

Attachment Coping Cards

At the point you need this, you cannot read a paragraph. Reading is one of the first things to go when the system is up, which is why the article you bookmarked for exactly this moment is unreadable at exactly this moment. A card works because it is four seconds long. One line to read, one thing to do, nothing to decide. It also has to be in your handwriting, in words you chose when none of this was happening, because somebody else's sentence does not reach you when you are like this.

Who this is for: You can explain your pattern clearly to a friend over coffee, and none of that explanation is available to you at half past eleven when the message has not been answered.

The card sets

1. The unanswered message

Wallet or phone case. Read before the third check.

Line: "Last time I was certain, it turned out to be ____."

Action: "Phone in ____ until ____."

This card lives in: ____

2. The argument that is starting

Pocket, or taped inside a cupboard door.

Line: "The thing I always regret saying is ____."

Action: "Say ____, then stop talking."

What I do with my hands for the next minute:

This card lives in: ____

3. The urge to check

Phone case, facing outwards.

Line: "Checking buys me ____ minutes and costs me ____."

Action: "Wait ____ minutes, then decide again."

What I have found before, and what it actually changed:

This card lives in: ____

4. The urge to leave

Bedside or car. For the hour when it all looks wrong.

Line: "I am allowed to decide this on ____, not tonight."

Action: "Write the reason down. Nothing else until ____."

What the last certainty looked like a week later:

This card lives in: ____

5. The three in the morning card

Bedside, face down, nothing else on the table.

Line: "Nothing at this hour is true. It will be different at ____."

Action, doable in the dark: ____

What I am not allowed to do until morning:

6. The day after

Desk or bag. For the shame, not the incident.

Line: "Reviewing it is not repairing it. The one thing I can do today is ____."

Action: "____, once, and then leave it."

What I usually do all day instead:

This card lives in: ____

7. Where each card goes

Placement beats wording. Decide it now.

Wallet: ____

Phone case: ____

Bedside: ____

Car or bag: ____

Any card with no obvious home, and why:

8. The test before you cut them out

Read each one aloud and time it.

Four seconds or fewer? Which cards failed:

Which action could I not do with shaking hands:

After a fortnight, the card I actually used:

The cards I can throw away:

This worksheet is free to print, photocopy and share, including with clients. It is self-reflection material, not a diagnosis, an assessment or a substitute for professional support. If a relationship involves fear, control or coercion, or if working through this raises more than feels manageable, please speak to a doctor, a therapist or a domestic abuse service.