



Emotional Sovereignty in a Politically Charged World

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Simple ways to stay grounded, protect your attention and live your values

Political news can be hard to escape.

A headline. A breaking-news alert. A video. A post. A speech. A provocative statement.

Something catches your attention, and suddenly you are angry, afraid, outraged, arguing, scrolling, checking for updates—or thinking about it long after you've put your phone down.

Attention is powerful.

Political messages and media often aim to capture our attention and stir emotion. Social media can amplify content that keeps us watching, clicking, commenting and sharing. The more emotionally charged something is, the harder it can be to look away.

We can easily become absorbed in events, personalities, and conflicts far outside our control. We may feel like we are *doing something* by watching, arguing and reacting. At the same time, our attention and energy are pulled away from the people and things that matter in our own lives.

EMOTIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

Emotional sovereignty means taking responsibility for your attention, emotional energy and choices.

It doesn't mean becoming indifferent or ignoring important issues. It means caring deeply about what is happening in the world **without letting it take over your inner world.**

You can:

- **Be informed** without becoming consumed.
- **Care** without carrying everything.
- **Disagree** without losing yourself.
- **Choose when to engage** and when to step away.
- **Stay connected** to what matters most.

Your attention is valuable. You can choose where you give it.



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PAUSE — TAKE BACK YOUR ATTENTION

When something triggers a strong reaction, create a little space before responding.

STOP

S — Stop: Put down the phone. Pause the video. Step away.

T — Take a breath: Take one slow, easy breath.

O — Observe: What am I feeling? What's happening in my body? What impulse do I notice?

P — Proceed: Choose your next step mindfully, rather than reacting automatically.

A pause is where emotional sovereignty begins.

ASK — DOES THIS NEED MY ATTENTION RIGHT NOW?

Before getting pulled into a political story, argument or online exchange, ask:

Does this really need my attention, or have I simply been pulled into it?

Then consider:

- Do I need to know more about this right now?
- Do I need to respond?
- Is this something I can influence?
- Am I caught up in someone else's anger, fear or outrage?
- Will giving this more attention help me or drain me?

Then ask:

Will engaging help?

- Will it move me toward something I value?
- Am I responding thoughtfully or reacting emotionally?
- Will this create something useful?
- Will I feel steadier afterward, or more agitated?





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You don't have to respond to everything that captures your attention.

NOTICE WHAT HAS BEEN ACTIVATED

Sometimes a political story touches something deeper in us.

You might notice:

"Someone has to stop this."

"I need to keep checking."

"I have to do something."

"What if things get much worse?"

Instead of judging yourself, become curious.

"Something in me is really activated right now."

Ask:

What am I feeling?

What am I afraid of?

What matters so much to me here?

What am I trying to protect?

Maybe you're protecting your family, community, sense of justice, freedom, safety or hope.

You don't have to get rid of the reaction. You can **listen with curiosity without letting it take over.**

A strong reaction can give you information without directing your choices.





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STEP BACK FROM THE STORY

When emotions are intense, create some distance between **you** and **what you're experiencing**.

Instead of:

"I am furious." → "I notice anger arising."

"Everything is terrifying." → "I notice fear and uncertainty."

"I have to do something right now." → "I notice a strong urge to act."

This simple shift reminds you:

I am experiencing this feeling. I am not the feeling.

You have thoughts, feelings and impulses, and you are more than any of them.

Notice what's happening with curiosity. Then choose what to do next.

That space is where you find your freedom to choose.

REGULATE YOUR BODY BEFORE YOU DECIDE

When you're highly activated, it can be difficult to think clearly. Before deciding whether to respond, post, argue or keep reading, help your body settle.

Try this 30-second reset:

FEEL your feet. Press them gently into the floor.

RELAX your shoulders and soften your jaw.

BREATHE slowly, with a slightly longer exhale.

LOOK around and notice three things you can see.

FEEL the support beneath you.





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Then remind yourself:

"Right now, I am here."

You don't have to absorb the entire political world into your mind, heart and nervous system.

Regulation gives you back your ability to choose.

CREATE DISTANCE FROM THE ATTENTION TRAP

Notice when you start checking:

"What's happening now?"

"What did they say next?"

"What are people saying?"

"I need to know."

The urge to keep checking can become a cycle.

Create some distance:

Physically: Put your phone down • Go outside • Walk • Stretch • Make tea • Talk to someone you care about.

Digitally: Turn off breaking-news notifications • Check news at specific times • Take social-media breaks • Unfollow accounts that repeatedly leave you agitated • Avoid political content before bed • Choose a few reliable sources instead of endlessly scrolling.

Information can serve you without hijacking your attention, capacity and energy.





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PROTECT YOUR ATTENTION

Think of your attention as a valuable resource.

Every time you give something your attention, you give it a little of your life.

Ask:

"Is this where I want my life energy to go?"

Imagine a calm, clear boundary around yourself, not a wall, but a filter.

You can be:

- **aware without absorbing**
- **caring without carrying**
- **informed without becoming consumed**
- **open-hearted with healthy boundaries**

You might imagine a soft light surrounding you.

"I choose what I allow into my mind and heart. I can care without carrying what isn't mine."

Cut the cord

If you feel emotionally connected to a story, person or conflict, close your eyes and imagine a cord connecting you to it.

Gently imagine **disconnecting the cord**.

You might picture putting the story down, closing a door, turning off a screen or placing the story in a container.

Then say:

"This is happening in the larger world. I don't have to carry it all right now. I return my attention to what matters in my life."





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This isn't about denying what is happening.

It's about remembering I choose where my attention goes.

TURN TOWARD WHAT GIVES YOU LIFE

Creating distance can leave a space that your mind wants to fill with more news.

Instead, ask:

"What do I want to put my energy and attention toward instead?"

Imagine turning toward what brings you **nourishment, steadiness, joy, strength or peace** rather than continuing to stare at the storm.

Choose something that reconnects you with what is resourceful and aligned with your values:

Nature	Music	Someone you love
Meditation or prayer	Creativity	Time with an animal
Meaningful reading	Walking or movement	Humour
Gratitude	Beauty	An act of kindness

You might also imagine breathing in a quality you need in this moment: **calm, courage, compassion, peace, strength or hope.**

This isn't denial. It's choosing where to place your attention and how to fill your well.



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COME BACK TO YOUR VALUES

When the political world feels chaotic, your values can anchor you to what matters.

Instead of asking only:

"What do I think about this?"

Also ask:

"What kind of person do I want to be in response to this?"

What matters most to you?

**Courage • Compassion • Justice • Truth • Dignity • Freedom • Community • Wisdom
• Responsibility • Non-harm • Equity • Fairness • Other**

You may not be able to control another person's behaviour.

You can choose how **you** show up.

Your values give you somewhere steady to stand when everything around you feels chaotic.





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KNOW WHERE TO DIRECT YOUR ENERGY

Reflect upon these three domains of influence:

1. I CAN CONTROL

My attention • My words • My behaviour • My boundaries • My media habits • My choices
• Where I put my energy

2. I CAN INFLUENCE

My family • My community • My conversations • My workplace • My civic engagement
• Causes I support

3. I CANNOT CONTROL

Other people's behaviour • Political personalities • Every news story • What strangers post online • The future • Everything that happens in the political world

When you notice yourself emotionally living in the third domain, gently return to the first or second. **"What is mine to do?"**

"This isn't giving up.

It's choosing where your energy can be placed most meaningfully.

BEFORE YOU POST, SHARE OR RESPOND

Try the **WISE PAUSE**:

WAIT — Do I need to respond right now?

NOTICE — What am I feeling?

SEE CLEARLY — What do I know? What am I assuming? What are my biases and blind spots?

ENGAGE — Will responding serve what matters to me?





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Then choose:

Respond • Wait • Don't engage • Take constructive action

The important thing is that the choice is yours.

WHEN YOU NOTICE YOU'RE GETTING PULLED IN

NOTICE — *"I'm getting pulled in."*

PAUSE — Put the phone down.

GROUND — Feel your feet. Take a slow breath.

NAME — *"I'm feeling angry." "I'm feeling afraid." "A part of me wants to fight."*

STEP BACK — *"This is happening in the world. I am here in this room."*

CHOOSE — *"What response reflects who I want to be?"*

REDIRECT — Put your attention toward something meaningful.

EMOTIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

Emotional sovereignty isn't about controlling your emotions.

It's about **not handing your emotions, attention and choices over to someone else.**

- I can feel without being controlled by what I feel.
- I can care without becoming consumed.
- I can be informed without being overwhelmed.
- I can listen without absorbing.
- I can disagree without losing myself.
- I can engage when engagement is meaningful.
- I can step away when it is not.
- I can choose where my attention goes.
- I can return to what matters.





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A SIMPLE PRACTICE TO RECLAIM WHAT MATTERS

Option: Place one hand over your heart and one on your abdomen.

Take a slow breath.

The world is larger than me.

I don't have to carry all of it.

I can care without becoming consumed.

I can stay informed without becoming overwhelmed.

I can have boundaries without closing my heart.

I can feel deeply and still choose my response.

I can choose where my attention goes.

I can return to what is meaningful, here and now

Take another breath. Look around you. Notice where you are and what is alive in your mind and heart.

Then ask:

"What is mine to do, and what can I release?"





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MY EMOTIONAL SOVEREIGNTY PLAN

PAUSE • CHOOSE • RECLAIM • ALIGN

Protecting my inner peace, attention and freedom to choose

PAUSE - Notice when I'm getting pulled in

I know I'm getting pulled in when...

The feelings I notice are...

My usual urge is to...

What helps me pause and ground is...

CHOOSE

Decide where my attention goes

My healthy news / social-media boundary is...

Before I engage, I can ask:

- ☐ Does this really need my attention?
- ☐ Will engaging help?
- ☐ Is this aligned with what matters to me?



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RECLAIM

Bring my energy back to my own life

What I want to put my attention toward instead is...

Something I am willing to release is...

ALIGN

Choose how I want to show up

A value I want to embody is...

One constructive action I can take is...

MY REMINDER

- **My attention is precious.**
- **My energy is valuable.**
- **My choices are mine.**
- **I can care about the outer world without giving the world control of my inner life.**

