

Find Your Pattern

What you tend to do under pressure at work, how strongly it holds, and what to try first. About 20 minutes.

THE EIGHT DRIFT PATTERNS

	← PUSH • AGAINST THE THREAT	READING TRUE	PULL BACK • AWAY FROM IT →
Self	 → Defender	Self-Awareness Identity Outside the Role	 ← Reassurance-Seeker
Others	 → Credit-Keeper	Relational Generosity Context-Reading	 ← Pleaser
Discipline	 → Expert	Coachability Standards vs. Perfectionism	 ← Checker
World	 → Controller	Locus of Control Energy Management	 ← Bystander

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Why this exists
- The model on one page
- F5 Find Your Pattern: 16 questions, 10 minutes
- F6 How Strong Is It?: 4 questions, 5 minutes
- What to do with your result

HOW TO USE IT

1. Read the model page first
2. Answer F5 for yourself, honestly
3. Check your top pattern with F6
4. Read the last page for your next step

From The Workplace Field Guide

More than 100 two-page sheets for managers and staff

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Not for resale.

Why This Exists

The problem this guide
is meant to help with

Managing people is hard. Everyone arrives with a history of past bosses, past mistakes and things that went well or badly. That includes the manager.

Under pressure, those histories start to steer. People defend, go quiet, recheck, take control or say yes to everything. Then two people's habits bump into each other. The friction makes it harder to see what's really going on, and harder still to know how to respond.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN A LAB

A technical reviewer returns a report with a page of comments. The analyst explains every point before the reviewer has finished. The reviewer tightens the next review. A month later, both are spending more time managing each other than the casework. Both are capable scientists who are protecting something.

WHAT CHANGES WITH A SHARED LANGUAGE

The analyst can say, "I'm getting defensive. Give me a minute to read these properly." The reviewer can ask, "Which three comments matter most?" and stop there. Neither has to label the other. The conversation gets back to the casework.

WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS

Most leadership advice goes straight to the behaviour. Be more direct. Delegate more. Give better feedback. That helps for a while. When the pressure comes back, so does the old habit, because nothing touched what the habit was protecting.

WHAT THIS GUIDE DOES

- Gives everyone the same plain words for what people do under pressure
- Separates habits under pressure from how someone works on an ordinary day
- Shows what each habit protects, and the strength underneath it
- Maps where two people's habits rub against each other
- Offers small, specific changes to try for two weeks

Who it's for

Staff

Notice your own pattern, understand what it protects, and try one small change. Start with F5 Find Your Pattern.

Managers

Start with your own pattern, because it shapes the whole team. Then M0 Helping Staff Adjust helps you support staff.

Coaches and facilitators

Run the questionnaire, coaching check-ins and team sessions safely. The C sheets cover how.

The way in. F5 finds your pattern. F4 checks it isn't just your working style. Your S sheet (or M sheet, if you manage people) gives you an experiment to try. S0 helps you track how it's going.

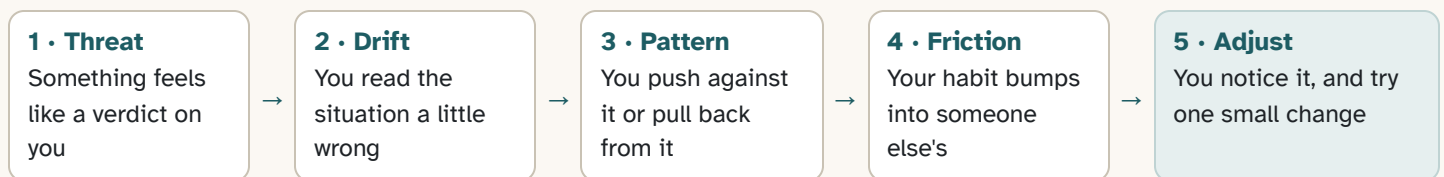
The guide is a practical framework drawing on published research and lab experience. The patterns haven't been tested as a measure. They describe behaviour, never people.

The Model at a Glance

The words the whole guide uses

Drift	Reading a situation a little wrong when you feel under pressure, then acting on that reading.
Threat	Anything that feels like a verdict on you: a correction, a gap in what you know, a decision made without you.
Domain	One of four things we read less accurately under pressure: ourselves, others, our field, our workplace.
Push • pull back	The two directions people move under pressure: against the threat, or away from it.
Drift pattern	A habit under pressure that protects your sense of worth. Dimension 1. There are eight. A pattern describes behaviour, never a person.
Intangible	One of eight qualities that make someone strong in this work. Two sit at the centre of each domain.
Working style	How you work on an ordinary day, from pace and focus. Dimension 2. There are four.
Strength underneath	The real strength each pattern grows out of. The aim is to keep it and use the pattern less.

How it plays out



Dimension 1 • Drift patterns: what you do under pressure

	← PUSH • AGAINST THE THREAT	READING TRUE	PULL BACK • AWAY FROM IT →
Self How I see myself	●→ Defender Explains and needs to be right	Self-Awareness Identity Outside the Role	○← Reassurance-Seeker Hides mistakes, needs to hear it's okay
Others What I think people think of me	●→ Credit-Keeper Competes for recognition	Relational Generosity Context-Reading	○← Pleaser Says yes, avoids conflict
Discipline What I know vs. the field	■→ Expert Must have the answer	Coachability Standards vs. Perfectionism	□← Checker Rechecks, can't sign off
World How I think the place works	⬢→ Controller Holds rules and decisions tight	Locus of Control Energy Management	⬢← Bystander Stops trying, waits it out

Dimension 2 • Working styles: how you work on an ordinary day

Style is where you start. Drift is how far pressure moves you from there.

Anchor MEASURED • PEOPLE Steady, loyal, patient	Rallier FAST • PEOPLE Energizing, full of ideas	Architect MEASURED • TASK Careful, precise, systematic	Pacesetter FAST • TASK Decisive, direct, quick
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PATTERN OR STYLE? THE QUICK TEST

Does the behaviour get stronger under pressure and ease when you feel safe? Then it's a drift pattern. Does it look about the same every day? Then it's a working style. F4 has the full test.

READING THE ICONS

○ Self ○ Others □ Discipline ⬢ World ●→ push ○← pull back working style

The shape shows the domain. Filled, with an arrow pointing out, is push. An outline, with an arrow pointing in, is pull back.

Find Your Pattern

A ten-minute questionnaire
for the eight drift patterns

Think about times at work when you've felt under pressure. That might mean being watched, judged, challenged or unsure. For each line, circle how often it's true of you **at those times**. Answer for how you actually are, not how you'd like to be. Go with your first answer. There are no good or bad answers. Every pattern has a strength underneath it.

1 rarely • 2 now and then • 3 sometimes • 4 often • 5 almost always

#	WHEN I'M UNDER PRESSURE, I...	rarely	now and then	sometimes	often	almost always
1	... explain or justify myself before the other person has finished.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2	... say yes before checking whether I have the capacity.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3	... check work again after it already meets the standard.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4	... get uneasy when plans change, and try to control every detail.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5	... need to hear that it went okay before I can relax.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6	... sound surer than the data allows.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
7	... stop raising issues, because nothing seems to change.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
8	... make sure people know what I contributed.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
9	... take a correction of my work as a verdict on me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
10	... hold on to work until it feels perfect.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11	... hesitate before I raise a mistake.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
12	... hold on harder to how things must be done when questioned.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
13	... agree in the room and have doubts afterwards.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
14	... find it hard when someone else gets the praise for shared work.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
15	... do only what's asked, and wait for the pressure to pass.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
16	... find "I don't know" hard to say.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

THIS SHEET IS YOURS

Nobody collects it. If someone gave it to you, you choose whether to use it and who sees it. Don't write case details here. On a work computer, don't save it to a shared drive.

A SECOND VIEW

If you like, ask someone who knows your work to fill in a copy about you. You choose who. If you lead people, ask a peer manager or your own manager, never someone who reports to you. They give their copy to you and keep none.

Score it

Add your two answers for each drift pattern, and write the total under Mine. Each total runs from 2 to 10. Then shade each bar from the centre out, as far as your total: 2 to 4 is rarely, 5 to 7 sometimes, 8 to 10 often. A second view goes under Theirs.

	LINES	MINE	THEIRS	← PUSH		PULL BACK →	LINES	MINE	THEIRS
Self	● → Defender S1 · M1 1 + 9 8-10 5-7 2-4				Self-Awareness Identity Outside the Role	○ ← Reassurance-Seeker S2 · M2 2-4 5-7 8-10 5 + 11			
Others	● → Credit-Keeper S3 · M3 8 + 14 8-10 5-7 2-4				Relational Generosity Context-Reading	○ ← Pleaser S4 · M4 2-4 5-7 8-10 2 + 13			
Discipline	■ → Expert S5 · M5 6 + 16 8-10 5-7 2-4				Coachability Standards vs. Perfectionism	□ ← Checker S6 · M6 2-4 5-7 8-10 3 + 10			
World	⬢ → Controller S7 · M7 4 + 12 8-10 5-7 2-4				Locus of Control Energy Management	⬢ ← Bystander S8 · M8 2-4 5-7 8-10 7 + 15			

At the centre: the two intangibles that hold when you read that domain accurately. Drift either way pulls on them. The codes beside each name are the sheets to read next.

Reading your result

- Your highest one or two totals are your likely drift patterns. A "high" total is 8 or more.
- If two patterns tie, run F4 on each. Keep the one that gets stronger under pressure. Still tied? Keep the S sheet where you tick more lines under "Do you recognize this?"
- If several are high, start with the one that costs you most right now.
- If everything is low, that's a real result. You may be in a calm stretch. Try again after a hard week, or ask for a second view.

Push or pull back?

Add up your push patterns (Defender, Credit-Keeper, Expert, Controller) and your pull-back patterns (Reassurance-Seeker, Pleaser, Checker, Bystander). Most people lean one way. Push moves against pressure. Pull back moves away from it.

Push total Pull-back total

If someone else rated you too

Look for the biggest gap between your total and theirs. A pattern they see and you don't is often worth exploring. Ask for one example, and listen before you explain.

What to do next

- 1 F5 finds your pattern.** You've just done this step.
 - 2 F4 checks it isn't just your working style.** Run it on your top pattern.
 - 3 Your S sheet (or M sheet, if you manage people) gives you an experiment to try.** Keep it for two weeks.
 - 4 S0 helps you track how it's going.** Score it now, and again in about two months.

Also useful: F3 finds your working style, which is where you start. F6 shows how firmly a pattern holds. Your W sheet (W1 to W4) shows how it looks with your style.

My likely patterns _____ Date _____

About this questionnaire. It's for reflection, and it hasn't been tested as a measure. A pattern describes what you do under pressure, and it can change. Don't fill in a copy about anyone unless they ask you to.

Use with care. Keep this sheet, and anything you write on it, yourself. Keep results out of ratings, files, discipline, hiring, promotion, probation, casework authorization, assignments and references. Never hand a sheet to someone as a comment on them. A concern about a manager goes to the next level up or HR. **Help:** your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) · your harassment process · your health and safety committee · your quality system · HR, for health or disability · a union representative.

How Strong Is It?

Four questions for your top one or two patterns

F5 tells you which patterns you lean on under pressure. This sheet asks how firmly a pattern holds. The answer helps you and anyone supporting you set a realistic pace. Some patterns need only a small tweak, while others run deep and change slowly. Neither says anything about your worth or your potential.

Rate each of your top patterns

Write your top one or two patterns from F5 at the top of the columns. For each question, circle the number whose description fits best. Go with your first answer.

QUESTION	1	2	3	PATTERN A	PATTERN B
Breadth Where does it show up?	In one setting, or with one person	In a few settings	Almost everywhere, at work and outside it	(1) (2) (3)	(1) (2) (3)
Grip Once it starts, can you stop it?	Usually, once I notice it	Sometimes, with real effort	Rarely. It runs its course	(1) (2) (3)	(1) (2) (3)
Recovery How long until you feel steady again?	Minutes	Hours, or the rest of the day	Days, or longer	(1) (2) (3)	(1) (2) (3)
Total of Breadth, Grip and Recovery (3 to 9)					
History How long has it been with you?	It's fairly recent, or tied to this job	Several years	As long as I can remember	(1) (2) (3)	(1) (2) (3)

History isn't part of the total. A long history means the habit may take longer to shift.

What your total suggests

3 to 4 • Tweak

The pattern shows up in some places and lets go fairly quickly. Two-week experiments usually make a visible difference within weeks.

5 to 7 • Rework

The pattern is a steady habit. Expect a few months of practice, with setbacks when pressure rises. A coaching rhythm helps.

8 to 9 • Long road

The pattern runs deep and wide. Change is real but slow, often a year or more, and it comes in small steps. Steady support over a long time helps most.

A SECOND VIEW

You choose who gives a second view. Pick someone who doesn't rate you, if you can. If you lead people, ask a peer. They can rate Breadth at work and Grip. Recovery and History are yours alone. They give their copy to you.

ABOUT THIS READING

This is for reflection. It isn't a test. The bands are working estimates based on practice. Your reading is yours to share or keep.

Reading your result

WHERE CHANGE SHOWS FIRST

Breadth, Grip and Recovery are where change shows. Recovery time is often the first to shorten. Breadth usually narrows later. A long History means the habit is an old one. It may take longer to shift.

READING	WHAT HELPS	A REALISTIC PACE
Tweak	One two-week experiment at a time from your S sheet. A quick check-in with your coach.	A visible difference within weeks
Rework	The two-month coaching rhythm in C2. One experiment kept going for several weeks before adding the next.	A few months, with setbacks under pressure
Long road	Smaller experiments, kept longer. Steady support from people you trust. Work set up so the pattern is triggered less often. Professional support if it weighs on you.	A year or more, in small steps

IF YOUR READING IS LONG ROAD

- You're in good company. Deep patterns are common, and they usually grew for good reasons.
- Pick the smallest experiment you can keep, and keep it longer.
- Tell your coach or manager what pace is realistic for you, if you choose to.
- If the pattern is weighing on you, your Employee Assistance Program or a counsellor can help with the parts work can't reach.

WATCHING IT CHANGE

- Retake this sheet in three to six months. F5 can be retaken at about two months
- Look for Recovery getting shorter first
- Notice the rooms where it no longer shows up
- Count small wins. They add up slowly

PLAN IT

My pattern and my reading _____

One experiment I can keep _____

Who I'll tell, if anyone _____

When I'll retake this _____

Related sheets. F5 Find Your Pattern, F4 Pattern or Style?, your S sheet, C2 The Coaching Rhythm, C6 Setting Realistic Expectations.

Habits can take months to change, and some take far longer. Forming a single new habit took a median of about two months in one study, with a wide range.¹

Sources

1. Lally, P., van Jaarsveld, C. H. M., Potts, H. W. W., & Wardle, J. (2010). How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(6), 998–1009.

Use with care. Keep this sheet, and anything you write on it, yourself. Keep results out of ratings, files, discipline, hiring, promotion, probation, casework authorization, assignments and references. Never hand a sheet to someone as a comment on them. A concern about a manager goes to the next level up or HR. **Help:** your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) · your harassment process · your health and safety committee · your quality system · HR, for health or disability · a union representative.

What to Do With Your Result

Your next step depends
on where you stand

You now have a likely pattern and a sense of how firmly it holds. A pattern is something you do under pressure, and it can change. The next step is one small experiment, tried for two weeks. F5 and F6 mention F4, your staff sheet and C2. Those are in the full guide. Until then, start with the first step for your pattern below.

A first step for each pattern

- → **Defender** · Ask one question before you explain
- → **Credit-Keeper** · Credit someone else, out loud, this week
- → **Expert** · Ask what others think before you answer
- → **Controller** · Ask "what am I missing?" before you decide
- ← **Reassurance-Seeker** · Check the evidence yourself before you ask
- ← **Pleaser** · Say "let me check and get back to you" before yes
- ← **Checker** · Ask "does it meet the standard?" and stop if it does
- ← **Bystander** · Pick one thing inside your influence and move it

Where to go from here

- If you want to work on your own pattern** · Your staff sheet (S1 to S8) has the signs to watch for, what the pattern protects, and practices to try. It's in the full guide.
- If you lead people** · Start with the manager sheet for your own pattern (M1 to M8). Your pattern shapes how your whole team works.
- If you're stuck with one person** · The Compatibility Map (P0) shows where two patterns rub against each other. Ten pairing sheets cover the pairings most likely to lock into a loop.
- If a hard moment is coming up** · Ten situation sheets cover hard feedback, saying no, delegating, change and more.
- If your F6 reading was Long road** · Go slowly and keep the experiments small. C6 helps managers and coaches set a realistic pace with you.

The full Workplace Field Guide

More than 100 two-page sheets for managers and staff: all eight drift patterns from both sides, four working styles, ten pairings, ten situations, team sheets and a coaching guide. You read it online, and every source is listed.

Twelve sheets are open to everyone, and so is an on-screen self-check that finds your working style first. The rest is in early access. Request access at workplacefieldguide.com.

Tell us how it went

The guide improves every week from reader feedback. Each sheet online has a short rating form. It takes a minute.

For teams and organizations

Team licences, a facilitator kit for internal trainers, and a 90-day team program that includes a team pulse, a team session and coaching check-ins. Contact hello@workplacefieldguide.com.

USE WITH CARE

These are tools for reflection and conversation, not tested psychological measures. Keep results out of ratings, files, hiring and discipline. If what came up is weighing on you, your Employee Assistance Program or a counsellor can help.