



Breaking the Cycle: A Working Relationships Self-Assessment Workbook

Introduction

This workbook is designed to help you examine your working relationships and break free from the arrival fallacy—the belief that happiness and satisfaction lie just beyond the next milestone. Through these exercises, you’ll assess your current situation, identify patterns, and develop strategies for creating more sustainable and fulfilling working relationships.

PART 1 The Four-Legged Stool Assessment

Imagine your working relationships as a stool you sit on every day. Just as a stool needs all its legs to provide stable support, your relationship with work relies on four essential elements: **continuity**, **reciprocity**, **purpose**, and **hope**. When any of these elements is weak or missing, you might find yourself constantly straining to maintain balance—often by telling yourself things will get better “after this project” or “next quarter.”

This powerful framework, developed by anthropologist Aaron Delgaty in his book “Working Relationships: Crisis and Resilience at the Heart of Employee Experience,” offers a clear way to understand and evaluate our relationship with work.



Let's examine how strong each leg of your stool is right now. Rate each element on a scale of 1-5 (1 = severely lacking, 5 = strongly present) and provide specific examples:



CONTINUITY

1. Current Rating:

Severely Lacking ● ● ● ● ● Strongly Present

1 2 3 4 5

2. What makes me feel secure/insecure about the stability of my work?

3. How consistent are my working relationships and routines?

4. Examples of continuity or disruption in my work life:



RECIPROCITY

1. Current Rating:

Severely Lacking ● ● ● ● ● Strongly Present

1 2 3 4 5

2. What do I give to my work/organization?

3. What do I receive in return?

4. Is this exchange balanced? Why or why not?

5. Areas where reciprocity feels unbalanced:



PURPOSE

1. Current Rating:

Severely Lacking Strongly Present

1 2 3 4 5

2. Does my work align with my values?

3. What meaning do I find in my daily tasks?

4. How does my work contribute to something larger?

5. Elements of work that feel purposeful/purposeless:



HOPE

1. Current Rating:

Severely Lacking Strongly Present

1 2 3 4 5

2. What positive changes do I see possible in my work?

3. Am I growing and developing?

4. Sources of hope/stagnation in my current role:

Total Score:

/ 20

Add the 1-5 rating from each element to get your total score.

Understanding Your Score:

16–20 points: Strong Foundation

- Your working relationships show robust balance across all elements
- Focus on maintaining and building upon existing strengths
- Continue regular check-ins to sustain this positive momentum

11–15 points: Solid but Room for Growth

- Your working relationships have good fundamentals
- Some elements may need attention or reinforcement
- Use this assessment to identify specific areas for development

6–10 points: Needs Attention

- Multiple elements may be out of alignment
- Consider having deeper conversations about expectations and needs
- Create specific action plans for strengthening weaker elements

0–5 points: Critical Review Needed

- Significant imbalance in working relationships
- Important to address fundamental misalignments
- May benefit from external support or coaching
- Consider whether current role/organization alignment needs evaluation

Remember: *This score is a snapshot in time and can change with focused attention and action. Use your score not as a judgment, but as a starting point for meaningful growth and development.*

PART 2 Arrival Fallacy Pattern Recognition

Current “I’ll Be Happy When...” Statements

List your active “arrival” thoughts:

1. “Things will be better after...”

2. “I just need to get through...”

3. “Once I achieve...”

4. “After this project/quarter/year...”

Historical Pattern Analysis

Think back to previous "arrival" points:

1. Last major milestone you were waiting for:

Did things actually improve after?

What actually changed?

What stayed the same?

2. Previous milestone:

Did things actually improve after?

What actually changed?

What stayed the same?

Cost Assessment

For each current "arrival" thought, identify what you're postponing:

1. Health impacts:

2. Relationship impacts:

3. Personal development impacts:

4. Work quality impacts:

PART 3 Boundary Setting Practice

Practice writing responses using the "Yes, and..." framework:

1. When asked to take on additional work,

Instead of just "yes," I will say:

What I need to communicate about my capacity:

2. When personal time is threatened:

Instead of just "okay," I will say:

What I need to protect:

Immediate Actions (Next 24 Hours)

1. One honest conversation I need to have:
2. One boundary I need to set:
3. One "arrival" thought I need to challenge:

Weekly Practice (Next 7 Days)

1. Daily self-check-in time:
2. Specific boundaries to maintain:
3. Relationships to nurture:

Monthly Review

Schedule a monthly review to assess:

1. Progress on four elements (continuity, reciprocity, purpose, hope)
2. Effectiveness of boundaries
3. New "arrival" thoughts to address
4. Necessary conversations or changes

Commitment

I commit to reviewing this workbook on [date]:

Next review date:

Notes & Reflections

Use this space to journal additional thoughts and insights:

Remember: Working relationships require active maintenance and honest assessment. Use this workbook regularly to stay aware of patterns and make necessary adjustments before arriving at crisis points.