

Re:frame

A Framework for Emotional Clarity

Concept Document · Next to Kin · 2026

When you understand why you feel the way you feel, you stop being ruled by it.

Re:frame is a behavioural psychology tool that helps people understand their emotional and physiological responses in real time — not to eliminate those responses, but to correctly interpret them. When a person understands what their body and mind are actually doing, and why, they return to equilibrium faster, make clearer decisions, and become significantly harder to manipulate.

This document describes the concept, the science, the design approach, and the long-term vision. It is written for anyone who cares about mental health, emotional resilience, and human dignity — investors, clinicians, pastors, educators, and community leaders alike.

BUILT ON

Rory Sutherland's reframing method + neuroscience of emotion

DESIGNED FOR

Any person at a moment of emotional overwhelm

DELIVERED VIA

AI-personalised web tool, unique to each audience

The Problem

Most people in emotional distress are not broken. They are simply misreading the signal.

When a person feels anxious before a difficult conversation, their hands shake, their heart races, their thoughts spiral. The almost universal interpretation of these signals is: something is wrong with me. I am not strong enough. I cannot handle this.

This interpretation is factually incorrect — and it makes everything worse.

What is actually happening is a 200,000-year-old survival system doing exactly what it was designed to do. The nervous system cannot distinguish between a physical threat and a social one. It responds to a difficult phone call the same way it responds to a predator. Not because the person is weak, but because the wiring is ancient and the modern world moves faster than evolution.

The problem is not the feeling. The problem is the story we attach to the feeling.

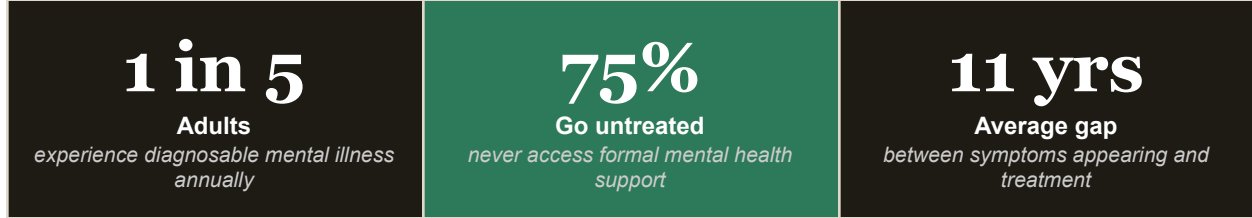
“The single most important psychological intervention is not medication, not therapy, not meditation. It is helping a person correctly interpret what their own body is telling them.”

— adapted from research in affective neuroscience

What happens when the story is wrong

When someone misreads a physiological stress response as evidence of personal weakness or danger, several things happen:

- The nervous system escalates. A misread signal becomes a confirmed threat. The body produces more cortisol. Breathing shallows. Rational thought diminishes.
- Decision-making degrades. Under perceived threat, the brain prioritises speed over accuracy. People make choices in a state of fight-or-flight that they would never make in calm.
- Shame compounds the original feeling. "I shouldn't feel this way" adds a layer of self-judgment that prolongs the distress far beyond the triggering event.
- Patterns calcify. Over time, repeated misreading of emotional signals creates ingrained beliefs about the self: I am anxious. I am not a people person. I cannot cope.



The mental health system is overwhelmed. Waitlists are measured in months. Therapy is expensive. Stigma remains. And the people who most need support are often the least likely to seek it — not because they don't want help, but because the help available doesn't speak their language, live in their community, or meet them at the moment they need it.

Re:frame does not replace professional mental health care. It fills a different and equally important role: the space between the moment of distress and the moment of resolution. The gap where most people are simply alone with a story that is making things worse.

The Science

Reframing is not positive thinking. It is accurate thinking.

The intellectual foundation of Re:frame draws from three converging fields: Rory Sutherland's behavioural economics and reframing methodology, Lisa Feldman Barrett's theory of constructed emotion, and the neuroscience of the autonomic nervous system.

Rory Sutherland and the Logic of Reframing

Rory Sutherland is Vice Chairman of Ogilvy and one of the most influential thinkers in behavioural economics. His central insight is deceptively simple: the problem is never the problem. It is always the frame around the problem.

A train journey that takes 90 minutes feels long. The same journey with reliable WiFi, a comfortable seat, and good coffee feels like productive time. Nothing about the journey changed. Everything about the experience did. The difference is the frame.

Sutherland argues that this principle extends far beyond consumer experience into every domain of human life. The same event — a failed sales call, a caregiver's moment of anger, a night of sleeplessness — can be the evidence of personal failure or the completely expected outcome of a hard situation, depending entirely on the story surrounding it. Both interpretations are available. One is more accurate than the other. And the more accurate one almost always produces better outcomes.

“Logic gets you from A to B. Reframing gets you somewhere worth going.”

— Rory Sutherland, *Alchemy*

The Three Lenses

Re:frame applies Sutherland's method through three distinct lenses, each addressing a different layer of a person's experience. The labels are rewritten for each audience — a rural caregiver hears different language than a startup founder — but the underlying structure is constant.

Lens	What it addresses	The shift it produces
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Psychological	The story the mind constructs around the event	From "this means something is wrong with me" to "this is what minds do under pressure"
Emotional	The feeling itself — what it signals vs. what it means	From "I shouldn't feel this" to "this feeling is information, not verdict"
Biological	The body's physical response — nervous system activation	From "I am falling apart" to "my body is doing exactly what bodies do in this situation"

Lisa Feldman Barrett and Constructed Emotion

Lisa Feldman Barrett, Professor of Psychology at Northeastern University and one of the most cited scientists in the world, has fundamentally changed how neuroscience understands emotion. Her research demonstrates that emotions are not hardwired reactions that happen to us. They are constructed predictions — the brain's best guess at what is happening, based on past experience and current body state.

This has a profound implication: emotions can be recategorised. A racing heart before a difficult conversation is not inherently anxiety. It is physiological arousal. The label "anxiety" is applied by the brain based on context and history. Change the context, change the label, and the experience changes with it.

Barrett's research shows that people with larger emotional vocabularies — what she calls emotional granularity — experience less intense emotional reactions, recover faster from distress, and are less likely to resort to maladaptive behaviours. They can distinguish between "anxious" and "excited," between "angry" and "frustrated," between "sad" and "grieving." This granularity is not a personality trait. It is a learnable skill.

Re:frame is, at its core, a tool for building emotional granularity in real time.

The Autonomic Nervous System and Homeostasis

The autonomic nervous system operates in two primary modes: sympathetic (activation — fight, flight, or freeze) and parasympathetic (restoration — rest and digest). Homeostasis is the body's natural return from activation to rest.

Under normal circumstances, the sympathetic response is temporary. A threat passes. The body downregulates. This process takes minutes to hours depending on the individual and the intensity of activation.

What prolongs the stress response is not the original trigger. It is cognitive rumination — the mind returning repeatedly to the event, re-activating the threat response, and preventing the natural return to baseline. Every return to "why did that happen" or "what does this mean about me" is a fresh activation signal.

Reframing interrupts this cycle. By changing the meaning attached to the experience — accurately, not dismissively — the rumination loop loses its grip. The nervous system is no longer receiving a threat signal. The return to homeostasis accelerates.

KEY INSIGHT

Re:frame does not suppress emotion or pretend difficult things are fine. It provides a more accurate interpretation of what is happening — one that does not trigger the rumination loop. Accurate understanding is not toxic positivity. It is the biological prerequisite for recovery.

The Manipulation Dimension

A person who understands their own emotional responses cannot easily be steered by them.

This section addresses something that most mental health tools do not: the relationship between emotional literacy and resistance to manipulation.

Manipulation — whether in advertising, politics, abusive relationships, or social media — almost always operates through the same mechanism. It creates or amplifies an emotional state, attaches a meaning to that state, and then offers a resolution that serves the manipulator's interest rather than the person's.

Fear is the most commonly weaponised emotion. A person who feels afraid and does not understand why is a person who can be told what to be afraid of. A person who recognises "my nervous system is activated right now, and this message is designed to keep it activated" has an entirely different relationship to that message.

How manipulation uses the emotional system

Modern manipulation is sophisticated. It does not require lies. It requires only the correct framing of true information to produce a desired emotional response. Consider:

- "9 out of 10 people in your neighbourhood have already signed up." — Social threat activation (exclusion fear)
- "You only have 2 hours left to claim this offer." — Scarcity + urgency, sympathetic activation
- "People like you know that..." — Identity priming before a claim is made
- "Scientists are divided on whether this is safe." — Manufactured uncertainty to paralyse rational assessment

None of these statements require false information. All of them work by hijacking the emotional system before the rational mind can evaluate the underlying claim.

"The goal of most persuasion is to get you to feel first and think second. Emotional literacy reverses that order."

What Re:frame builds over time

A person who uses Re:frame regularly is, over time, developing something that cannot be taken away: a working mental model of their own emotional system. They begin to recognise patterns:

- "I always feel this way when I'm hungry and haven't slept — this isn't a crisis, it's a need."
- "This news story is making my chest tight. What exactly is it asking me to believe?"
- "I felt this same way before the last three arguments. What happened in my body right before?"

This is not cynicism. It is discernment. The person is not less emotionally engaged with the world — they are more accurately engaged with it. They can still be moved. They can no longer be driven.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

Many religious traditions have long understood that peace of mind is not the absence of difficulty, but the ability to hold difficulty without being destroyed by it. Re:frame does not replace spiritual practice — it provides a complementary psychological language for experiences that faith communities have always known are real. The felt sense of being overwhelmed, the body's response to fear, the mind's tendency to catastrophise — these are not failures of faith. They are human physiology. Understanding them does not diminish the spiritual; it removes the shame that so often accompanies the struggle.

The Tool

Re:frame is not one app. It is a framework for generating an infinite number of apps, each built for a specific person.

The most important design decision in Re:frame is one that most technology overlooks: the same words do not work for everyone.

A burnt-out caregiver in rural Saskatchewan and a stressed startup founder in Toronto may be experiencing nearly identical physiological states. But the language that reaches each of them is completely different. The caregiver needs warmth, plain language, and no jargon. The founder wants directness, precision, and efficiency. If you give the caregiver the founder's tool, she closes it in twelve seconds. If you give the founder the caregiver's tool, he dismisses it as soft.

Both of them are unreachable. Not because reframing doesn't work for them. Because the delivery doesn't match the receiver.

Re:frame Factory

Re:frame Factory is the tool that builds tools. It is a web application that interviews a builder about a specific audience — their life situation, their language, their fears, their constraints, what they resist, what trust looks like for them — and uses that information to generate a completely custom reframing tool, designed and written specifically for that audience.

The generated tool is not a template with swapped colours. Every dimension is derived from the persona:

- Colour palette — emotionally appropriate for this specific person's world and psychological state
- Typography — a font pair that feels right: clinical or warm, heavy or light, modern or grounded
- Layout density — airy for someone overwhelmed, dense for someone who wants efficiency
- Reading level — grade 6 through grade 12, matched to how this person actually communicates
- Tone register — clinical, warm, blunt, direct, raw — derived from who they are
- Warmth and directness scores — calibrated precisely, not picked from a dropdown
- Banned phrases — words and phrases this person has heard too many times and no longer trusts
- Lens labels — the three reframe lenses rewritten in this person's own language
- Opening line — a single sentence designed to make this exact person feel understood immediately

“The tool doesn't adapt to users. It was made for them before they arrived.”

The Reframe Experience

When an end user opens a Re:frame tool, here is what they encounter:

1	An opening line appears, typed character by character, at a pace calibrated to their emotional state. It names exactly where they are right now — in their language.
2	A single input appears. No forms. No checkboxes. Just: "Tell me what's happening."
3	They write. Anything. As little or as much as they need.
4	Three reframe cards appear. Each one looks at what just happened through a different lens — psychological, emotional, biological — all written in the person's language, at their reading level, in their tone.
5	A tiny step is offered. Not a solution. A single thing that is doable in the next two minutes.
6	A permission slip. One sentence that validates exactly what they're carrying right now.
7	A shareable line — one sentence they might want to keep, screenshot, or send to someone.

What it does not do

These constraints are as important as the features:

- It does not diagnose. It names what is happening, not what is wrong.
- It does not advise. It reframes. The person decides what to do.
- It does not store conversations. Nothing the user writes is retained or shared.
- It does not claim to be therapy. It is a moment of clarity, not a clinical intervention.
- It does not use toxic positivity. "You've got this" is banned. Accuracy is the only standard.
- Crisis detection: if a user's input suggests danger to self or others, all reframe content is suppressed and only a single message is shown: seek support from someone you trust or your local emergency services.

Who Is It For

Anyone who has ever felt something they could not explain, and needed a better story about it than the one their mind was spinning.

Re:frame Factory can generate a tool for any audience. The framework is universal; the delivery is specific. Below are the audiences that have been identified as high-need and high-fit in the initial development phase.

Family Caregivers

Men and women, often mid-life, caring for an aging or ill family member. Frequently isolated, financially stretched, and carrying profound guilt about normal human responses to an abnormal situation. The tool helps them understand that snapping at a parent, crying on the drive home, or feeling resentment is not evidence of being a bad person. It is evidence of being a human being under sustained stress.

Rural and Remote Communities

Geographic isolation amplifies every mental health challenge. Distance from services, lack of anonymity in small communities, and cultural norms around stoicism all conspire to prevent help-seeking. Re:frame meets people where they are — on a phone, in private, without requiring travel, referral, or disclosure.

Faith Communities

Congregations and pastoral care settings already provide significant informal mental health support. Re:frame gives leaders and members a psychologically grounded language for experiences they already know are real — without replacing or contradicting their spiritual framework. Understanding the body's role in fear, grief, and overwhelm does

Outbound Sales Professionals

People whose daily work involves repeated social rejection. The neurological response to a phone hang-up or a hostile prospect is identical to physical pain — same neural pathways, same response. The tool provides a moment of accurate interpretation between calls, reducing cortisol accumulation and improving performance not through motivation but through biological literacy.

Youth and Young Adults

The formative years for emotional architecture. A young person who learns that anxiety before a performance is physiological arousal, not personal weakness, carries that understanding for life. Re:frame in educational settings has the potential to interrupt patterns before they calcify into beliefs.

Healthcare and Frontline Workers

Emergency responders, nurses, social workers, and others in high-stress roles experience vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue as occupational realities. A tool that provides a rapid, accurate interpretation of their own physiological state between calls, shifts, or

not diminish faith. It removes the shame that often accompanies the struggle.

incidents has both immediate wellbeing benefits and long-term retention implications.

The Vision

A world where emotional literacy is as common as the ability to read.

The long-term vision for Re:frame extends well beyond any single tool or audience. It is built on a conviction: that the majority of human suffering that does not have an external cause is sustained primarily by misinterpretation. By incorrect stories about what is happening inside us.

We live in an era of unprecedented access to information and unprecedented rates of anxiety, depression, and disconnection. These trends are not unrelated. The information environment we have built is extraordinarily good at activating the human stress response and extraordinarily bad at helping people understand what that activation means.

Re:frame is a small but scalable counter-movement to that trend. Not by limiting information, but by building the human capacity to interpret experience accurately.

Near-term: The Tool Library

The immediate vision is a library of Re:frame tools, each built for a specific audience and freely accessible. A caregiver's tool. A sales team's tool. A school counsellor's tool. A congregation's tool. Each one looks completely different, sounds completely different, and reaches the person it was made for in a way that a generic tool never could.

Re:frame Factory — the tool that builds tools — enables this library to be built not by a team of developers and designers, but by anyone who knows their audience well enough to describe them. A social worker. A pastor. A team leader. A community health nurse. The expertise required is not technical. It is human.

Medium-term: Emotional Literacy as Infrastructure

The medium-term vision is Re:frame embedded in the infrastructure of care: employee assistance programs, school wellness frameworks, primary care waiting rooms, community mental health organisations, and faith-based support networks.

Not as a replacement for professional care, but as the first layer of a continuum. The moment between distress and escalation. The gap where most people currently have nothing.

Long-term: A Generation that Reads Itself

The deepest version of this vision is generational. A young person who grows up with accurate emotional literacy — who learns in school, at home, or through a tool like Re:frame that their body's responses are information rather than evidence of personal failure — is a fundamentally different kind of adult.

They are more resilient. More empathetic, because they understand their own experience. More resistant to manipulation, because they understand how the emotional system can be targeted. More capable of genuine connection, because they are not spending their relational bandwidth managing the shame of feeling things.

This is not utopian. It is the natural consequence of accurate information, delivered in the right language, at the right moment.

“We are not trying to make people feel better. We are trying to help them understand what they already feel — accurately enough that they can choose what to do next.”

Design Philosophy

The most important feature is that the person feels understood before they are asked to do anything.

Most mental health tools fail at the first sentence. They are designed for a generic user, written in clinical language, and presented in an interface that signals "this is a wellness product" in a way that many people, particularly those who most need support, immediately distrust.

Re:frame is built around a different first principle: reach the person before they close the tab.

Specificity as trust

The opening line of every Re:frame tool is a single sentence, generated specifically for this audience, written in their language, naming exactly where they are right now. Not "welcome to a space for reflection." Not "we're here to help." Something that lands like a text from a friend who gets it.

For a caregiver who just snapped at her mother: "You love her. And you're exhausted. Both of those things are true at the same time."

For a salesperson who just got hung up on: "Your nervous system just took a hit. That's not weakness. That's biology."

Specificity creates trust. Trust creates openness. Openness is the only state in which reframing can actually work.

No toxic positivity. Ever.

The phrase "you've got this" is banned in every Re:frame tool. So is "just breathe," "things happen for a reason," and every other piece of hollow reassurance that people in genuine distress have heard so many times it has become an exit signal.

Re:frame's standard is accuracy, not comfort. The goal is not to make the person feel better right now by telling them a story that isn't true. It is to give them a more accurate story about what is actually happening — one that, because it is true, produces genuine relief rather than temporary soothing followed by the return of the original feeling plus the added weight of having been dismissed.

Tiny steps, not solutions

Every Re:frame response includes one tiny step. Not a plan. Not a solution. One thing that is doable in under two minutes.

This is deliberate. A person in sympathetic nervous system activation cannot execute a plan. The cognitive load is too high. But they can do one small thing. And one small thing, done, produces a measurable shift in perceived agency — which is itself a signal to the nervous system that the threat is manageable.

Permission before action

Before the tiny step, there is a permission slip. One sentence that validates exactly what the person is carrying, without minimising it or trying to fix it. This is not therapy. It is acknowledgement. And acknowledgement, neuroscience confirms, is physiologically meaningful. Being witnessed — even by a tool — reduces sympathetic activation.

THE DESIGN STANDARD

Every word in a Re:frame tool must earn its place by answering one question: does this help this specific person, at this specific moment, return to a clearer and more accurate understanding of their own experience? If the answer is no, it does not appear.

Guardrails and Responsibility

This tool operates at the intersection of technology and human vulnerability. That responsibility is taken seriously.

Re:frame is built with explicit constraints that reflect a clear-eyed understanding of the risks of deploying AI in emotionally sensitive contexts.

What Re:frame will never do

- Diagnose. The tool describes what is happening in plain language. It never suggests a clinical condition.
- Advise. The tool reframes. It does not tell people what to do. The person decides.
- Store conversations. Nothing the user writes is retained, logged, or used for any purpose beyond the immediate response.
- Simulate relationship. The tool does not express ongoing care, does not ask the user to return, and does not position itself as a companion or friend.
- Override crisis. If input contains any language suggesting danger to self or others, all reframe content is suppressed. The only output is a single message directing the person to trusted human support or emergency services.

What Re:frame is clear about

- It is a moment of clarity, not a clinical intervention.
- It is built on peer-reviewed science, not proprietary claims.
- It is one part of a continuum of care, not a substitute for professional support.
- It is designed to reduce barriers to human help-seeking, not replace human helpers.

ON AI AND VULNERABILITY

The use of AI in mental health contexts raises legitimate questions. Re:frame's position is this: the risk of a person in distress having access to accurate, non-judgmental emotional information is far lower than the risk of that same person having nothing. The tool is designed with the explicit understanding that it is a bridge, not a destination — and that the most important thing it can do is help a person return to a state where they can make genuine choices about the human support they seek.

Re:frame and Next to Kin

Re:frame was born inside a company built on a simple belief: that the right information, at the right moment, changes outcomes.

Next to Kin began with a physical product: a small NFC tag worn by a child, a senior, or a vulnerable person that allows anyone nearby to access their emergency contact information with a phone tap. No app required. No lock screen. Instant connection between a person who needs help and the people who love them.

The product exists because of a gap. The gap between the moment something goes wrong and the moment the right people are reached. In that gap, outcomes diverge dramatically. KinTag closes the gap.

Re:frame addresses a different gap: the one between the moment of emotional distress and the moment of clarity. It is the same fundamental mission applied to the internal world rather than the external one: the right information, at the right moment, delivered in the right language, to the person who needs it.

“Next to Kin exists to make sure people can get home safely. Re:frame exists to make sure they can find their way back to themselves.”

Both products serve people in moments of acute need. Both are built for communities that are often underserved by existing systems. And both reflect the belief that technology's most important role is not to replace human connection, but to protect the conditions in which it can happen.

For more information

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This document is intended for investors, healthcare professionals, faith leaders, educators, and community organisations.

Re:frame is a framework, not a medical device. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, or replace professional mental health care.