

The Armor Inventory.

The Armor Was Necessary. Keeping It On Wasn't.

A guided reflection for leaders ready to examine what they are still carrying — and what it is costing.

THE ARMOR INVENTORY

Armor is built for good reasons. This inventory is not about removing it all at once — it is about noticing what you are still wearing, and whether it is still serving you.

1. What armor did you build — and when?

Think about a time you learned it was safer to manage yourself than to be yourself at work. What protection did you build from that?

2. What does your armor look like in professional settings?

Calm that isn't calm. Competence performed at a level that leaves no room for question. Anticipating what everyone needs before they ask. Name yours.

3. Where does the armor still work for you?

It was built for real reasons. Where does it still provide something useful — and what would you lose if you removed it?

4. Where has the armor become a cost?

When does the protection stop other people from reaching you? When does it stop you from asking for what you need?

5. What is underneath it?

When you imagine setting the armor down — not permanently, just for a moment — what do you notice? What have you been protecting?

This inventory is private. There are no right answers. The noticing is the work.

PRACTICES FOR TAKING IT OFF

Notice when it goes back on.

You don't have to stop it every time. Just notice it. The awareness that you reached for the armor — before you decided to — is the whole practice.

Name it to one person.

Armor loses some of its weight when it is named out loud. Find one person — a trusted colleague, a coach, someone outside work — and say: here is something I carry that most people don't know about.

Ask for something you would normally absorb.

This week, identify one thing you would ordinarily handle alone, quietly, without asking. Ask for help with it instead. Notice what happens.

Let something land without immediately resolving it.

Armor often shows up as the need to fix, smooth, or respond. Practice sitting with something difficult for 24 hours before acting on it. Not avoidance — just space.

Model it for someone else.

If you lead others, name one piece of your own armor in front of them — not as confession, but as leadership. You cannot create safety for others while fully armored yourself.

IF YOU LEAD OTHERS

You cannot create genuine psychological safety while fully armored yourself. People feel the distance — even when they can't name it. The most powerful thing a leader can model is that it is safe to be reached.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

What armor did you build that once served you? Where do you still wear it?

What would change in your leadership if you took one piece of it off?

The armor was necessary. It was built for good reasons at a time when those reasons were real. But you are not in that time anymore.