

From Striving to Grounded Authority

High-Achieving Professional in Corporate Leadership · 9-Session Engagement

12/13 Goals Progressing	5 Roots Identified & Addressed	Resolved Striving Architecture/IOS	Improved Peace on Waking
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A high-achieving professional in corporate leadership engaged in a 9-session structured intervention to address chronic striving, fear-based performance patterns, and an internal architecture wired for approval rather than authority. Thirteen goals were mapped to five root causes. Twelve of thirteen goals showed documented progress at mid-engagement review.

This was not stress management or career coaching. It was the surgical removal of a performance-based identity architecture that had been masquerading as ambition and excellence for years.

PRESENTING SITUATION

She was built to achieve. Ambition and endurance scored at the top of the clinical range of what is referred to as a “high performer.” From the outside, she was winning. From the inside, something else was operating.

She woke up anxious most mornings — not as a response to crisis, but as a baseline. She rehearsed conversations before they happened. When overlooked or dismissed by a colleague, she felt it physically — a contraction, a smallness, a sense that no matter how much she produced, it still wasn't enough. She gave everything and couldn't rest.

"Getting off the hamster wheel of striving energy. There has to be a thinking trap there somewhere."

— The Client, Needs Analysis (Session 1)

She could feel the thinking trap (*cognitive distortion*). What she couldn't see was what had built it — or that it had a name, a root, and a clinical pathway out.

BASELINE ARCHITECTURE — ROOT IDENTIFICATION & EVIDENCE

ROOT IDENTIFIED	PSYCHOMETRIC DATA	MANIFESTATION
Self-Rejection Rooted in Relational Trauma Unlovingness*	Recognition 8.5 · Self-Confidence 2.5	Worth fused to others' opinions. Felt physically diminished when dismissed. Significant energy spent managing external perception. Signs of a deep shattered soul due to a soul wound by a parent/caregiver. Pathology rooted in early relational wounding; etiology excavated to childhood environment where safety was inconsistent and worth became performance-based.
Conditional Worth Architecture	Trust 3.5 · Composure 2.5	I am worthy when I perform or earn it. Deep sensitivity to disapproval in authority relationships. Pessimistic POV, mindset and self-talk. Emotionally dysregulated; emotions would easily leak out & flood people.
Chronic Striving / Fear-Driven Performance	Contentment 2.5 · Ambition 9.0	Anxiety on waking as baseline. Inability to rest without guilt. Nervous system conditioned to see rest or unproductivity as a threat. Striving framed as diligence — it was fear. Mapped out specific fears found in assessments.
Perfectionism / Should Pressure	Shoulding 8.5 · Responsibility 8.5	Rigid internal rules. Exhaustion, not excellence, was the consistent output.
Automatic Negative Framing	Labeling 8.5 · Mental Filter 8.5	Worst-case assumptions about peers. One bad interaction becomes a systemic threat.

**Unlovingness – A trauma-installed belief system rooted in victimization where the individual internalizes the pain inflicted by others and redirects it as extreme self-rejection. The individual was victimized—harmed by those who should have protected them—and then taught (explicitly or implicitly) that the abuse was their fault. The victim becomes their own perpetrator—adopting a condemning internal voice that rejects, blames, and devalues the self. Worth becomes fused to external validation as a survival adaptation: if love was conditional, withheld, or paired with harm in formative relationships, the individual learns they must earn acceptance through performance. Manifests as chronic self-criticism, inability to internalize positive regard, somatic self-rejection responses, and compensatory striving to prove value. The core wound: "I am fundamentally unworthy, deficient, or unacceptable"—not as chosen*

belief, but as installed operating system from an environment where they were victimized and taught the abuse was their fault. This is a form of toxic shame—the etiology is ultimately the core belief "I am bad/wrong/defective"—but the pathology presents as layered self-rejection architecture that must be addressed systematically, not collapsed into a single intervention.

Core diagnostic finding: Her striving was not ambition. It was a survival mechanism — a deeply wired belief that she had to earn safety and worth through performance (conditional love). Conditional love wires the nervous system to equate rest with abandonment and wires their soul to equate love with performance; the child learns their value must be continuously re-earned, making performance the only acceptable proof of worth. These were structural roots, not character flaws. Roots respond to precise intervention, not willpower.

SESSION-BY-SESSION ARC

6-month engagement, 9 sessions

Eight sessions were completed over four months, followed by a check-in two months later. At the follow-up, the client demonstrated lasting change under real pressure—holding boundaries, resisting old patterns, and responding differently in a high-stakes workplace conflict. The most powerful results typically occur when clients complete the process within three months with a consistent biweekly cadence.

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW:

Session 1 (Needs Analysis Debrief): 120-minute session where psychometric results are debriefed and the client's internal operating system is diagnosed in real time.

Sessions 2–6: Deep breakthroughs, rapid pattern naming, major structural shifts.

Session 7: First major workplace crisis. Old fleeing pattern exposed and linked to deeper rejection and father wounds.

Session 8: Significant relapse under pressure — 50+ billable hours, old striving and praise addiction patterns resurfaced but were now consciously recognized in real time.

Session 9: First time in career client did not apologize or back down when publicly challenged. Held ground, maintained peace, and recognized the pattern in real time — though still continuing to unwind the work addiction underneath.

SESSION	STRUCTURAL WORK
<p>Session 1 (Needs Analysis Debrief)</p>	<p>Needs Analysis Debrief (120 min): Psychometric contradictions exposed. Called out inauthenticity, self-sabotage patterns, and trauma-driven compensatory behavior. Client reported feeling "seen" and "naked" — defense mechanisms named in real time. Mindset shift occurred before session ended. Thirteen goals mapped to five structural roots.</p>
<p>Session 2</p>	<p>Performance pressure identified as false self operating system. Client wasn't uncomfortable in social settings due to introversion — she was performing instead of being present. Authentic self vs. performed self exposed in real time. Mindfulness framework installed. Core insight surfaced mid-sentence: "I want people to treat me the way I want to be treated" — realized she was projecting her own self-rejection onto others.</p>
<p>Session 3</p>	<p>Assertiveness framework built for transactional relationships. Taught to identify relationship type (transactional vs. personal), remain neutral/calm, label behaviors & emotions objectively, refuse false blame. Core trigger exposed: when blamed, she rails against it to defend worthiness (pride wound). Childhood voice stolen—taught to shove down healthy anger. Framework: this is not dad, this is "Bob."</p>
<p>Session 4</p>	<p>Striving named as a structural problem, not a productivity problem. Rest reframed from passivity to active trust. 'Now what' restlessness identified as avoidance of stillness.</p>
<p>Session 5</p>	<p>Fear and performance-striving linked structurally. Receiving worth unconditionally — rather than earning it — installed as operating truth.</p>
<p>Session 6</p>	<p>Progress check-in: Peace increased, personal boundaries improving, striving energy decreasing. Core insight: "If I stop striving, I will get fired" — fear named but intellectually fighting it. Workplace crisis surfaced. Old pattern triggered: catastrophize → "I'm a POS leader" → fear of being kicked out of leadership club → impulse to run/look for new job. Pattern named: when difficulties arrive, flee for control. Traced to father wound + mother's passive enabling. Rejection spirit exposed as root holding all other patterns. Bitterness toward mother addressed: never protected her, never provided for her, high standards projected onto everyone.</p>

<p>Session 7</p>	<p>Worked excessively (6am-9pm, skipped gym) — old pattern triggered under high workload. Core revelation surfaced: "What do I do with this striving energy I have?" — 40 years of worth fused to achievement, integrity tied to "be the best you can be." God stripping away idols (VP title, fitness validation, worldly success markers) — elicited panic. Striving traced to fear — underlying thought: "If I don't go full-heartedly, I'll miss the chance and ruin my life." Relationship concerns addressed: bitterness/pride intertwined around money, fear of judgment. Childhood wound exposed: father stopped working, mother supported family working retail — "God's provision" language used to justify father's entitlement. Pattern named: hyper-independence rooted in victimization, pride as defense against shame. Codependency addressed: oversharing with people who haven't earned trust, using others' questions to process unresolved emotions.</p>
<p>Session 8</p>	<p>Worked excessively again (7am-9pm, 50+ billable hours, skipped gym) — old pattern full relapse. Self-awareness present but behavioral change lagging. Core addiction named: praise addiction — "15-20 opportunities a day for quick dopamine hit: did the thing, do you like me now, will you promote me now?" Workplace crisis: SVP published critique of her department without consulting her — triggered old wound. Core fear surfaced: "If I surrender my desire for power/status to God, He will automatically take my salary and position away." Exposed pattern: eating disorder (overcome) transferred into work addiction — same mechanism, different substance. Filling void of not feeling loved by working into the grave, numbing heart pain. Recognition 8.5 confirmed as structural vulnerability — needs others' approval to feel worthy, doesn't think about others but obsesses over what they think of her (pride/self-absorption). Father wound named as core driver. Deepest fear: repeating father's pattern of giving up. Lie exposed: 37 years of evidence she doesn't quit. Prayer vision: compartmentalized deep pain behind "curtain/false wall" — avoiding wound that requires facing vulnerability.</p>
<p>Session 9</p>	<p>Follow-up session two months post-engagement. Major workplace victory: publicly challenged by VP who criticized completed project without prior review — first time in career she didn't apologize or back down. Held ground: "We did exactly what we said we were going to do when we said we were going to do it." VP shut down, attempted power play, accused client of being "defensive" and "attacking" her — classic shame projection. Client didn't cave. Core revelation integrated: career as idol now recognized daily, fear of man identified as root of people-pleasing. Still struggling with work addiction (occasional 12-14 hour days during Q1 close) but self-awareness present. Practicing boundaries: refused to be small to keep peace. Identity shift confirmed: "I don't feel like you can do any of this if you have fear of man... if I'm afraid my VP won't like me, I'm going to stay small."</p>

Experiencing tangible peace during conflict — "the peace that doesn't make sense."

BEFORE & AFTER

BEFORE ENGAGEMENT	AFTER ENGAGEMENT
Woke up anxious — striving before the day began	Career idol recognized daily (not eliminated, but <i>seen</i>)
Self-confidence 2.5 — worth fused to performance	Praise addiction named explicitly — "eating disorder transferred to work"
Fear of external opinion driving professional decisions	First time in career held boundary without apologizing when publicly attacked
Perfectionism producing chronic guilt and exhaustion	Experiencing supernatural peace <i>during conflict</i> — "the peace that doesn't make sense"
Inability to rest — stillness felt like falling behind	Self-awareness high; behavioral change in progress
Apologized automatically when challenged	Still working 12-14 hour days under stress but <i>recognizing the pattern in real time</i>

**Note: A formal post-engagement psychometric reassessment was not administered for this engagement. At that time, reassessment protocols had not yet been integrated into shorter-term work. Current practice includes pre/post comparison for all engagements, with the client's self-reported change used as the primary indicator of progress.*

High-achieving professionals are among the hardest clients to diagnose — because the symptoms look like virtues. Hard work looks like diligence. Striving looks like ambition. People-pleasing looks like kindness. None of it is.

The cost of staying stuck is not zero. It is years spent proving something to people who are not the source.