

## **How To Heal Hypervigilance**

### **QUESTION:**

Why do I feel constantly on guard, scanning for danger, and unable to relax even when nothing is wrong?

### **ANSWER:**

Hypervigilance is more than being alert; it's living in a constant state of emotional or physical readiness for something to go wrong. It often develops when the past taught you that safety was fragile, that peace was only temporary, and danger could arrive at any moment.

Whether it came from unpredictable caregivers, unsafe environments, or repeated betrayals, hypervigilance wires your nervous system to believe that calm is a trap. Healing hypervigilance isn't about becoming unaware; it's about teaching your body and mind that safety can exist without the constant need to be on high alert.

Here's how to start the healing process:

### **1. Recognise Hypervigilance as a Survival Response**

Hypervigilance is your nervous system's way of keeping you safe. It was born from real experiences where you had to be alert to protect yourself. The problem is that your brain and body is so conditioned to be hypervigilant that it doesn't know the danger has passed. This is why even in peaceful situations, you might still feel tension in your

shoulders, watch people's moods closely, or overanalyse your surroundings. Recognising this as a survival response helps replace hypervigilance with self-compassion.

## **2. Identify Your Personal Danger Scans**

Everyone with hypervigilance has their own scanning habits. Maybe you constantly check people's expressions for signs of irritation. Maybe you mentally rehearse worst-case scenarios. Maybe you notice every small change in someone's tone or body language. These habits are your brain's way of collecting evidence that you're still safe, but they also keep you in a loop of anxiety. Noticing your personal scans in real time allows you to pause and question whether they're truly needed in that moment.

## **3. Create Micro-Moments of Safety**

You don't have to dismantle hypervigilance all at once – in fact, trying to relax too quickly can feel unsafe to your nervous system. Instead, focus on creating micro-moments of safety. This could mean taking five deep breaths, spending two minutes noticing something comforting in your environment, or reminding yourself, 'right now, I am safe.' These small moments teach your body that it can survive without being on full alert. One moment of calm at a time.

#### **4. Learn to Differentiate the Past From the Present**

Hypervigilance blurs the lines between then and now as your pattern-based nervous system reacts to present-day events as though they are happening in the same unsafe context as your past. When you notice your guard going up, gently ask yourself: is this threat happening now, or am I reacting to a memory? This simple question helps you separate the old danger from your current reality, giving your body permission to stand down.

#### **5. Practice Letting Others 'Hold the Watch'**

Part of healing hypervigilance is learning that you don't have to monitor everything alone. This might mean trusting a partner to handle a stressful situation, letting a friend take the lead, or allowing yourself to be a passenger instead of the driver. At first, this can feel deeply uncomfortable but over time, these small acts of shared responsibility help your nervous system understand that safety can be collective, not just self-managed.

#### **6. Replace 'Prepared for the Worst' With 'Ready for the Best'**

When hypervigilance is your default, your mind rehearses what could go wrong. Healing means giving at least equal airtime to what could go right. This isn't blind optimism; it's a deliberate choice to imagine safe, loving, and joyful

outcomes. Over time, this rewires your brain to recognise alternative options to danger and opens you to experiences that don't require a constant shield.

**Affirmation:**

It is safe to lower my guard. I can trust the present without living in the past.

**Journal Prompts:**

1. When did I first learn that safety could disappear at any moment?
2. What signs tell me I'm scanning for danger?
3. How can I create one small, safe moment for myself today?
4. Who in my life has shown me it's safe to let them 'hold the watch'? It's OK if the answer is nobody.

**Visualisation:**

Imagine yourself standing in a lighthouse. You can't remember a time when you've not been scanning the horizon with your strong, focussed beam, ready to raise the alarm at the first sign of trouble.

Today, as you scan the horizon, you see nothing but stillness. Water flowing, soft clouds drifting. You decide to climb down from your look-out point. Your feet touch solid ground, and you walk into a small, sunlit space and sit in a soft chair.

As you sit you realise your body knows you're safe. You take a deep breath in and slowly exhale. Whatever happens, you know you're safe.

### **Conclusion:**

Hypervigilance is evidence of how deeply you want to stay safe and survive but it's also evidence of how your past has exposed you to too much potential and real danger. As you struggled to find ways to cope, your nervous system developed a pattern of hypervigilance. It was never safe to shrug anything off or ignore the danger signs.

As you teach your body and mind that the danger has now passed and that rest is safe you'll stop scanning for threats. Instead, you'll learn to breathe deeply and stay present. All is well. You are safe.

This isn't about erasing your instincts – it's about letting them stand down so your **whole self** can stand free.

### **Final Thought:**

When you no longer live as a lookout for the next storm, life opens in ways you couldn't see from the lighthouse. You're not required to stay vigilant for danger anymore. It stops being something you scan for as you allow feelings of **safety and peace** to become your new normal.