

Authenticity and Adaptation: A Reflection Worksheet

	SELF-AWARENESS	SELF-AUTHORSHIP	RELATIONAL + CONTEXTUAL AWARENESS
“Take me or leave me”	May recognize what they feel and prefer	May confuse impulses and default habits with a chosen identity	Gives insufficient consideration to purpose, impact, relationship, or context
The chameleon	May lose touch with what they think, feel, or want	Allows each room to determine who they become	May be exceptionally skilled at reading and responding to others
The emotionally intelligent, authentic person	Remains honest with themselves about what is true	Chooses how to respond based on their values and purpose	Adapts thoughtfully to the people, relationship, context, power, and consequences

WHAT GOVERNS THE ADAPTATION?

- 1

What remains true within me?
What do I actually think, feel, want, or believe?
- 2

What purpose am I serving?
Is the adaptation helping accomplish something I genuinely value?
- 3

Who is authoring this choice?
Am I choosing my response, or allowing my impulse - or the room - to choose for me?
- 4

Is this a strategy I am choosing - or who I believe I must become?
Am I adapting for this purpose and context, or beginning to believe this carefully managed version is the only acceptable me?
- 5

Does this expand or replace my range?
Am I gaining another way to show up, or losing access to my own voice?
- 6

What is the cost, and is the purpose worth it?
Effort alone does not make adaptation self-abandonment.

A final distinction: Choosing diplomacy, restraint, or strategic silence can be prudent rather than inauthentic. Authenticity does not obligate us to make ourselves unsafe.

WHAT ARE YOU NOTICING?

When Does Adaptation Become Self-Abandonment?

It becomes more complicated if I begin to believe:

- My natural directness is inherently defective.
- Their comfort is more legitimate than my perspective.
- I am not permitted even to acknowledge my real thoughts or feelings to myself.
- Success requires me to become the version of me they prefer.
- My carefully managed presentation is no longer a strategy I use; it is who I believe I must be.

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

My immediate feeling is anger.

My natural impulse is to become sharp.

My familiar habit is sarcasm.

My value is treating people with dignity.

My purpose is to address the problem effectively.

The context may include a meaningful power differential.

I choose words, timing, tone, and perhaps allies that allow me to raise the concern as safely and effectively as possible.

What matters is whether I know what I am feeling, remain connected to what I believe, and consciously understand what my choice is protecting or serving.

A PROVISIONAL ANSWER

Authenticity is neither unrestricted self-expression nor behaving identically in every situation. It requires self-awareness, self-authorship, and awareness of relationship and context. Emotional intelligence allows us to adapt how we show up in service of a purpose we value. The important question is not simply how much we adapt, but what governs the adaptation: Are we consciously choosing from an expanding range while staying connected to what is true within us? Or are we allowing our impulses - or the room - to author who we become?

Where does this framework fit your experience - and where does it fall short?