

THE SELF-ABANDONMENT TRADE™

A FREE INSIGHT MINI GUIDE



by Susan Taylor,
MSW, RSW

Therapist & Founder

Insight Therapy and Consulting

An Insight
Framework

Insight Mini Guide Series

INSIGHT
Therapy and Consulting

insighttherapyandconsulting.ca

THE INSIGHT

You didn't lose yourself all at once. It happened gradually, over years, in ways so subtle you didn't notice each individual moment. First you stopped saying what you needed, because your needs were met with dismissal or irritation. Then you stopped knowing what you needed, because the signal had become harder to hear. Then you stopped letting yourself want anything at all, because wanting felt risky or selfish. You may have disconnected from your body, living mostly in your head, managing everyone and everything. One day you looked around and wondered who you were and how you got so far from yourself.

I call this the **Self-Abandonment Trade**, and it's one of the most painful and least visible patterns I see in my work with women. The trade is not a personal failing. It's a pattern that can develop when you learn, often early, that certain parts of you are welcome and certain parts are not. You adapt by setting those parts aside. Your voice for approval. Your needs for safety. Your desires for belonging. Your connection to your body for productivity. Aspects of your identity for love. Each trade may have made sense at the time. The challenge is that the arrangement may have continued long after the original conditions changed, and the longer the trades continued, the more they may have felt like your personality rather than adaptations you learned under particular circumstances.

The trade may have been reinforced by the world around you. Family members who benefited from your compliance. Relationships that rewarded your self-silencing. Workplaces that expected your overfunctioning. Cultural messages that celebrated women who give until there's nothing left. These patterns can be reinforced by gendered norms and relationship structures without anyone having

consciously designed them. You were navigating real pressures, and the choices you made may have been the best available to you at the time. Now you're starting to see the trade for what it was. That seeing changes things.

Self-abandonment is not a formal diagnosis or a single established psychological construct. I use the term as plain-language shorthand for patterns that overlap with research on self-silencing, self-neglect, agency, identity, values, and body awareness. The Self-Abandonment Trade™ itself is an original clinical and psychoeducational framework and has not been independently validated.

THE ACTION

One Thing You Can Try Today

The journey back toward yourself can begin with one small question, asked gently and without pressure. "What do I need right now?"

The answer might not come immediately. You may be out of practice asking yourself. Ask anyway. Ask in small, ordinary moments. While you're making coffee. While you're driving. While you're lying in bed at night. Don't demand an answer. Just ask the question and leave space for whatever arises.

The asking is the practice. Every time you ask yourself what you need, you are reaching back toward the part of you that knows how to answer. Over time, you may notice answers becoming easier to identify. They may be small at first. A glass of water. A moment of quiet. A walk around the block. Those small answers are the first signs that you are finding your way back.

THE REFLECTION

Want to Go More In-Depth?

This mini guide is an introduction. The full **Self-Abandonment Trade Workbook** walks you through what you may have put aside, what the trade provided, what it costs now, and how to begin reclaiming what matters to you. It includes reflection exercises and optional deep-dives for when you're ready to go further.

You can find the workbook at insighttherapyandconsulting.ca or take the [free Pattern Assessment](#) to discover which pattern may be most active in your life right now.

I offer virtual therapy across Ontario for women who are ready to understand their patterns and build lives that feel authentic and sustainable. If that's you, I'd love to hear from you.

Book a session with me and/or ask a question here: [**Insight Therapy and Consulting**](#).

Let's talk about it.

Susan Taylor, MSW, RSW
[Insight Therapy and Consulting](#)