

Short Fuse Reflection Tool

A quick self-check for when you're running hot – before it costs you at work or at home. This isn't therapy. It's a practical tool built for the pace and pressure of this job. Use it when you feel the tension building, when you've snapped at someone you didn't mean to, or when you're shutting down and can't explain why. Five minutes now can save a lot of damage later.



What Sets Me Off?

Before you can manage your triggers, you have to name them. Be honest – nobody else is reading this.

On the Job

- Disrespect from the public or brass
- Calls that go sideways or feel pointless
- Poor decisions made above my pay grade
- No backup when I needed it
- Paperwork piling up after a rough shift

At Home

- Feeling unheard or misunderstood
- Noise, chaos, or demands the second I walk in
- Financial stress bleeding into everything
- No time to decompress between shifts
- Feeling like no one gets what I carry

Inside My Head

- Running on too little sleep, too long
- Feeling like I have to hold it together alone
- A call I can't stop replaying
- Cynicism becoming the default setting
- The feeling that nothing I do matters

Reflection prompt: Circle or mentally flag the 1–2 triggers that hit hardest this week. That's where your attention goes first.

What Do I Notice First?

Your body usually knows before your brain does. Learning your early warning signs is the difference between choosing your response and just reacting.

Body Signals

- Jaw or fists clenching
- Chest tightening up
- Shallow or held breath
- Neck and shoulder tension
- Stomach going tight
- Heart rate spiking at nothing

Thought Patterns

- "Everyone is an idiot."
- "Nothing ever changes."
- "Why even bother?"
- Everything feels personal
- Can't let small things go

Behavior Shifts

- Going quiet or shutting people out
- Short answers, sharp tone
- Avoiding the family when you get home
- Drinking more, sleeping worse



What Am I Actually Carrying?

Irritability is rarely about the thing that set you off. It's what's stacked underneath it. Take thirty seconds to do a real inventory before you engage with whatever's in front of you.



Fatigue

Hours of sleep. Back-to-back shifts. The kind of tired that a day off doesn't fix.



Tough Calls

A scene you didn't expect. A decision you're still second-guessing. Something you saw that you can't unsee.



Pressure

Staffing shortages, command friction, performance scrutiny, body camera second-guessing.



Home Tension

A conversation you haven't had. Distance with your partner. Kids picking up your mood.

Ask yourself: "If I had to pick the one thing draining me most right now – what would it actually be?"
That's the one worth addressing, not the small stuff that triggered you today.

What Pause Can I Use? My Plan Next Time.

A reset doesn't have to be complex. It has to be fast, repeatable, and real. Pick one that fits where you are when you need it – then commit to it before the moment hits.

→ In the Moment (Seconds)

Slow exhale through the mouth – longer out than in. Step back physically if you can. Say nothing until your jaw unclenches. Buy yourself 10 seconds before you speak or act.

→ Between Calls or Before Home (Minutes)

Sit in the car before you go in. Walk a lap around the block. Call someone who gets it. Write one sentence about what's actually bothering you.

→ My Personal Plan

When I notice _____, my reset is _____. Before I go home, I will _____. If it happens again, the one person I'll talk to is _____.

- ✔ **Remember:** Catching it early isn't weakness – it's tactical. You train for every other threat on this job. This one's no different.

