

The Support System.



A structure for people building a life far from the people who raised them.

A free field note and printable worksheet. Twenty minutes to complete. Ten minutes to repeat, once a quarter.



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Nine years in, someone finally asked me the right question.

I have lived in the United States for nine years. My family lives on another continent. I have been away from home since I was fifteen — boarding school first, then university abroad — so I thought I had already solved this.

I hadn't. I had just been inside structures that solved it for me. A boarding school is a support system with a timetable. When you leave it, nobody hands you the next one.

At a conference for skilled immigrants, two women asked me a question I had never answered out loud: *how do you support yourself here, alone?*

Their families are also far away. They are ambitious, capable, building something real. And underneath the excitement was the same quiet problem I had stopped noticing in myself: it is thrilling to build a life abroad, and strange to build it without the people who would have been standing next to you.

We are not machines that relocate cleanly. We need sincerity, touch, being known. Distance does not remove that need. It only removes the easy supply.

So I did what I do with every other complex problem — I turned it into a system. This is that system.

*Most people abroad do not lack support.
They have four rings doing the work of five.*

Five rings.

Support is not one thing you either have or don't. It is five layers, each carrying a weight the others cannot. When one goes thin, another compensates — quietly, and for longer than it should.

CORE

You

Body and inner life: sleep, movement, food, silence, and a working knowledge of what you actually want. Every outer ring is anchored here. Lose contact with yourself and the outer rings start slipping too — usually before you notice.

RING 1

Kin

The people who love you without conditions — family by blood or by choice. What only this ring provides: physical presence. Touch, a hug, someone in the room. A video call carries the love. It does not carry the weight.

RING 2

Chosen

Friends and mentors who run on the same values you do. What this ring provides: being known. Friends arrive and leave; the ones who stay are almost always the ones who want a similar kind of life.

RING 3

Craft

Work, colleagues, collaborators. What this ring provides: contribution and momentum. It only holds if the work is something you are genuinely curious about. Otherwise it stops feeding the core and starts drawing from it.

RING 4

Ground

Place, routine, home, culture, community, an animal who needs you daily. What this ring provides: belonging to a location. The question underneath it is simple and rarely asked — do the people around me want the same things I do?

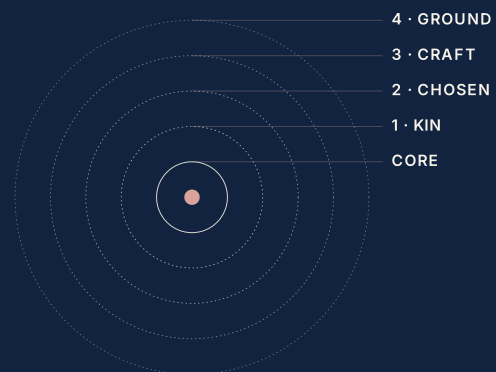
A move does not shrink a life evenly.

When you relocate, two rings are cut immediately: **Kin** and **Ground**. The people who love you are on another continent, and the place that knew you — your street, your language, your ordinary Tuesday — is gone.

Two rings remain intact and portable: **Craft** and, if you are fortunate, a few of the **Chosen**. So those two take the load. Work expands to fill the space where family used to be, and for a while it works remarkably well. Work rewards you, structures your week, and tells you that you are doing fine.

Then something ordinary happens — an illness, a rejection, a Sunday — and the structure shows what it is actually made of.

This is not a personal failure. It is a predictable consequence of geometry. And geometry can be rebuilt.



Five rings, drawn from the centre out.

The rule to remember: a ring that has been cut has to be rebuilt deliberately, in the place where you actually live. Nothing rebuilds by itself, and nothing rebuilds by accident.

Eight spheres.

The rings describe who holds you. The spheres describe how the life itself is going. You need both — a strong ring can hide a hollow sphere for years.

1 · Private life & family

Closeness with the people you call yours — near or far. Not how often you speak. How known you feel.

2 · Work, career & business

Would you choose this work again today, knowing what you now know?

3 · Money & income

Stability, not ambition. Can you breathe? Do you know your real monthly floor?

4 · Education & learning

Are you still growing, or only performing what you already know how to do?

5 · Relationships & connection

Being known — which is not the same as being busy with people.

6 · Health, body & wellness

Sleep, movement, food, and how you feel inside your own skin.

7 · Self-esteem & self-growth

How you speak to yourself when no one is listening.

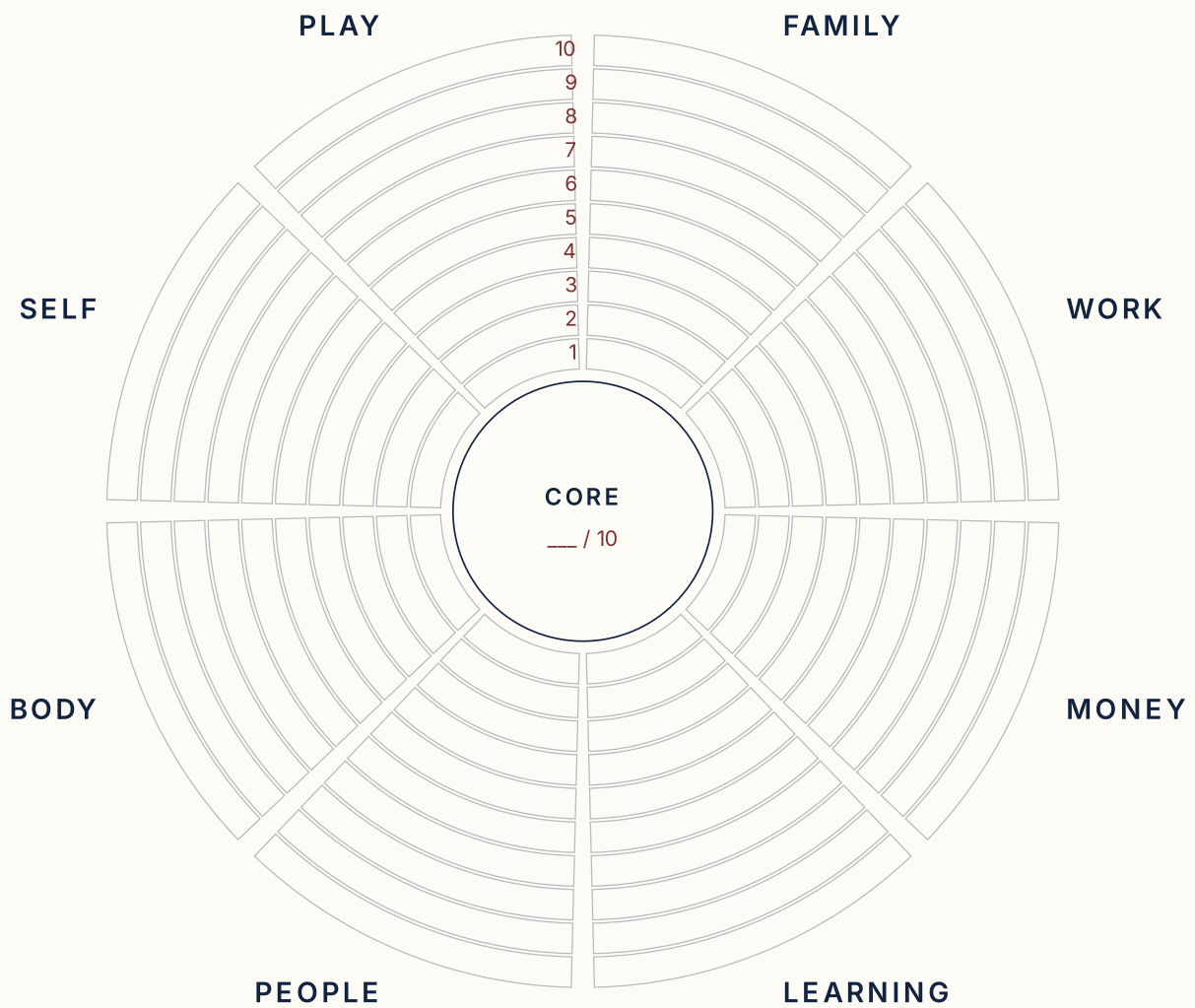
8 · Rest, hobby & play

What you do purely because you like it, with no outcome attached.

Score each sphere from 0 to 10 as it is *today* — not as you intend it to be by December. If you hesitate between two numbers, take the lower one. The instrument is only useful if it is honest.

Your wheel.

Shade each sphere from the centre outward to your score. Then write today's date.
Keep the page.



DATE

FULLNESS · AVERAGE

SPREAD · HIGH MINUS LOW

Who is actually holding this?

One number per ring, 0 to 10. Not how much you love them — how much weight the layer can carry *this month*, where you live now.

CORE · YOU	Energy, clarity, contact with what you want.
RING 1 · KIN	Unconditional love. Presence you can reach.
RING 2 · CHOSEN	Friends and mentors who share your values.
RING 3 · CRAFT	Work, colleagues, collaborators.
RING 4 · GROUND	Place, routine, home, community.

Three patterns worth naming

PATTERN A

Kin and Ground low, Craft high. The migration pattern. Work is carrying what family and place used to carry. Work can hold a great deal of weight. It cannot hug you.

PATTERN B

Core lowest. Start here and nowhere else. The outer rings will not hold on a body running on empty, and every sphere scores low when you are tired.

PATTERN C

Everything at 6. Nothing is broken; everything is running low. This is the pattern that lasts the longest before anyone calls it a problem.

Fix two things. Not eight.

Take your two lowest spheres and your one thinnest ring. That is the whole quarter. A wheel does not become round by working on all eight sides at once.

If the sphere is low

- **Family.** Give one person a fixed slot — same day, same time, every week. Unscheduled love does not survive time zones.
- **Work.** Name the one part you are genuinely curious about and move an hour toward it. Curiosity is what keeps work from becoming a job.
- **Money.** Write down your real monthly floor. Anxiety shrinks the moment it has a figure attached to it.
- **Learning.** One skill, two hours a week, one month. Growth compounds; motivation does not.
- **People.** Go where your values already gather — a class, a conference, a community for the thing you actually care about.
- **Body.** Sleep first, then movement. Every other sphere is being scored by a body, and a tired one scores everything low.
- **Self.** Write three things you did well this month. People building abroad measure themselves against the finish line and never against the distance covered.
- **Play.** Book one thing this week with no outcome attached. Rest is not the reward for finishing. It is part of the machine.

If the ring is thin

- **Core.** Protect one hour a day that belongs to no one else. Not a productivity hour — an hour where nothing is owed.
- **Kin.** Stop treating a video call as the same thing, and build a second anchor where you live: a chosen-family person nearby, or an animal at home who needs you daily. Presence has to come from somewhere.
- **Chosen.** Stop counting friends and start filtering for values. Two people who want a similar life beat twenty pleasant acquaintances.
- **Craft.** Find one collaborator, not one job. A single person building something adjacent to yours changes the texture of the entire week.
- **Ground.** Put one repeating place into your week — the same gym, café, class, congregation. Belonging is mostly repetition in one location.

Write the two spheres and the one ring here.
Nothing else goes on this list.

Four times a year is enough.

PURPOSE

Name the shape

Draw the wheel and score the rings. Twenty minutes, alone, on paper. The first drawing is always the most uncomfortable one.

PROOF

Move three things

Two spheres, one ring, one quarter. Small and repeated beats ambitious and abandoned — every single time.

PERMANENCE

Draw it again

Same page, new date. Four wheels a year and you can see the shape of your own life changing, which is a rare thing to be able to see.



*Life is a marathon that we insist on running in sprints.
The wheel is how you check, four times a year, that you
are still running your own race.*

A note on honesty: the centre of this diagram is you — your values, your body, the place where you actually feel like yourself. If the geography, the work or the people around you consistently want a different life than the one you want, no amount of scoring will fix that. The wheel will simply keep telling you the truth until you are ready to act on it.

KEEP GOING

If this was useful,
pass it to someone
who is building far
from home.

This field note is free to share and free to print. It was written for the two women who asked the question, and for everyone else who has been carrying it quietly.

This is a reflection tool, not a clinical assessment. Nothing here is medical, psychological, legal or immigration advice. If what you are carrying feels heavier than a worksheet can hold, speak to a qualified professional — that is a strong move, not a weak one.

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