

FRICTION

INTERPERSONAL Mantra Minute

The Experiment: Build Your Mantra Library

Duration: One week of reflection, ongoing practice

Time required: 20 minutes to build the library, 60 seconds per interaction to use it.

Goal: This experiment asks you to identify the people in your life (at or outside of work) for whom a mantra would be most useful and to build a small personal library you can draw from before high-friction interactions.

Step One: Identify Your High-Friction Relationships

Think about the people you interact with regularly where one of the following is true:

The relationship carries enough history, care, or importance that you want to show up well, but the interactions are sometimes difficult. Or the person is currently in a hard season (e.g., sick, grieving, overwhelmed, difficult, etc.) and their behavior does not always reflect who they are at their best. Or you have a pattern with this person of responding reactively rather than intentionally, and you know the relationship deserves better.

List three to five people. These can be people you love, people you lead, people you care for, or people you simply want to be better with.

Step Two: Find the Word

For each person on your list, ask yourself one question: *Who is this person to me, at their core, in the fullest sense of who they are?*

Then find a single word that holds that truth. Some examples of what this can look like in practice:

- A colleague who is brilliant but prickly: *Pioneer*
- A parent in decline who has become demanding: *Giant*
- A direct report going through a hard time: *Fighter*
- A partner who is overwhelmed and short-tempered: *Home*

Write it down beside each name on your list.

Step Three: Deploy It

In the coming week, before at least one interaction with someone from your list, especially an interaction you are dreading, stop. Take 60 seconds. Say the word to yourself. Not once, but several times, slowly, until you can feel it orienting you toward the person rather than the situation. Then walk in.

Step Four: Reflect

After the interaction, write briefly:

- Did the word change how I showed up?

- Where did I feel the pull to react to the behavior rather than respond to the person, and did the mantra help me hold the line?

- What did the person need from me today that I was able to give because I had grounded myself first?

- Does the word still feel right, or does this person need a different one?

We have found that the library itself is useful. Using this tool in the moment before friction peaks is incredibly helpful to protect relationships. And, having thought clearly, in advance and outside the heat of the moment, about who each person is to you provides a clarity that will be there when things aren't as hard and something you can reach for to deepen the relationship.