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A TRADEQUILLO FIELD GUIDE

# The Trade *Calm* Playbook

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*Five protocols that protect your edge under pressure.*

## INSIDE

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The Pre-Session Ritual

Body audit to opening bell

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STOP-THINK-ACT

The 10-second interrupt

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Your Saboteur Stack

Name it to interrupt it

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The Three-Sentence Journal

Five minutes, every day

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Circuit Breakers

Written in calm, held in heat

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## START HERE

# Why this playbook exists

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Most trading problems are not strategy problems. If you have been trading for more than a year, there is a high probability that your strategy works more often than you do. The chart gave you the setup. Something else rewrote what happened next.

That something else is the subject of this playbook. It is not a motivation document and it is not about mindset. It is five specific protocols, drawn from the frameworks in Trade Calm, that give your calm, rule-following self a structural advantage over the hot, reactive self that tends to appear when the P&L starts moving.

*"It is the difference between a trader who knows the rule and a trader who is the rule."*

— TRADE CALM, CHAPTER 1

## How to use this playbook

Read it end to end once. It takes under thirty minutes. Then install one protocol at a time. The Pre-Session Ritual first, because it governs everything that follows. Add the next protocol when the first one is automatic. Simplicity applied consistently compounds. Complexity applied sporadically does not.

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**1** The Pre-Session Ritual

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**2** STOP-THINK-ACT

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**3** Your Saboteur Stack

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**4** The Three-Sentence Journal

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**5** Circuit Breakers

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## FOUNDATION

# The 90/10 Truth

Most trading books start with the market. This one starts with you, because over a long enough time horizon, you are the market that matters. Strategy is roughly 10% of long-term results. The other 90% is what your nervous system does with that strategy under live conditions.

Your brain runs on three overlapping systems.

## The Lizard

Survival-based. Fast. Processes threats before your conscious mind can. Cannot be reasoned with directly. Every panic exit, every impulse entry, every frozen hesitation: that is the Lizard responding to perceived danger.

## The Dog

Social and emotional. Craves belonging and approval. Herd-follows. Needs to be right. The part that checks what the chat room thinks, that holds a winner because selling would mean admitting the run is over.

## The Professor

Analytical and deliberate. Wrote the plan. Backtested the strategy. Cannot beat the Lizard in a direct fight. Can only set up conditions ahead of time that change what the Lizard does.

*"The Lizard cannot be reasoned with directly. You cannot talk it out of being scared. You cannot show it your backtest. The work isn't to silence it. The work is to put it on a leash."*

— TRADE CALM, CHAPTER 2

*The five protocols in this playbook are how the Professor sets up conditions ahead of time that change what the Lizard does. Not willpower. Not motivation. Structure.*

# 1 PROTOCOL ONE The Pre-Session Ritual

*From the moment you wake up to the opening bell. Its purpose is not to gather market information. Its purpose is to arrive at the open with your body calibrated, your state checked, and your intention set. Information is incidental. Calibration is the goal.*

## STEP 1 State-Based Ban Check

Before anything else: am I clear to trade today? This is the honest filter, not a formality. Each item below represents a physiological or psychological condition that the research, and your own journal, shows correlates with bad-process trading.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I had at least 6 hours of sleep last night.             | <input type="checkbox"/> I am not physically ill or significantly fatigued. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am not experiencing acute personal stress.            | <input type="checkbox"/> I am not inside a weekly loss-limit breach.        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not had more than 2 drinks in the past 24 hours. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel "I need to make it back" urgency.    |

If any item is unchecked: trade smaller (half size) or do not trade. Both are valid professional decisions. Sitting out is a position.

## STEP 2 90-Second Body Audit

Check the body, then select the breath protocol. The audit takes 90 seconds and tells you what your nervous system is actually doing, not what you think it is doing.

CHECK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT IT MEANS
Shoulders	Elevated or tense?	Sympathetic activation: you are already in a mild stress response.
Breath rate	Fast or shallow?	CO2 dropping: cognitive performance will be below baseline.
Jaw	Clenched?	Held tension: often correlates with overnight or pre-market anxiety.
Hands	Restless?	Motor agitation: urgency to act before a plan exists.

## PROTOCOL ONE, CONTINUED

# The Pre-Session Ritual

## STEP 3 Breath Protocol

Match the protocol to what the audit found. The point is to down-regulate before the first decision, not after the first mistake.

AUDIT RESULT	PROTOCOL	DURATION
<b>Calm: body relaxed, breath slow</b>	Panoramic gaze for 30 seconds, then one slow exhale.	60 seconds
<b>Elevated: tight shoulders, shallow breath</b>	Box breathing: 4 counts in, 4 hold, 4 out, 4 hold.	3 to 5 minutes
<b>Anxious: restless, jaw tight, fast breath</b>	Physiological sigh: double inhale through the nose, long exhale.	60 to 90 seconds

## STEP 4 Today's Process Goal

One sentence. Not a P&L target. The specific behavior you are committing to. A P&L goal puts your nervous system in outcome mode from the opening bell. A process goal keeps it in execution mode, where the edge actually lives.

### EXAMPLES

- ◆ *"I will wait for full bar confirmation before every entry."*
- ◆ *"I will run STOP-THINK-ACT before clicking on any position not in my plan."*
- ◆ *"I will close the platform at 1:30 PM without exception."*

Write your process goal before the first chart opens. If you cannot write it in one specific sentence, you do not have a process goal yet. You have a hope. The goal you write in calm governs the trade you take in heat.

## 2 PROTOCOL TWO STOP-THINK-ACT

*The 10-second interrupt between impulse and click. A physical protocol that forces a switch from System 1, the Lizard, to System 2, the Professor, at the exact moment of decision. The physical steps are not optional. The protocol runs in the body, not in the mind.*

### S

#### Stop

Take your hand off the mouse. Sit back 6 inches. One slow exhale through the nose. Say "stop" silently, with intent. This is the physical interruption of the click motor program. One second.

### T

#### Think

Three questions, in order, one honest sentence each. What is my plan? Is this consistent with it? What would I tell a friend?

### A

#### Act

Two options only. Execute the plan exactly as written, or do not trade. No compromises. No "smaller size as a middle ground." Clean execution or clean pass.

### The three questions in full

#### 1

##### What is my plan?

One sentence naming the setup, the entry, the stop, and the target. If you cannot answer in one sentence, you have an impulse, not a plan. The STOP step has already done its work. Pass on the trade.

#### 2

##### Is what I am about to do consistent with my plan?

Yes or no. No qualifications. If you are constructing a paragraph to justify the answer, the answer is no. The Confirmer builds paragraphs. The plan asks for one word.

#### 3

##### What would I tell a friend to do here?

This shifts you from first-person urgency to third-person clarity. The version of you giving advice to a friend is the version that belongs at the desk.

## PROTOCOL TWO, CONTINUED

## When to run it

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Four moments account for most preventable losses. Each one is a trigger to run the interrupt before the hand reaches the mouse.

**You feel urgency to enter before your criteria are met**

System 1 is detecting an opportunity escaping. The feeling of urgency is almost always wrong. STOP before the hand reaches the mouse.

**You are about to move your stop loss**

The stop was set by the calm self. The impulse to move it is the hot self. This is exactly the moment the protocol exists for.

**You just had a loss and want to make it back**

Revenge trading is the single most expensive pattern in retail trading. Question one will return "I don't have a plan." That is already the answer.

**A ticker you don't usually trade is running on your scanner**

Question one: "What is my plan?" The scanner trade is not in your plan. The protocol has already done its work.

The protocol is not about willpower. It is a physical gap you insert between stimulus and response, every time, until the gap becomes the habit.

# 3 PROTOCOL THREE

## Your Saboteur Stack

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*Most traders have two or three cognitive biases that account for the majority of their losing trades. Trade Calm names twelve of the most common, drawn from the behavioral finance literature and thirteen years of self-documented trading. Your job is not to read all twelve. It is to identify your specific two or three, the ones your journal keeps naming, and build one interrupt for each.*

- 1 The Anchor**  
Holds losers because the entry price feels like a debt the market owes you.
- 2 The Confirmer**  
Hunts only for evidence supporting the trade already decided.
- 3 The Hot-Hander**  
Sizes up after winners and takes lower-quality setups during streaks.
- 4 The Sunk-Coster**  
Adds to losers and converts day trades into investments.
- 5 The Recency Worshipper**  
Abandons a strategy after five losses when the prior fifty were profitable.
- 6 The Hindsight Hero**  
Rewrites losing trades in the journal to make them look inevitable.
- 7 The Narrator**  
Constructs elaborate plots from price action. Trades the story, not the chart.
- 8 The Halo**  
Extends one analyst's winning call across all dimensions. Follows gurus outside their domain.
- 9 The Crowd Follower**  
Derives confidence from agreement, not from the chart.
- 10 The Loss-Averse Mouse**  
Cuts winners early and sizes down after losses even when the next setup is identical.
- 11 The Overconfident Captain**  
Skips the pre-trade checklist when certain. The certainty is the warning.
- 12 The Ghost of Trades Past**  
Hesitates on a valid setup because the last three similar trades lost. Each trade is independent.

## PROTOCOL THREE, CONTINUED

## Identify your stack

Your top three come from your journal, not from intuition. Read the twelve. Then open your last 20 journal entries. Which ones are named in those entries, explicitly or in the stories you told yourself? The two or three that appear most often are your stack. Then complete the table below.

SABOTEUR	THE EXACT PHRASE I HEAR WHEN IT SHOWS UP	MY SPECIFIC COUNTERMOVE
1 (most costly)	_____	When I hear this, I will: _____
2	_____	When I hear this, I will: _____
3	_____	When I hear this, I will: _____

Work one saboteur at a time. 21 days per saboteur before moving to the next. The goal is not silence. It is a gap wide enough to run STOP-THINK-ACT before the click.

## 4 PROTOCOL FOUR

# The Three-Sentence Journal

*Five minutes. Every trading day. Three questions. This is the smallest practice in the operating system with the largest cumulative effect. Over six months it becomes your personal training data set, the record that shows you which patterns are actually costing you money and which ones have already changed.*

*Score the decision, not the outcome. A trade that followed your protocol and lost is a quality trade. A trade that violated your protocol and won is a quality problem.*

### 1 The best decision I made today

Not the highest P&L outcome. The decision made with the clearest process: the setup you correctly passed, the break you took when you wanted to trade through it, the moment you ran the protocol and held the line.

### 2 The worst decision I made today

Not the worst outcome. The worst process. The shortcut you took. The protocol you skipped. The trade that was not in your plan, even if it happened to win. Especially if it happened to win.

### 3 One thing I will do differently tomorrow

One, not five. Implementation-intention format: "When [trigger], I will [physical action]." "When I feel the urge to enter before bar close, I will run STOP-THINK-ACT" is one. "Be more disciplined" is not.

## What to do with the patterns

Once a week, read back through your second answers from the prior five sessions. The question that appears three or more times is the pattern. That pattern is the next saboteur to work on, or the next constitutional rule to write. The journal feeds the weekly review. The weekly review feeds the constitution. This is the compound loop.

# 5 PROTOCOL FIVE Circuit Breakers

*Pre-committed rules you decide once, in calm, so you do not have to decide them again in the middle of a drawdown. Write them now. Honor them without negotiation. The version of you who eventually needs them cannot write them. That version is already in the heat.*

**CIRCUIT BREAKER 1**

**Daily loss limit**

Write the number: \$\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_% of account. When this number is reached: close all positions, log out, do not return until 9 AM the following trading day. No exceptions. The limit was decided by the calm self. The hot self does not get a vote.

**CIRCUIT BREAKER 2**

**The revenge trading interrupt**

After any loss that hits 1R, a mandatory STOP-THINK-ACT before the next entry. After two consecutive losses in one session, a 15-minute break away from all screens. Not paper trading. Not checking the chart. Away. The revenge trade is the most expensive trade in retail. This break is cheaper.

**CIRCUIT BREAKER 3**

**The recovery protocol trigger**

Write the threshold: \_\_\_\_\_% weekly drawdown activates the protocol. When triggered: a mandatory pause, then a cold-state review, then graduated re-engagement. Not "when I feel ready." A specific number of days, written now, honored then.

**My daily maximum loss**

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**My weekly drawdown trigger**

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**My recovery pause length**

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## THE FULL SYSTEM

# The operating system behind the playbook

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The five protocols in this playbook are the most immediately usable elements of a complete four-act system developed in Trade Calm. They produce measurable results on their own. The full system produces something larger: a trader whose practice compounds the same way a good edge compounds, slowly at first, then faster than expected.

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*1 to 5*

**Act 1 • Diagnose**

The 90/10 Truth, the Three Brains, System 1 versus System 2, the Twelve Saboteurs, and the four trader archetypes. Replace vague "I lack discipline" guilt with precise, observable failure modes.

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*6 to 10*

**Act 2 • In-Session Toolkit**

Neuroplasticity and the 21-day protocol, emotional intelligence, cognitive control and the decision budget, the sweet spot of stress, and engineering the flow state. The real-time interrupters.

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*11 to 14*

**Act 3 • Body and Substrate**

Breath, posture, gaze, environment, sleep, chronotype, and the style-signature audit, the three-layer fit test that tells you whether you are fighting the market or fighting your own nervous system.

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*15 to 20*

**Act 4 • Operating System**

The Trader's Constitution, Daily Loop, Weekly Review, Post-Trade Review, Recovery Protocol, and Identity Shift. The boring work that compounds.

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## NEXT STEPS

# Where to go from here

The playbook is the starting point. Everything below is the continuation. Each one builds on what came before and is designed to be used in this order.

FREE

## Take the TQ Assessment

Your baseline across the six behavioral dimensions of trading performance: Emotional Intelligence, Cognitive Control, Stress Resilience, Behavioral Discipline, Risk Management, and Performance Optimization. The profile tells you exactly which protocols to install first.

[tradequillo.com/assessment](https://tradequillo.com/assessment)

FREE

## Are you ready for TradeQuillo?

Before building the full operating system, verify that you have the foundation it requires: a genuine, testable edge. The Edge Readiness Assessment takes five minutes. Some traders find out they are not ready yet. That is the most useful discovery they can make before investing further.

[tradequillo.com/assessment](https://tradequillo.com/assessment)

\$9.99

## Read Trade Calm

20 chapters on the complete system behind this playbook. Every protocol here has a full chapter behind it, with the research, the case studies, and the exact drill for installing it in your own trading.

[tradequillo.com/book](https://tradequillo.com/book)

ENROLL

## The Complete Calm Trading Method

4 modules, 41 lessons, structured around the book's four acts. For traders who have confirmed their edge and are ready to build the full operating system with accountability, quizzes, and progress tracking.

[tradequillo.com/course](https://tradequillo.com/course)

1:1

## Work with James

Coaching is for traders who want direct feedback on their specific journal, their specific saboteur stack, and their specific numbers. Single session, three-session pack, or ten-session full engagement.

[tradequillo.com/coaching](https://tradequillo.com/coaching)

TQ

*Every trader has watched themselves do something they  
swore they would never do again.*

**This book is about that gap.**

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## Trade Calm

*The Psychology of Sustainable Profit*

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