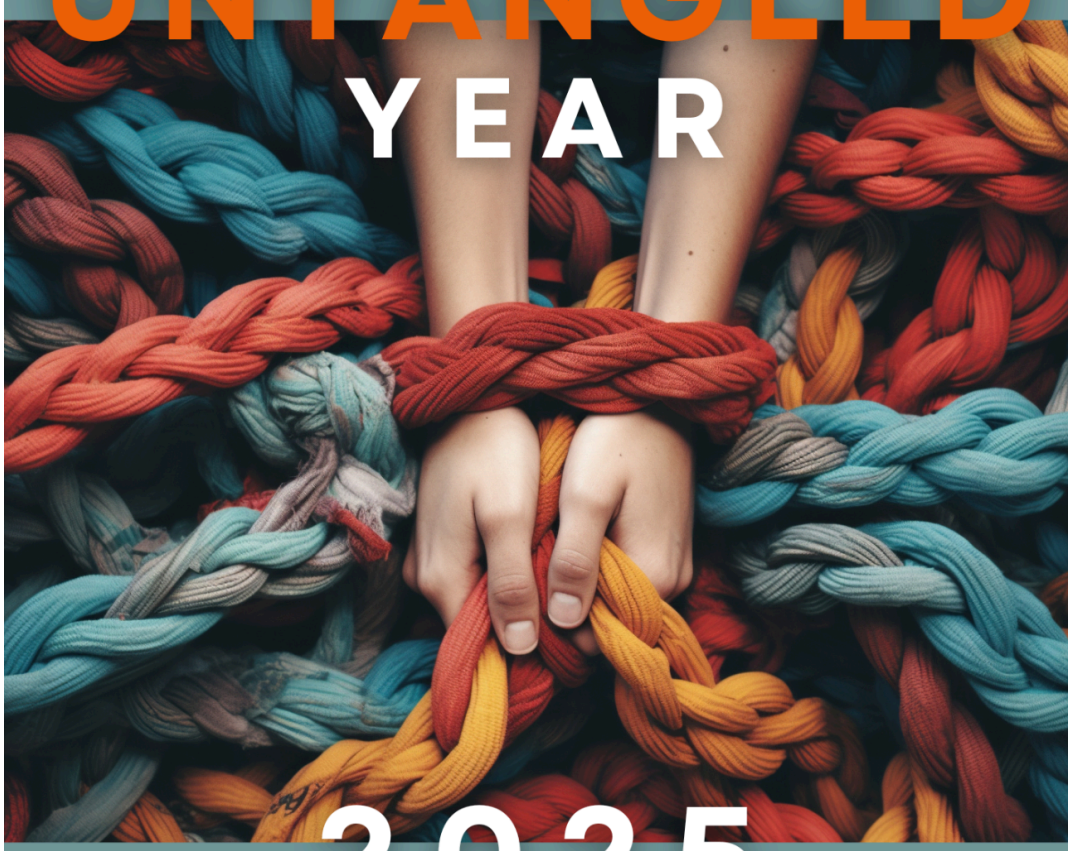
THE UNTANGLED YEAR



2025

A BEHAVIORAL & IDENTITY-LEVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW AND YEAR-AHEAD RESET

PIPER HARRIS, LPC

A LETTER FROM ME

This is not a goal-setting exercise for the new year. You don't need another list of resolutions you already feel behind on. This is a pause. An honest look at how you actually lived, coped, worked, loved, avoided, endured, and carried yourself through the past year. I routinely take the last two weeks of December to do just this: recall, assess, plan, activate.

Most people don't fail because they don't try hard enough. They struggle because the patterns running their life stay invisible. This reflection is designed to make those patterns visible. Not so you can judge yourself. Not so you can reinvent yourself. But so you can understand what truly carried you, and what quietly cost you.

We are stepping away from surface categories like productivity, balance, or success. Instead, we're looking at the deeper behavioral forces that shape:

- How you handle responsibility
- How your nervous system responds to stress
- How you use or withdraw from connection
- How you manage boundaries and conflict
- How flexible you are when life demands change

There are no scores here. No grading. No right way to look at your year. Only evidence and honesty. My encouragement as you move through this is simple: Write what **actually** happened, not what you think **should** have happened. You don't need to be optimistic or positive, and you don't need to impress anyone. You only need to be truthful. Because real change doesn't come from pressure. It comes from clarity.

— Piper

HOW TO USE THIS REFLECTION

This packet is designed to help you:

- Identify where your nervous system, habits, and identity carried you this year
- Detect what actually worked vs what only looked good on paper
- Translate insight into one-year operational focus, not vague resolutions

There are no scores. There is no grading system. Only evidence. Write what you observed, not what you wish were true.

A QUICK NOTE ON THE BIG FIVE MODEL

This reflection is structured around what psychology calls the Big Five Personality Model. These five traits are not types or labels. They describe broad behavioral tendencies that show up across stress, work, relationships, motivation, and emotional regulation.

These are:

- **Conscientiousness** – your follow-through, structure, and self-discipline
- **Neuroticism** – your stress sensitivity and emotional reactivity
- **Extraversion** – how you direct and regulate your energy
- **Agreeableness** – how you handle boundaries, conflict, and compliance
- **Openness** – how flexible you are toward change, ideas, and identity

In this packet, we are not testing your personality. We are using these five domains as a behavioral audit framework to examine how your nervous system, habits, and coping patterns actually functioned this year.

If you are interested in a formal Big Five assessment, a widely used version is available through Dr. Jordan Peterson's platform at:

https://www.understandmyself.com/

That assessment can be useful for deeper self-study, but it is not required for this reflection. This packet is designed to work from lived behavior and real-world evidencem, not test results.

Think of the Big Five here as Five mirrors, not five boxes.

HOW THE BIG FIVE SHOW UP IN REAL LIFE

The Big Five traits do not just describe “personality.” They describe how a person tends to operate under pressure. Under low stress, these traits look like preferences. Under high stress, they look like patterns. Each trait carries strengths, trade-offs, and predictable strain points. None is “good” or “bad.” Each becomes either a support or a liability depending on how it is managed.This reflection uses the Big Five as a functional framework, not a diagnostic label.

1. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS
(Structure, responsibility, follow-through)

Higher conscientiousness tends toward:

- Discipline
- Reliability
- Goal-orientation
- Strong internal standards
- Future focus

Common strain points:

- Guilt when resting
- Over-control
- Burnout through over-functioning
- Harsh self-judgment
- Difficulty tolerating inefficiency

Lower conscientiousness tends toward greater flexibility and lower guilt around downtime, but weaker consistency and follow-through.

2. NEUROTICISM
(Stress sensitivity & emotional reactivity)

Higher neuroticism increases:

- Emotional intensity
- Threat sensitivity
- Worry and rumination
- Mood volatility

Lower neuroticism increases:

- Stress tolerance
- Emotional steadiness
- Faster nervous-system recovery
- Tolerance for uncertainty

Under pressure:

- Higher neuroticism often looks like emotional flooding or avoidance
- Lower neuroticism often looks like staying operational longer, but sometimes delaying emotional processing

3. EXTRAVERSION
(Energy, stimulation, engagement)

Higher extraversion involves:

- Social energy
- Verbal processing
- Initiative
- Leadership emergence
- Motivation through activity

Trade-offs can include:

- Impulsivity
- Over-commitment
- Regulating distress through stimulation
- Difficulty with sustained solitude

Lower extraversion strengthens:

- Depth
- Independence
- Internal processing
- Emotional privacy, but this can drift toward isolation and bottled emotional load under stress.

4. AGREEABLENESS
(Boundaries, compliance, conflict style)

Higher agreeableness increases:

- Compassion
- Emotional attunement
- Cooperative behavior
- Desire for harmony

Common costs:

- Self-abandonment
- Conflict avoidance
- Boundary erosion
- Internalized resentment

Lower agreeableness strengthens:

- Directness
- Boundary defense
- Resistance to social pressure, but it increases risk for relational friction and unintended harshness.

Under stress, agreeableness often determines whether a person:

- Over-functions for others
- Or over-protects against others

5. OPENNESS
(Flexibility, belief systems, identity revision)

Higher openness increases:

- Curiosity
- Abstract thinking
- Willingness to revise beliefs
- Tolerance for ambiguity

Trade-offs may include:

- Over-analysis
- Difficulty committing
- Philosophical restlessness
- Identity diffusion during stress

Lower openness strengthens:

- Stability
- Predictability
- Concrete thinking, but can resist necessary change and psychological flexibility.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR YEAR-IN-REVIEW

Most people don't struggle because they are "bad at life."

They struggle because:

- One trait is over-relied upon
- Another trait is under-supported
- And stress amplifies the imbalance

This reflection will help you identify:

- Which traits carried you this year
- Which traits cost you the most
- Where recalibration (not reinvention) is needed

You are not here to fix your personality. You are here to optimize how your patterns actually function.

YOUR YEAR-IN-REVIEW BEHAVIORAL AUDIT

1. STRUCTURE & FOLLOW-THROUGH
(Conscientiousness in real life)

This section looks at how you handled responsibility, consistency, and demands.

Answer based on behavior, not intention.

- Where did I consistently follow through this year, even when I didn't feel motivated?

- Where did I procrastinate, delay, or abandon structure?

- What routines actually worked?

- Where did momentum break down?

- What drained my discipline the most?

Reflection Notes:

2. STRESS LOAD & EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY
(Neuroticism as nervous-system behavior)

This section is not about "being emotional." It is about how fast and how intensely your system reacted to stress.

- What reliably dysregulated me this year?

- How quickly did I recover after stress spikes?

- Did I ruminate, avoid, shut down, overthink, or panic?

- What stressors were predictable but still overwhelmed me?

- Did I use regulation tools or default coping?

Reflection Notes:

3. ENERGY DIRECTION & ENGAGEMENT
(Extraversion as regulation strategy)

- Did I withdraw to cope, or overextend to escape?

- What environments restored me?

- What environments drained me?

- Did I use stimulation to regulate discomfort?

- Did I isolate more than I needed to?

Reflection Notes:

4. BOUNDARIES, CONFLICT & SELF-ABANDONMENT
(Agreeableness played out relationally)

- Where did I say yes when I should have said no?

- Where did I avoid conflict that I needed to face?

- Where did I become sharp, resentful, or withdrawn instead of direct?

- Who benefited most from my agreeableness this year; me or others?

- Where did I tolerate things that actually cost me?

Reflection Notes:

5. FLEXIBILITY, BELIEF SYSTEMS & GROWTH
(Openness under pressure)

- Where did I resist change even when it was necessary?

- Where did I experiment or stretch?

- What belief about myself softened or hardened?

- What challenged me most this year?

- Where did I cling to familiarity instead of function?

Reflection Notes:

YOUR PATTERN SUMMARY

How to Use This Section

Up to this point, you've reflected on five separate areas of functioning:

- Structure & follow-through
- Stress & emotional reactivity
- Energy & engagement
- Boundaries & conflict
- Flexibility & growth

This section is where you pull those five reflections together into one clear operating pattern. Before you answer the questions below, briefly scan back through:

- What you wrote under Structure & Follow-Through
- What you wrote under Stress & Emotional Reactivity
- What you wrote under Energy Direction
- What you wrote under Boundaries & Conflict
- What you wrote under Flexibility & Growth

You're looking for:

- What showed up most consistently
- What broke down the fastest under pressure
- What you relied on automatically
- What you avoided most often

This is not about perfectly analyzing yourself, it's about identifying the main pattern that ran your year. Then answer the prompts below based on what you actually observed, not what you wish had happened.

- My strongest behavioral channel this year was:

- My most vulnerable channel was:

- My stress signature this year looked like:

- My default coping style under pressure was:

- The area where I most avoided discomfort was:

Summary Reflection:

THE YEAR-AHEAD STRATEGIC RESET

From Insight to Practical Change

This is not about doing more. It is about reducing friction where it actually matters most. Each prompt below connects directly to what you just reflected on. You are choosing one intentional shift per area, not a list of goals. Keep this simple and realistic.

1. One change that would most improve your consistency or daily functioning:
(This connects to your Structure & Follow-Through section)

2. One way you will deliberately contain stress before it compounds:
(This connects to your Stress & Emotional Reactivity section)

3. One shift in how you use your energy or engagement:
(This connects to your Energy Direction section)

4. One boundary you need to set, reinforce, or stop violating:
(This connects to your Boundaries & Conflict section)

5. One belief, role, or habit you are willing to challenge this year:
(This connects to your Flexibility & Growth section)

YOUR ONE-YEAR OPERATING FOCUS

A Values-Guided Direction for the Year Ahead

Goals drift when they aren't anchored to values. This section helps you choose what will actually lead your year, not just what sounds motivating.

You will complete two steps:

1. Identify your core values
2. Link them to the behavioral domain that will guide your year

Step 1: Review the Values List

Circle your top 10 values that resonate most with you right now.

Values	Values	Values	Values
Authenticity	Balance	Belonging	Creativity
Courage	Family	Friendship	Growth
Health	Honesty	Independence	Integrity
Joy	Love	Peace	Personal Development
Purpose	Respect	Security	Spirituality

Trust	Achievement	Adventure	Altruism
Appreciation	Authentic Relationships	Beauty	Boldness
Career/Work Fulfillment	Compassion	Contribution	Consistency
Contentment	Curiosity	Determination	Diversity
Empowerment	Equality	Expressiveness	Fairness
Faith	Flexibility	Forgiveness	Generosity
Gratitude	Growth/Progress	Happiness	Harmony
Healing	Helpfulness	Innovation	Insight
Knowledge	Leadership	Love & Affection	Openness
Peace of Mind	Patience	Persistence	Purposefulness
Respect for Others	Responsibility	Self-Acceptance	Self-Worth
Service	Simplicity	Spontaneity	Strength
Support	Teamwork	Wisdom	Zest

Step 2: Narrow to Your Top 3

From the 10 you circled, choose the **3 values that feel most essential for the year ahead**.

Top 3 Values:

Step 3: Assign a Lead Letter to Each Value

Now assign **one small letter** to each of your top three values based on what kind of change that value represents for you.

Use this guide:

c = Conscientiousness (consistency, responsibility, structure, follow-through)
For values related to: responsibility, consistency, discipline, stability, reliability
n = Nervous-System Regulation (emotional steadiness, recovery, containment)
For values related to: peace of mind, healing, patience, harmony, emotional balance
e = Extraversion (engagement, initiative, visibility, connection)
For values related to: leadership, expressiveness, teamwork, contribution, social connection
a = Agreeableness (boundaries, compassion, relational truth)
For values related to: compassion, service, forgiveness, authentic relationships, respect
o = Openness (growth, perspective shifts, identity flexibility)
For values related to: creativity, curiosity, innovation, learning, flexibility

Now label each of your top three values:

1. _____ (c / n / e / a / o)
2. _____ (c / n / e / a / o)
3. _____ (c / n / e / a / o)

Step 4: Choose Your Lead Letter for the Year

Look at the three letters you assigned. Which one shows up most often or feels most necessary right now?

My lead letter for the year ahead is: _____
(c / n / e / a / o)

Why this letter matters for me this year:

Step 5: Anchor It to Behavior

With that lead letter in mind:

One behavior I want to make more consistent:

One pattern I am ready to stop repeating:

One internal capacity I want to strengthen:

Your One-Year Operating Focus

Complete this sentence in your own words:

This year, I am orienting my life around…

CLOSING ORIENTATION

You've just mapped the patterns that carried you, the ones that cost you, and the values you want to lead with. This isn't about fixing who you are. It's about seeing your life clearly enough to move with intention instead of habit. Last year showed you what happens when you run on automatic. This year gives you the chance to operate on purpose. Carry forward the values you chose and watch for the patterns you named. Support the behavior you're strengthening.

Small, honest shifts, done consistently, change the trajectory of a year far more than resolutions ever will.

Your work now is simple:
Live in alignment with what you already know matters.

It isn't easy. But it is doable.

If you don't have a compelling aim, your goals won't hold.

This exercise gives you that aim, rooted in your values, your patterns, and your lived reality.

This year, you're not chasing motivation. You're choosing intentionally.