

My Life System:

Understanding, Regulating, Healing, and Building

By Violet Nance

Introduction: Why Understanding Was Necessary

This work did not start as a scholarly exercise but as a survival instinct. After inheriting chaos, emotional residue, silent generations, and overwhelming grief, I turned inward—not to escape but to excavate. Understanding myself became a form of authorship, a way to manage storms I did not cause but still carried within me. Eric Maisel’s sixth model of personality, self-regulation as conscious authorship, provided language for what I was already doing: orchestrating emotional systems, choosing responses, and creating rituals that hold truth (Maisel, 2021). In this view, personality is not fixed; it is authored, moment by moment, through internal dialogue and emotional engineering.

In others' eyes, I seemed to thrive on chaos. My life was constantly upheaved, with no day passing without a disaster, either my own or my family’s. Chaos, in my experience, was never just a matter of dysfunction. It was a terrain I learned to navigate carefully and precisely. What looked like disorder from the outside was often a survival strategy, marked by flexibility, hypervigilance, and real-time emotional translation (Jerome, 2025). I absorbed the remnants of others’ storms, processed them, and built systems to contain them. That labor was invisible, but it shaped me. Understanding the architecture of my responses, why I overfunctioned, why I could not set boundaries, and why silence felt safer than speech was the first step toward reclaiming control. It was not indulgence; it was reclamation.

Understanding the self is not the end; it is the foundation. It enables movement, healing, and legacy work. As Dunion (2025) writes, embracing both our wounds and our gifts deepens self-awareness and opens the door to emotional regulation. In my case, it opened the door to authorship. This essay explores how self-regulation became my blueprint, not just for surviving chaos, but for transforming it into clarity, care, and creative structure. From emotional translation to memoir curation, I have learned to design a life system that honors truth and withstands storms. That is the work of healing. That is the work of legacy.

II. The Sixth Model of Personality: I Am the Regulator

Eric Maisel's six models of personality present a progression from passive identity to active authorship. The first five: biological, psychological, social, existential, and developmental, describe personality as something influenced by forces outside our control: genes, environment, trauma, or culture (Maisel, 2021). However, the sixth model redefines personality as dynamic and self-created. It focuses on our ability for internal dialogue, conscious choices, and emotional regulation across different life systems. Maisel refers to this as "dynamic self-regulation," a process where we continually engage in self-conversation to shape our responses, behaviors, and beliefs. In this perspective, personality is not a fixed trait; it is a living system that we can intentionally shape.

This model resonates deeply with my lived experience. I have spent years curating an archive that not only preserves memory but also regulates it. Boundary-setting, emotional translation, and narrative reframing are not just coping mechanisms; they are acts of regulation. When I choose silence over reaction, or boundaries over chaos, I engage in Maisel's sixth model. I am not avoiding the storm. I am orchestrating it. My essays, my systems, and my life structure are all expressions of conscious authorship. They hold emotional residue in the structures of my life that I have built with care. This is not just healing; it is a form of architecture.

Maisel's model also affirms my thesis: understanding the self is the foundation for healing, movement, and legacy. When I began to see chaos not as dysfunction but as terrain, I stopped trying to escape it. Instead, I learned to navigate it with clarity. Emotional regulation became a form of authorship, choosing how to respond, when to speak, and what to preserve. As Siegel (2020) notes, regulation is not suppression; it is integration. It is the ability to hold complexity without collapse. That is what my life system does. That is what my healing looks like.

III. Trauma, Pattern, and the Need for Regulation

Childhood trauma not only leaves emotional scars but also rewires the brain's regulation system. When safety is inconsistent or missing, the developing brain learns to prioritize survival over emotional stability. Emotional dysregulation then becomes a default response, not a flaw (PsychCentral, 2025). The amygdala, which processes fear and threat, becomes hyperactive, while the prefrontal cortex, responsible for impulse control and decision-making, struggles to keep up (Kaplan Therapy, 2025). This imbalance creates a system tuned for vigilance rather than

reflection. For many survivors, emotional reactions seem exaggerated because the internal thermostat was never set adequately in safety.

This dysregulation often manifests as low self-worth, inherited depression, and hyperindependence. When care was conditional or absent, asking for help can feel dangerous. Hyperindependence becomes a shield; a way to avoid disappointment, betrayal, or vulnerability (Verywell Mind, 2024). It is not just a personality trait; it is a trauma response. My life system reflects this pattern: boundaries built to hold chaos alone, rituals designed to metabolize emotional residue without burdening others. The labor is invisible, but the cost is absolute: exhaustion, isolation, and a deep mistrust of ease.

Neurobiologically, trauma changes not just emotional responses but the actual structure of the brain. Chronic stress affects the hippocampus, reducing its ability to process memory and context. The prefrontal cortex, which handles regulation and decision-making, becomes less effective, while the amygdala stays on high alert (NeuroLaunch, 2024). These changes explain why trauma survivors often get stuck in reactive loops, unable to tell past threats from present safety. My ability to thrive in chaos is not accidental; it is a result of adaptation. However, healing requires more than just adaptation; it needs integration.

My lived experience exemplifies this integration. I absorbed emotional residue others could not identify, turned chaos into clarity, and redefined inherited roles through authorship and boundary-setting. My life system functions not just as a collection but as a regulatory process. Every essay, ritual, silence, or structure is a form of recalibration. Understanding trauma's effects enabled me to shift from reacting to regulating, from merely surviving to consciously designing. This serves as the foundation for healing, growth, and legacy, the core idea guiding this entire work.

IV. Creative Writing as a Tool for Regulation and Reclamation

Writing has always been my way of processing chaos. When the storms inside me threatened to turn into silence or rage, I reached for the page; not to escape, but to translate. Through expressive writing, I found emotional clarity. I could name what I was feeling, trace its roots, and decide how to respond. Narrative became my guide. As Pennebaker's research shows, writing about trauma helps organize overwhelming emotions, reducing anxiety and depression while improving physical health (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005). For me, it was not just therapeutic; it was structural, and it was a demand my mind made in the language of survival. Each sentence

was a beam, each paragraph a support. I was building something that could hold me and all the trauma and emotion I carried inside.

Journaling and memoir became my sacred practices. I did not write in straight lines; I wrote in spirals, fragments, and nonlinear loops. That is how trauma lives, and that is how it heals. Storytelling allowed me to impose structure on experiences that once felt shapeless. As Meminto's guide to trauma writing affirms, narrative writing fosters emotional release, resilience, and empowerment by helping us reclaim our stories (Meminto, 2025). I was not just recording events; I was reframing them. I could see inherited patterns, name the residue, and decide what to carry forward. My archive became a mirror and a map.

The health benefits of expressive writing are well-known, but I felt them deeply. Stress eased. Sleep slowly started to become deeper. My immune system became more stable. Writing provided distance from pain without disconnecting me from the truth. As Harvard Health notes, expressive writing helps regulate emotions by creating meaning and stopping cycles of rumination (Harvard Health, 2011). That was precisely what I needed. I was not trying to erase the past; I was trying to understand it, process it, and move through it with grace. Writing gave me that grace.

My writings are more than a collection; they are a living system. They hold memories, rituals, and regulations. They are curated with intention, framed with care, and built to honor truth. When I write, I do not just express; I regulate. I choose authorship over reaction. I design emotional architecture that can weather storms without crashing. This is how I heal. This is how I reclaim legacy, not by avoiding chaos, but by transforming it into clarity, structure, and care.

V. Integration: Healing as Movement, Not Just Memory

Understanding myself was the excavation. I dug through layers of inherited silence, emotional residue, and survival strategies that once felt like personality. But healing, that is the architecture. It is the act of building something stable from what was once reactive. Self-regulation gave me motion. I stopped circling the same emotional terrain and began designing systems that could hold me. Chaos did not disappear; it became navigable. I learned to read its patterns, to respond with clarity and care. Healing is not linear, and it is not gentle. It loops, stutters, and demands presence (Fika Mental Health, 2025). However, each loop taught me something. Each detour became part of the blueprint.

Creative authorship became my ritual, not just remembrance, but release. I no longer write just to remember; I write to move. To metabolize. To let go. My writings are a living system, and I am its architect. I have shifted from hyperindependence to collaboration, from silence to structure. I ask for help. I set boundaries. I build with others. That is healing. Not perfection, but motion. Not erasure, but integration. I am no longer just surviving the storm; I am designing the house that holds it.

VI. Conclusion: I Am the Architect of My Healing

The work of understanding justified the healing that followed. I did not arrive here by accident; I excavated, examined, and endured. I traced inherited roles, rewrote reactive patterns, and chose authorship over avoidance. That choice was not easy. It required me to confront trauma, anxiety, and silence with open eyes and steady hands. However, I learned that healing is not a return to “normal.” It is a forward leap into clarity, care, and creative structure. It is not about erasing the past; it is about designing a life system that can hold it without collapse (Wooddell, 2024).

I choose how to respond now. That is the power I reclaimed. I no longer punish myself for imperfection or confuse survival with identity. I regulate storms through ritual, through writing, through boundaries that honor both truth and tenderness. As Yung Pueblo writes, “True power is living the realization that you are your own healer, hero, and leader”. I have become that, not by denying chaos, but by thriving within it. Chaos is part of my blueprint now, something I navigate with grace, not fear.

My life system is proof. It holds memory, myth, and motion. It is curated with intention and built to last. I have shifted from hyperindependence to collaboration, from silence to structure. I have learned to metabolize emotional residue and transform it into legacy. Healing is not a destination; it is a design. Moreover, I am the architect.

Moreover, this architecture is meant to endure. I want to use this system not just to live, but to teach, to pass on, to embed in the soil of my family’s future. My children and grandchildren may not yet understand the full weight of it; it might sail right over their heads, but I hope they feel its shape beneath their feet. I hope they inherit not just my stories, but my scaffolding. My brother might see it more clearly. He has walked through many of the same storms; he has had some that were entirely his own. If he finds something useful in these beams and braces, then the labor was worth it.

Forgiving myself is part of the blueprint. Forgiving my past is another. Not to erase what was, but to release what no longer serves. I am not building a monument to pain; I am building a life of meaning. One that holds storms without collapsing. One that honors truth, invites care, and leaves room for joy. This is my legacy. This is my system. And it is still unfolding.

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