

The Epigenetic Lens

A practical guide from Dr. Nicola Schmitz

How To Use This Document

This is not a checklist. It is a lens. The single question that drives everything in this guide is: what am I telling my body right now, and is that what I want to be telling it?

Each of the six sections below covers one of the major inputs we discussed across Season Two. For each, you will find questions to ask yourself, patterns that suggest the input is supporting your body, and patterns that suggest it is wearing your body down.

Once a week, ideally on a quiet Sunday evening, sit with this document for ten or fifteen minutes. Pick one small change for the coming week. Just one. The lens works through accumulation, not through drama.

INPUT ONE: FOOD

Ask yourself. Did I eat actual food this week, or mostly food products? Did I get a palm-sized portion of protein at most meals? How many of my meals were prepared from ingredients rather than packages? Did I drink filtered water, and roughly how much?

Signs the input is supporting your body. Stable energy across the day. Hunger that arrives at regular intervals. Sleep not disrupted by digestion. Clear thinking in the morning.

Signs the input is wearing your body down. Frequent reliance on convenience foods. Sugar cravings that feel hard to ignore. Bloating or digestive discomfort after most meals. Eating mostly while distracted.

Small adjustments worth considering. Add one protein-rich element to a meal that usually does not have it. Replace one ultra-processed item with something closer to its natural form. Drink one glass of water before your first coffee.

INPUT TWO: SLEEP

Ask yourself. How many nights this week did I get seven to eight hours? Did I go to bed at roughly the same time most nights? Did I wake feeling rested? How was bedroom temperature, darkness, and quietness? Caffeine after lunch? Alcohol in the evening?

Signs the input is supporting your body. Falling asleep within fifteen or twenty minutes. Sleeping through most of the night. Waking with reasonable energy. Steady mood through the day.

Signs the input is wearing your body down. Difficulty falling asleep. Waking between three and four in the morning. Needing significant caffeine. Feeling tired before the day has started.

Small adjustments worth considering. Set a consistent bedtime within a thirty-minute window. Stop screens at least thirty minutes before bed. Cool the bedroom. Move caffeine cutoff to early afternoon.

INPUT THREE: MOVEMENT

Ask yourself. How many hours did I sit this week in long uninterrupted blocks? Any resistance training, even bodyweight? How much did I walk? Did I stand up and move at least once every hour during work?

Signs the input is supporting your body. Energy that builds through the day rather than drains. Sleep that improves on days you have moved. Strength available when you need it.

Signs the input is wearing your body down. Long stretches of sitting uninterrupted. Avoidance of stairs and walking distances. Stiffness on rising. Visible muscle loss in arms and shoulders.

Small adjustments worth considering. Two resistance sessions of thirty to forty minutes each week. Daily walk of at least twenty minutes, ideally outdoors. Stand up and move briefly every hour. Take stairs whenever the option exists.

INPUT FOUR: STRESS

Ask yourself. Could I feel my own stress this week, or had I stopped noticing? Did I have moments of true rest, not just distraction? How was my breathing across the day? Did I touch anything that calmed my nervous system?

Signs the input is supporting your body. Periods in the day when your body actually settles. Sleep that begins easily. Reasonable patience with small disruptions. A sense you can drop down when you choose to.

Signs the input is wearing your body down. Constant low-level vibration you can no longer turn off. Tension in jaw, shoulders, neck even at rest. Early morning waking with a racing mind. Disproportionate reactions to small stressors.

Small adjustments worth considering. Four to six slow exhales, longer than the inhale, several times a day. One brief moment of unstimulated stillness daily, even two minutes. Cold water on the face once a day. A walk after lunch, no phone, no earbuds.

INPUT FIVE: ENVIRONMENT

Ask yourself. What did I drink water from this week, and what was the water? What did I heat my food in? What goes on my skin every day that I have not examined the labels of? How is the air in my home, particularly the bedroom? Where does my phone sleep, and how close to my head?

Signs the input is supporting your body. Filtered water is the default. Glass and stainless steel in the kitchen. Personal care products have ingredients you can identify. Bedroom is ventilated, with low electronic load near the head.

Signs the input is wearing your body down. Plastic bottles or containers used daily, especially with hot foods. Synthetic fragrances in lotions, deodorants, laundry. Daily chemical sunscreen

year-round. Hidden moisture damage or mold.

Small adjustments worth considering. Install a water filter, store filtered water in glass. Switch one frequently used non-stick pan to cast iron or stainless steel. Read labels on three daily personal care products, replace the worst. Move phone away from head at night.

INPUT SIX: RELATIONSHIPS AND BELONGING

Ask yourself. Who knows what I actually did this week, beyond surface-level updates? Who would notice if I disappeared for a few days? Did I have any conversation this week where I felt truly met? Are my closest relationships safe places for my nervous system, or vigilant ones?

Signs the input is supporting your body. A few relationships in which you do not have to perform. Regular, repeated, low-pressure contact with the same people. A sense of being known, even by a small number. Physical contact with safety in it, at least sometimes.

Signs the input is wearing your body down. Days going by where no one really sees you. Close relationships that require constant vigilance. Loneliness that has become so familiar you no longer name it. Replacement of in-person contact with screens.

Small adjustments worth considering. One repeated weekly contact you can rebuild, with one person or group. One conversation a week where you are physically present, not on a screen. A regular place you go where the same faces will be there.

THE PAUSE AT THE END OF THE WEEK

One more question, after the six. Where is my body asking for something it has not been getting? The answer may not be in the section that seems most obvious. Trust what you notice. The body is usually pointing toward what it needs, if you give it space to be heard.

Pick one adjustment. Just one. Carry it through the coming week. Return here next Sunday.

Remember the principle. The lens does not change a body overnight. It changes a body through consistent application, week after week, year after year. The people who actually transform their health are not the people who do everything at once. They are the people who return, again and again, to the same simple practice of asking what their body is being told, and adjusting what is within their control.