

# Karen Horney's Neurotic Framework

## Mid-30s Life Field Guide (22 Rules)

Live from the real self—not from fear, approval, pride, or avoidance.



Health



Career



Finance



Relationships

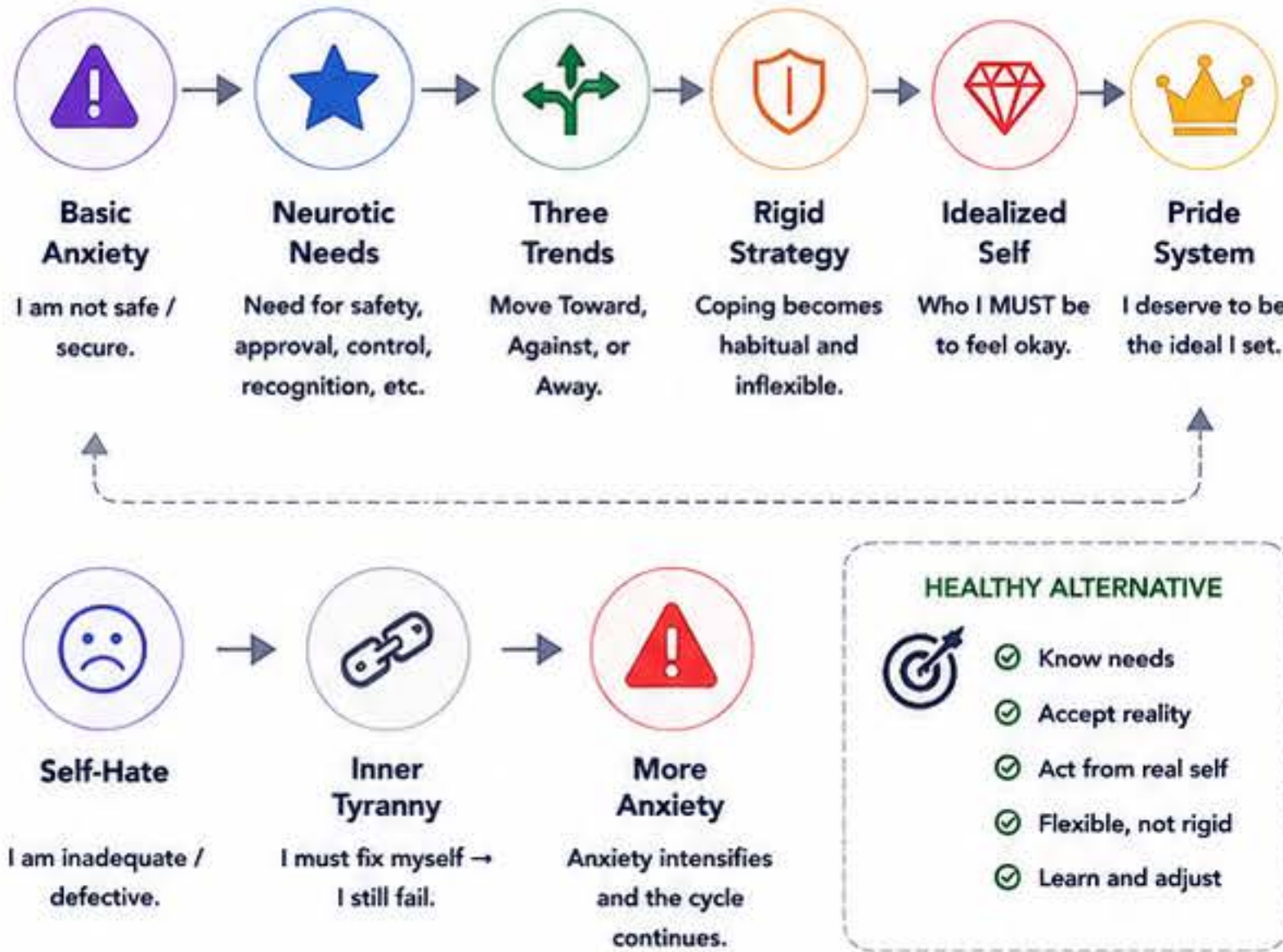


Growth



Life

### HORNEY'S NEUROTIC FRAMEWORK (SIMPLIFIED)



### THE THREE NEUROTIC MOVEMENTS

#### MOVE TOWARD (Attachment)



Seek security through closeness & approval.

##### Examples

- Needs reassurance
- People-pleasing
- Dependent
- Fear of rejection

#### MOVE AGAINST (Overcontrol)



Seek security through power, control & superiority.

##### Examples

- Must outperform
- Competes
- Controlling
- Overconfident
- Perfectionistic

#### MOVE AWAY (Disengagement)



Seek security through distance & independence.

##### Examples

- Avoids decisions
- Procrastinates
- Withdraws
- Numbs out
- Resigns



We all use all three movements.

The problem is rigidity and overuse of one.

### MID-30s FIELD GUIDE – 22 SIMPLE RULES

- Get up and engage.  
Don't wait until you feel motivated.
- Know what actually matters.  
Don't inherit someone else's definition of success.
- Build capability, not an image.  
Become competent because it serves your life.
- Exercise for health.  
Don't turn your body into a status symbol.
- Protect your sleep & energy.  
Exhaustion makes anxiety louder.
- Keep learning.  
Learn from curiosity—not because you must prove you're smart.
- Do difficult things.  
Don't let discomfort automatically become avoidance.
- Don't make career your identity.  
Your job is something you do, not everything you are.
- Don't chase approval.  
Your job is something you do, not everything you are.
- Don't chase approval.  
Make decisions that still make sense when nobody is watching.
- Don't compete with everyone.  
Someone else's house, salary, car, or career isn't your scoreboard.
- Watch the "shoulds".  
Ask: Is this genuinely mine, or am I satisfying an imagined expectation?
- Don't turn ambition into self-tyranny.  
"I want to improve" is different from "I must be exceptional."
- Handle money deliberately.  
Neither fear nor status should be your financial strategy.
- Don't use achievement to regulate self-worth.  
A promotion is an event—not proof that you're valuable.
- Choose relationships consciously.  
Don't cling to people simply because being alone feels threatening.
- Set boundaries.  
Saying no doesn't make you selfish.
- Don't rescue everyone.  
Support people without taking responsibility for their lives.
- Fix problems early.  
Notice → act → resolve.  
Don't let avoidance turn small problems into chronic ones.
- Accept being imperfect.  
You don't have to become your imagined "perfect self."
- Separate failure from identity.  
A mistake means something went wrong, not something is wrong with you.
- Use all three movements flexibly.  
Toward when connection helps, Against when action is needed, Away when solitude helps.
- Choose the real self.  
At the end of the day ask: "Am I living my life—or performing the person I think I should be?"

### THE MID-30s COMPASS – USE ALL THREE FLEXIBLY



**Toward**  
Lean in  
Connect  
Ask for help  
Be open



**Against**  
Stand firm  
Set boundaries  
Be decisive  
Protect values



**Away**  
Step back  
Have solitude  
Ignore noise  
Simplify

♥ The problem is rigidity and overuse of one.

### REMEMBER



You don't need to be perfect.



You are not your portfolio, your body, or your productivity.



Time is finite—live, don't just optimize.



Ordinary days well lived are extraordinary.



Act 3 is not a race—it's a way of living.



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| Rigel G Arcayan, 2026

