

## A CLINICAL FRAMEWORK

# Ten Dimensions of a Secure Relationship with Self

*In psychology, the relationship you hold with yourself functions as an internal working model — the inner template that shapes how you respond to your own emotions, choices, and worth (Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). A secure self-relationship is built across ten interconnected domains.*

**Why this matters clinically:** Research consistently links a secure self-relationship to lower anxiety and depression, healthier interpersonal functioning, and greater life satisfaction (Neff, 2003; Schwartz, 2021). It is also *earnable* — these capacities can be developed through deliberate practice at any stage of life.

1

**Self-Acceptance**

Embracing your strengths and limitations without excessive self-criticism. Imperfection is part of being human.

2

**Healthy Self-Esteem**

An internal sense of worth that is not contingent on achievement, comparison, or external validation.

3

**Emotional Awareness & Regulation**

Recognizing, naming, and gently working with your emotions — neither avoiding them nor being overtaken.

4

**Self-Compassion**

Offering yourself the same kindness you would offer a struggling friend (Neff, 2003). Mindfulness, common humanity, self-kindness.

5

**Boundaries with Self & Others**

Knowing when to say "yes" and "no" without disproportionate guilt. Honoring your own needs alongside others'.

6

**Trust in Self**

Believing in your capacity to make decisions and meet challenges. Relying on inner wisdom, not constant reassurance.

7

**Authenticity**

Living in alignment with your values rather than only social expectations (Hayes et al., 2012). Honest expression of self.

8

**Resilience & Self-Support**

Encouraging yourself through setbacks rather than self-sabotaging. Failure as information, not identity.

9

**Independence & Connection**

Comfortable in solitude, capable of healthy interdependence. Self preserved within relationship, not dissolved by it.

10

**Purpose & Meaning**

A felt connection to your deeper values and aspirations. Purpose as a guiding anchor in daily choices.

## A CLINICAL REFRAME

*You do not need to be strong in all ten dimensions to be whole. Most people are stronger in some areas than others. Knowing where you feel grounded — and where you feel less so — is the beginning of more deliberate self-care.*