

# The Boundary Alarm

*Noticing Your First Boundary Alarm Before You Override It*



## Your Body Knows Before Your Brain Explains

As a professional, you're trained to be composed, reasonable, and solutions-oriented. That training is valuable, but it's incomplete.

Long before your "professional brain" starts explaining what's happening, your body has already registered whether something feels safe, respectful, and aligns with your values. That first flash of tightening, heat, or "something's off" is what we call the **L2 signal**, the energy of anger, frustration, or self-protection.

Most leaders override that signal so quickly they never get its message.

This resource helps you spot your L2 signal in real time, so you can respond with clarity instead of defaulting to self-silencing, over-functioning, or quiet resentment.

## Why This Matters

When you miss or override your L2 signal, you are more likely to:

- Say "yes" when your whole body means "no."
- Take on work or emotional labor that doesn't belong to you.
- Keep the peace on the outside while feeling depleted on the inside.
- Rationalize disrespectful behavior ("They didn't mean it," "It's not that bad") instead of addressing it.
- Distance yourself emotionally from colleagues, family, or the work you actually care about.
- Take on more work than you can handle (overwork/overfunction).

When you listen to your L2 signal:

- You recognize early if your sub-conscious perceives a need or value is being threatened.
- You have more choice in how you respond.
- You can pair your emotional wisdom with your strategic mind.
- You protect your energy *before* burnout, resentment, or shutting down.

You don't need to be more "assertive" as a personality. You just need a clearer relationship with your *first* internal signal.

## Part 1: Name Your L2 Sensations

Think about times you felt frustrated, angry, ashamed, or anxious. How does L2 show up in your body?

### Common L2 sensations include:

- Tight jaw or clenched teeth
- Heat in the face, chest, or throat
- Knot in the stomach
- Shoulder or neck tension
- Sudden spike of energy or irritation ("I can't believe this")
- Urge to argue, shut down, or walk away

### Your turn:

When I feel a boundary is being crossed, my body usually feels:

- In my jaw: \_\_\_\_\_
- In my chest or throat: \_\_\_\_\_
- In my stomach or gut: \_\_\_\_\_
- In my shoulders/neck: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other sensations: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle or star the **top 2-3 sensations** that show up most often. These are your *primary L2 cues*.

## Part 2: A Recent Moment You Overrode Yourself

Choose a recent situation where you felt something was off, but you minimized it, stayed silent, or immediately tried to "be reasonable."

Use these prompts to unpack it:

### 1. The Situation

What happened? (Who was involved? Where were you?)

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## 2. The First Signal (L2)

What did you feel in your body in the first few seconds? (Use cues from Part 1.)

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## 3. The Fast Rationalization (L3)

What did your “manager brain” say next? Common examples:

- “It’s not worth bringing up.”
- “They’re under a lot of stress.”
- “I don’t want to make a big deal.”
- “I’m probably overreacting.”

Write your actual inner script:

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## 4. The Cost

What was the emotional or energetic cost of overriding your signal?

- Did you feel drained, resentful, or checked out?
- Did you feel like you abandoned yourself?
- Did you replay the moment in your head later?
- Did you conclude that you’re an imposter as a leader?
- Are you dreading the next scenario akin to this one?



Describe it briefly:

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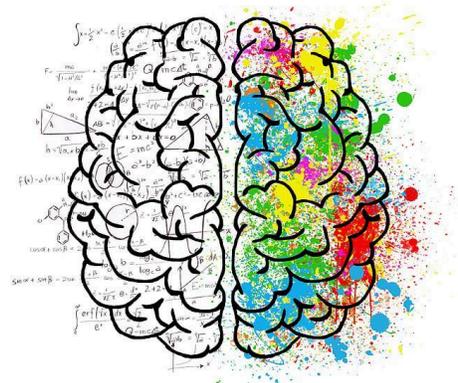
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## Part 3: What Need Felt Threatened?

Every L2 signal points to a **need or value** that matters to you. Look at your situation above and ask: At that moment, what did I need that I *wasn't* getting?

Check any that resonate, or add your own:

- Respect
- Fairness
- Clarity
- Support
- Honesty
- Predictability
- Autonomy
- Appreciation
- Emotional safety
- Space/Time to think
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



Now complete this sentence:

“My L2 signal was trying to tell me I needed\_\_\_\_\_.”

That sentence is the *wisdom* inside your discomfort.

## Part 4: Rehearse a Micro-Pause in Real Time

The next time you feel your familiar L2 cues (jaw, chest, stomach, etc.):

### Step 1 – Notice and Name

Silently say to yourself: “L2 is here. Something matters.” This small label keeps you stay present.

### Step 2 – Three-Breath Pause

Before you fix, explain, or smooth it over:

- Take three slow breaths; feel your feet on the ground.
- Keep your attention on your body, not the story.

This gives your nervous system a moment to shift from automatic reaction to conscious choice.

### Step 3 – Ask One Wise Question

In that brief pause, ask yourself: “What need is signaling my attention?” Or, “If I listen to this feeling, what would I *not* agree to right now?”

You don’t have to *say* anything out loud yet. You are simply letting the signal be heard before you hand the mic to your rationalizer.

## Part 5: A Simple Script to Honor Your Signal

Use this template to translate your L2 signal into grounded leadership language.

**When** \_\_\_\_\_ (describe the behavior or situation, factual)

**I feel** \_\_\_\_\_ (name the emotion or sensation: pressured, dismissed, uneasy)

**Because I need** \_\_\_\_\_ (name the need: clarity, respect, collaboration, realistic timelines)

**Can we** \_\_\_\_\_? (make a clear request or suggest a next step)

Example:

When deadlines get moved up without checking with the team,  
I feel pressured and uneasy,  
because I need realistic timelines and clear communication.  
Can we talk about how we set and adjust deadlines so they’re sustainable?

You can adjust the tone to fit your context, but the structure helps you keep both your wisdom and your composure.

## Your Next Experiment

For the next 7 days, try this:

1. Catch one L2 moment per day.  
Just notice: “There it is. L2.”



2. Write a one-line summary at the end of the day:  
“Today my L2 signal showed up when \_\_\_\_\_.”
3. Ask what it was protecting.  
“It was trying to protect my need for \_\_\_\_\_.”

You’re training your awareness to spot the signal before you silence it.

## Want Support Internalizing This Change?

If you recognize yourself in this worksheet: highly capable, deeply caring, and often overriding your own signals, you are not alone. This is the invisible labor of many leaders in education, healthcare, and mission-driven work.

If you’d like to go deeper into:

- Recognizing your emotional signals without shame
- Turning needs-awareness into clear, grounded boundaries
- Pairing your intuition with your strategic brain

you can:

👉 Learn more at [www.innersagecoach.com](http://www.innersagecoach.com)

👉 Or schedule a **complementary session with Dr. Joan Flora** by emailing: [innersagecoach@gmail.com](mailto:innersagecoach@gmail.com)

You don’t need to become a different person. You just need a clearer relationship with the signals your body has been sending all along.

