

# Tiny Words, Big Relief

## Micro-Scripts for School-Based SLPs & Audiologists Facing Burnout and Impostor Syndrome

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### What you will practice

Recognize burnout and impostor thoughts; use brief language to regulate, clarify, and protect capacity; leave with a personal set of scripts for school-based practice.

| Pattern           | What you may notice                                                                | Where to begin                                               |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Burnout           | Exhaustion, detachment, or reduced professional efficacy amid chronic work stress. | Examine workload, resources, recovery, and support.          |
| Impostor thoughts | Self-doubt or fear of being exposed despite evidence of capability.                | Return to evidence, role clarity, and a next step.           |
| Overlap           | "If I were better, this would not feel so hard."                                   | Name the pressure before making it a verdict about yourself. |

Concept anchors: Maslach & Leiter (2016); Bravata et al. (2020). These reflection prompts are not a diagnostic assessment.

### Start here: one moment worth changing

What recurring school situation would you like to handle with more choice?

Practice agreements: Use de-identified examples. Share only what you choose. Adapt scripts to your voice, culture, role, and setting. Critique the language, not the person.

## 02 / Decision Space + SOS

Notice the pressure. Name what is needed. Choose one useful response.

Decision Space describes the perceived and practical room to notice, interpret, choose, and act before defaulting. A pause, clearer priorities, prepared language, or help from someone else may make another response available.

In this workshop, Decision Space is a working construct, not a validated measure. “10% more room” is a reflection prompt, not a numerical score.

| SOS step        | Ask yourself                                                 | Try saying                                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SENSE IT</b> | What is my earliest body, thought, emotion, or behavior cue? | “I notice I am rushing.”                            |
| <b>OWN IT</b>   | What feeling, need, or inner voice is present?               | “I need clarity before I answer.”                   |
| <b>SHIFT IT</b> | Do I need to regulate, clarify, or protect capacity?         | “Let’s name the decision.”                          |
| <b>LIVE IT</b>  | When will I rehearse, use, and revise this sentence?         | “Before my next meeting, I will practice it twice.” |

### Activity 1 • My pressure signature | 2 minutes

SENSE IT — When pressure rises, I first notice...

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OWN IT — The emotion, need, or inner voice I can name is...

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SHIFT IT — The next useful sentence is...

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One small action I will pair with that sentence is...

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LIVE IT — I will rehearse it when/where...

### Pair-share | 2 minutes

What shrinks my Decision Space? What would give me a little more room?

## 03 / A script bank to make your own

Borrow a sentence. Say it aloud. Change it until it sounds like you.

A strong micro-script is SHORT, KIND, TRUE, and DIRECTIONAL. It fits in one breath, preserves dignity, feels believable, and points toward a next step.

### Inside voice

“I am allowed to pause.”

“One difficult meeting is not the whole story of my competence.”

“I can do the next right step, not the whole future.”

### IEP / 504 meetings

“Let’s name the decision we are making today.”

“What data are we using to guide this plan?”

“Who owns the next step, and by when?”

### Family communication

“I can hear how much you care about this. Let’s look at what we know.”

“That makes sense to ask. Let me explain it in plain language.”

“If this still feels unclear, let’s write the next step in one sentence.”

### Workload and boundaries

“I can do A or B this week. Which is the higher priority?”

“I can support that, but I need to know what moves down the list.”

“To protect quality and compliance, I need a realistic timeline.”

### Educational audiology and hearing access

“The device is one part of access. Classroom acoustics and communication routines matter too.”

“Let’s make the hearing-access responsibility visible in the plan.”

### For a difficult conversation: Validate → Clarify → Next Step

“I can hear this matters.” → “The decision today is...” → “Let’s write the next action.”

Scripts are starting points. Check the facts, the student’s needs, your responsibilities, and what the situation permits before using them.

## 04 / Choose your scenario

Work with a partner or small group. Use page 5 for two practice rounds.

### 1 The tense IEP meeting

A parent challenges your recommendation while an administrator watches. Your mind goes blank: “You have no idea what you’re doing.”

**Write one inside-voice script and one meeting script.**

### 2 The parent email spiral

A frustrated email arrives after school. You are exhausted and behind on documentation. You want to reply immediately with too much explanation.

**Write one pause script and one response opener.**

### 3 The evaluation backlog

Evaluations are due, therapy minutes need attention, and referrals keep arriving. You think, “If I were better, I could handle this.”

**Write one capacity script and one next-step script.**

### 4 “Can you just squeeze this in?”

A supervisor or team member asks you to take on one more task. You want to help, but your schedule is already full.

**Write one boundary script that names a tradeoff.**

### 5 Hearing technology follow-through

A student’s hearing technology is not used consistently. A teacher says, “It’s too much to manage during instruction.”

**Write one educational script that protects dignity and clarifies access.**

### 6 The comparison trap

Another professional’s polished materials or meeting style leave you thinking, “I’ll never be that good.”

**Write one comparison-interrupt script and one action step.**

Practice frame: “I notice \_\_\_\_\_. I need \_\_\_\_\_. The next useful sentence is \_\_\_\_\_.” Keep all examples de-identified.

## 05 / Scenario lab worksheet

Allow 8–10 minutes per round. Rehearse each script aloud twice.

Build the response: FRAME what is happening + name the TRUTH / NEED / BOUNDARY + identify the NEXT STEP.

**Round 1 • Scenario number: \_\_\_\_\_**

SENSE / OWN — My first pressure cue and the feeling or need beneath it:

---

SHIFT — My first script:

---

Second script or next action, as requested by the scenario:

---

LIVE — After saying it aloud twice, I would revise...

---

Voice check: ☐ Short ☐ Kind ☐ True ☐ Directional

**Round 2 • Scenario number: \_\_\_\_\_**

SENSE / OWN — My first pressure cue and the feeling or need beneath it:

---

SHIFT — My first script:

---

Second script or next action, as requested by the scenario:

---

LIVE — After saying it aloud twice, I would revise...

---

Voice check: ☐ Short ☐ Kind ☐ True ☐ Directional

### Debrief

What became clearer? What needs to change before I use it at school?

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## 06 / My personal micro-script library

Draft 8–12 scripts during the workshop. These 10 spaces can hold your first set.

Transfer useful lines from the lab, adapt the script bank, or write your own. Circle three to keep close; star one to practice first.

01 When self-doubt speaks up...

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02 When I need a pause...

---

03 When an IEP / 504 meeting gets tense...

---

04 When I need data or role clarity...

---

05 When a family expresses concern...

---

06 When I am tempted to overexplain in an email...

---

07 When my capacity is exceeded...

---

08 When a new request requires a tradeoff...

---

09 When hearing-access follow-through needs attention...

---

10 When comparison takes over, or another trigger appears...

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## 07 / Make the workload visible

A useful sentence can open a conversation. A workable plan needs decisions and support.

Caseload counts students; workload includes all the activities required to serve them. Include direct service, evaluations, meetings, documentation, consultation, travel, technology support, supervision, and other assigned duties as applicable (ASHA, n.d.).

### Prepare one workload conversation

What work is required, and how much time is available?

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Which student services, quality expectations, or deadlines are at risk?

| Possible adjustment                  | My concrete proposal |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Reprioritize or reassign work        |                      |
| Adjust a timeline where permitted    |                      |
| Add staffing, time, or other support |                      |

Who can make the decision? When will we review the plan?

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Conversation starter: "Here is the current workload. Here is what is at risk. These are the options I see. Which plan will protect student services and meet our responsibilities?"

Do not assume a script authorizes changes to required services or deadlines. Confirm requirements and use the appropriate supervisory or district process.

### Choose the level of action

Personal: rehearse a pause or boundary.

Team: clarify roles, meeting decisions, and follow-through.

System: address staffing, workload, resources, and service-delivery conditions.

One condition that needs to change, and one person/process that can help:

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## 08 / The seven-day experiment

Choose one script and one predictable cue. Keep the practice small enough to repeat.

| Day | Practice                                                                                    |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Pick one predictable pressure moment.                                                       |
| 2   | Write two versions. Choose the one you believe and can actually say.                        |
| 3–6 | Use or rehearse the script in the same context. Notice what helped and what needs revision. |
| 7   | Keep what worked. Rewrite what sounded false. Add one new script.                           |

### My if–then plan

IF this cue appears...

THEN I will say...

And take this small action...

Practice check: ☐ Day 1 ☐ Day 2 ☐ Day 3 ☐ Day 4 ☐ Day 5 ☐ Day 6 ☐ Day 7

These checkboxes track practice, not mental health or treatment outcomes.

### My take-with-me script card

SENSE IT → OWN IT → SHIFT IT → LIVE IT

My early pressure cue: \_\_\_\_\_

Inside-voice script: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting script: \_\_\_\_\_

Boundary script: \_\_\_\_\_

I will keep this card / reminder: \_\_\_\_\_

### After seven days

What worked? What will I revise? Who or what else do I need?

## 09 / Evidence & further reading

Selected sources supporting concepts discussed in the presentation.

The workshop combines findings from adjacent research on work stress, impostor experiences, if-then planning, and self-talk. Those findings do not establish that this particular micro-script approach or the SOS protocol prevents or treats burnout. Decision Space remains an applied working construct.

For example, self-talk findings from sport should not be treated as direct evidence of effectiveness for school-based SLPs or audiologists. Use these tools thoughtfully, evaluate their usefulness, and address the working conditions around them.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Caseload and workload [Practice Portal].

<https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/Caseload-and-Workload/>

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Gollwitzer, P. M., & Sheeran, P. (2006). Implementation intentions and goal achievement: A meta-analysis of effects and processes. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 69–119.

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Shields, G. S., Sazma, M. A., & Yonelinas, A. P. (2016). The effects of acute stress on core executive functions: A meta-analysis and comparison with cortisol. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 68, 651–668. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2016.06.038>

When distress persists, affects functioning, or feels unsafe, seek appropriate professional support, employee assistance, supervision, or local crisis support. Micro-scripts are communication and self-regulation tools, not mental health treatment.

### Workshop source

Adapted from K. Todd Houston's OSSPEAC presentation, *Tiny Words, Big Relief: Micro-Scripts for School-Based SLPs & Audiologists Facing Burnout and Impostor Syndrome*. Practice examples and worksheets are educational applications, not validated assessments.

## Thank You for Listening!

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