loving eyes of your community.

## Closing Chapter 19: Becoming Your Own Mirror

### **Why Internal Eyes Are Important**

Borrowed eyes can show you the truth of your strengths. But the greatest gift is learning to see yourself with your own kind, compassionate gaze.

Throughout this book, you've learned how to borrow the perspectives of supportive people, letting their words, care, and affirmation help you rewrite your self-story. This is powerful, especially if you grew up misunderstood, or your strengths were overlooked.

But what happens when no one is around to give you that encouragement? Or when you want to build a sense of self-worth that doesn't depend on others' approval? That's where the practice of “Internal Eyes” comes in: learning to offer yourself the same gentleness, recognition, and belief that you once needed from others.

For neurodivergent people, this journey can be challenging. Years of masking, criticism, or feeling “too much” can make self-kindness feel awkward or even impossible at first. But every step toward seeing yourself with compassion is a step toward true, lasting confidence.

### **The Limits of Borrowed Eyes and the Need for Your Own**

Borrowed eyes are a bridge. They help you cross from old, harsh self-judgments to a place where you can recognize and trust your own value. But eventually, you'll want to build a home on the other side; a self-image that is rooted within you, not just reflected from others.

This doesn't mean you stop seeking support or community. It means you start to internalize the feedback you receive, making it part of your own voice. Over time, the affirming words of others become your own inner dialogue.

## **Growing Self-Compassion**

Self-compassion means treating yourself with the same care and understanding you'd offer a close friend. For neurodivergent minds, this might mean:

- Letting go of “shoulds” and perfectionism
- Accepting your unique wiring and needs
- Acknowledging challenges without shame
- Celebrating your wins, no matter how small

### **Practice: Self-Compassion Letter**

- Write a letter to yourself as if you were a kind, wise friend. What would you say about your struggles, strengths, and growth?
- Reread this letter on tough days—or record it as an audio message to yourself.

## **Finding Confidence in Your Body**

Confidence isn't just mental; it's physical. For many neurodivergent people, tuning into the senses and body can build a foundation for self-assurance.

### **Practice: Grounding and Sensory Rituals**

- Notice what sensory experiences bring you comfort, joy, or peace.
- Make a ritual of engaging with those experiences: wrap yourself in a soft blanket, listen to favorite sounds, stim or play with a fidget toy.
- Let your body's signals and pleasures become part of your self-trust.

## **Living Your Values**

Confidence grows when your actions align with what matters to you, not just with what others expect.

### **Practice: Values Check-In**

1. List your top 3 values (such as creativity, honesty, compassion, curiosity, justice, etc.).
2. Each day, notice one small way you lived out a value—whether or not anyone else saw or approved.
3. Celebrate these moments as proof of your integrity.

## **Rewriting Your Internal Narrative**

The stories you tell about yourself matter. If your inner voice is full of old criticism, try consciously rewriting your narrative.

### **Practice: My Story, My Way**

1. Write a short "About Me" paragraph as if you were introducing your best friend. Focus on your resilience, uniqueness, and growth.
2. Update it as you learn new things about yourself.

## **Creative Self-Expression**

Your confidence doesn't have to come from words or logic alone. Art, music, movement, and play can all be ways to celebrate your identity.

### **Practice: Create Without Judgment**

1. Make something just for you—a drawing, song, dance, recipe, or collection of favorite objects.
2. Let the act of creating be enough, without worrying about the outcome.

## **Solitude, Joy, and Self-Belonging**

Sometimes, the most powerful confidence comes from knowing you can enjoy your own company.

### **Practice: Solitude Ritual**

1. Choose a solo activity you enjoy (stargazing, coloring, cooking, walking).
2. Before you begin, say to yourself: “This is my time. I am enough, just as I am
3. Notice how it feels to belong to yourself.

## **Repairing Self-Trust**

Self-trust is built when you listen to your needs, keep promises to yourself, and treat your mistakes with gentleness.

### **Practice: Repair and Reassure**

1. When you let yourself down or make a mistake, pause. Instead of self-blame, ask: “How can I repair this? What would I say to a friend in my shoes?”
2. Take one small step—apologize to yourself, rest, or try again.

## **Bringing It All Together: Borrowed and Internal Eyes**

### **Blend these practices:**

1. When you’re struggling, borrow the eyes of those who love and understand you.
2. When you’re ready, practice seeing yourself through your own internal eyes: kind, curious, and accepting.

Let the two perspectives work together, reinforcing your confidence and sense of belonging.

## **Mindfulness Log**

1. What affirming messages have I heard from others that I want to internalize?
2. How can I offer myself kindness, even when I feel alone?
3. What values or traits do I admire in myself, even if they go unnoticed?
4. When do I feel most at home in my own skin?

## **Closing Thoughts**

Borrowed eyes are a gift, and so is learning to see yourself with your own gentle gaze. Confidence is cultivated from both the outside in and the inside out. You deserve to trust your own worth, delight in your uniqueness, and feel at home in your own company. May you carry both borrowed and internal eyes with you, seeing yourself clearly, kindly, and fully, today and always.



## FAQs and Troubleshooting

1. Q: What exactly does 'Borrowed Eyes' mean?

A: 'Borrowed Eyes' refers to seeing yourself through the supportive, affirming perspective of others. It's about letting the positive reflections from your community help shape your self-perception.

2. Q: Can I practice Borrowed Eyes alone, or do I need a group?

A: You can start with a journal or by reflecting on past feedback, but the practice becomes richer with interaction—whether one-on-one, in groups, or through written exchanges.

3. Q: How do I know if the feedback I get is genuine?

A: Over time, you'll learn to discern sincerity by looking for feedback that is specific, consistent, and given with care. If you're unsure, ask for examples or clarification.

4. Q: What if someone refuses to give feedback or doesn't respond?

A: Not everyone is comfortable giving feedback, and that's okay. Value the insights from those who are willing, and remember that silence isn't a reflection of your worth.

5. Q: Can Borrowed Eyes help with long-standing self-doubt or low self-esteem?

A: Yes! While it's not a quick fix, regularly practicing Borrowed Eyes can gradually reshape how you see yourself, especially when combined with self-reflection and self-compassion.

6. Q: How often should I seek out feedback or practice Borrowed Eyes?

A: There's no set rule. Some people benefit from weekly check-ins, others from periodic reflection. Listen to your needs and adjust as you grow more comfortable with the practice.

7. Q: Is it possible to over-rely on others' perspectives?

A: It's important to balance external feedback with your own sense of self. Borrowed Eyes is meant to supplement, not replace, your inner voice.

8. Q: What if my culture discourages self-praise or talking about strengths?

A: Focus on the strengths and stories valued by your culture, and seek feedback in ways that feel respectful and authentic to your background.

9. Q: How can I offer Borrowed Eyes to others?

A: Practice giving specific, heartfelt feedback and affirmations. Helping others see their strengths is just as important as receiving borrowed eyes yourself.

# Thank You

Thank you so much for getting my book and reading it all the way through!

Before you go, could you please post a book review on the Amazon platform?

Posting a review is the best way to support the work of an independent author like myself.

Your feedback will help me to continue to write the kind of books that will help you and other readers. It would mean a lot to me to hear from you.

Also, if you would like to request other book topics, drop me a line at [montegobooks@gmail.com](mailto:montegobooks@gmail.com)

All the best,

Lili Castille



## References

- Bravata, D. M., Watts, S. A., Keefer, A. L., Madhusudhan, D. K., Taylor, K. T., Clark, D. M., ... & Hagg, H. K. (2020). Prevalence, predictors, and treatment of impostor syndrome: A systematic review. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 35(4), 1252–1275. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-019-05364-1>
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Families in Society*, 87(1), 43–52. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.3483>
- Cassidy, S. A., Bradley, L., Shaw, R., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2020). Risk markers for suicidality in autistic adults. *Molecular Autism*, 11(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13229-020-00324-6>
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310>
- Crompton, C. J., Hallett, S., Ropar, D., Flynn, S., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2020). ‘I never realised everybody felt as happy as I do when I am around autistic people’: A thematic analysis of autistic adults’ relationships with autistic and neurotypical friends and family. *Autism*, 24(6), 1438–1448. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320908976>
- Crompton, C. J., Ropar, D., Evans-Williams, C. V. M., Flynn, E. G., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2020). Autistic peer-to-peer information transfer is highly effective. *Autism*, 24(7), 1704–1712. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320919286>
- Dunning, D., Heath, C., & Suls, J. M. (2004). Flawed self-assessment: Implications for health, education, and the workplace. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(3), 69–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1529-1006.2004.00018.>

- Feenstra, S., Begeny, C. T., Ryan, M. K., Rink, F., Stoker, J. I., & Jordan, J. (2020). Contextualizing the impostor “syndrome”. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 575024. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.575024>
- Harris, M. A., & Orth, U. (2020). The link between self-esteem and social relationships: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119(6), 1459–1477. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000265>
- Livingston, L. A., Shah, P., & Happé, F. (2020). Compensation in autism is not consistent with social camouflaging. *Nature Communications*, 11, 3858. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-17794-1>
- Livingston, L. A., Shah, P., & Happé, F. (2020). Autistic peer-to-peer information transfer is highly effective. *Autism*, 24(7), 1704–1712. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320919286>
- Liu, Y., Wang, Z., & Lü, W. (2013). Resilience and affect balance as mediators between trait emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 54(7), 850–855. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2012.11.031>
- Luthans, F., & Youssef, C. M. (2007). Emerging positive organizational behavior. *Journal of Management*, 33(3), 321–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206307300814>
- Neff, K. D., & Germer, C. K. (2013). A pilot study and randomized controlled trial of the mindful self-compassion program. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69(1), 28–44. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21923>
- Neff, K. D., & McGehee, P. (2010). Self-compassion and psychological resilience among adolescents and young adults. *Self and Identity*, 9(3), 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860902979307>

Neureiter, M., & Traut-Mattausch, E. (2016). An inner barrier to career development: Preconditions of the impostor phenomenon and consequences for career development. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 48.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00048>

Oettingen, G. (2012). Future thought and behavior change. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 23(1), 1–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2011.643698>

Oettingen, G., & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2010). Strategies of setting and implementing goals: Mental contrasting and implementation intentions. In J. E. Maddux & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Social Psychological Foundations of Clinical Psychology* (pp. 114–135). Guilford Press.

Ozbay, F., Johnson, D. C., Dimoulas, E., Morgan, C. A., Charney, D., & Southwick, S. (2007). Social support and resilience to stress: From neurobiology to clinical practice. *Psychiatry*, 4(5), 35–40.

Seligman, M. E. P., Ernst, R. M., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(3), 293–311.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980902934563>