

endeavor

Founder Support Systems: **A WORKBOOK**

**Who's really challenging
you where it matters?**

**For many founders,
the list is short.**

This workbook is built on a few simple premises: strong support systems take time to build and you often don't have the right people in the room, and if you do, they might not have permission to challenge you.

The three exercises that follow are designed to be practical and direct, helping you assess where your support system stands today.

About this workbook

This workbook was based on work done by **Markus Bihler** as an Endeavor Entrepreneur in Residence (EEIR), a program in which Endeavor Entrepreneurs donate their time and expertise to tackle specific challenges facing the community.

Markus is an investor and independent board director focused on companies at pivotal moments. He serves on the boards of listed and private companies and began his career in private equity at Blackstone and EQT, was twice a CEO, and has been an Endeavor Entrepreneur and part of Endeavor's International Selection Panels since 2018. As EEIR, his mandate is board-effectiveness and governance for founder-led companies, including the human side of building under pressure.

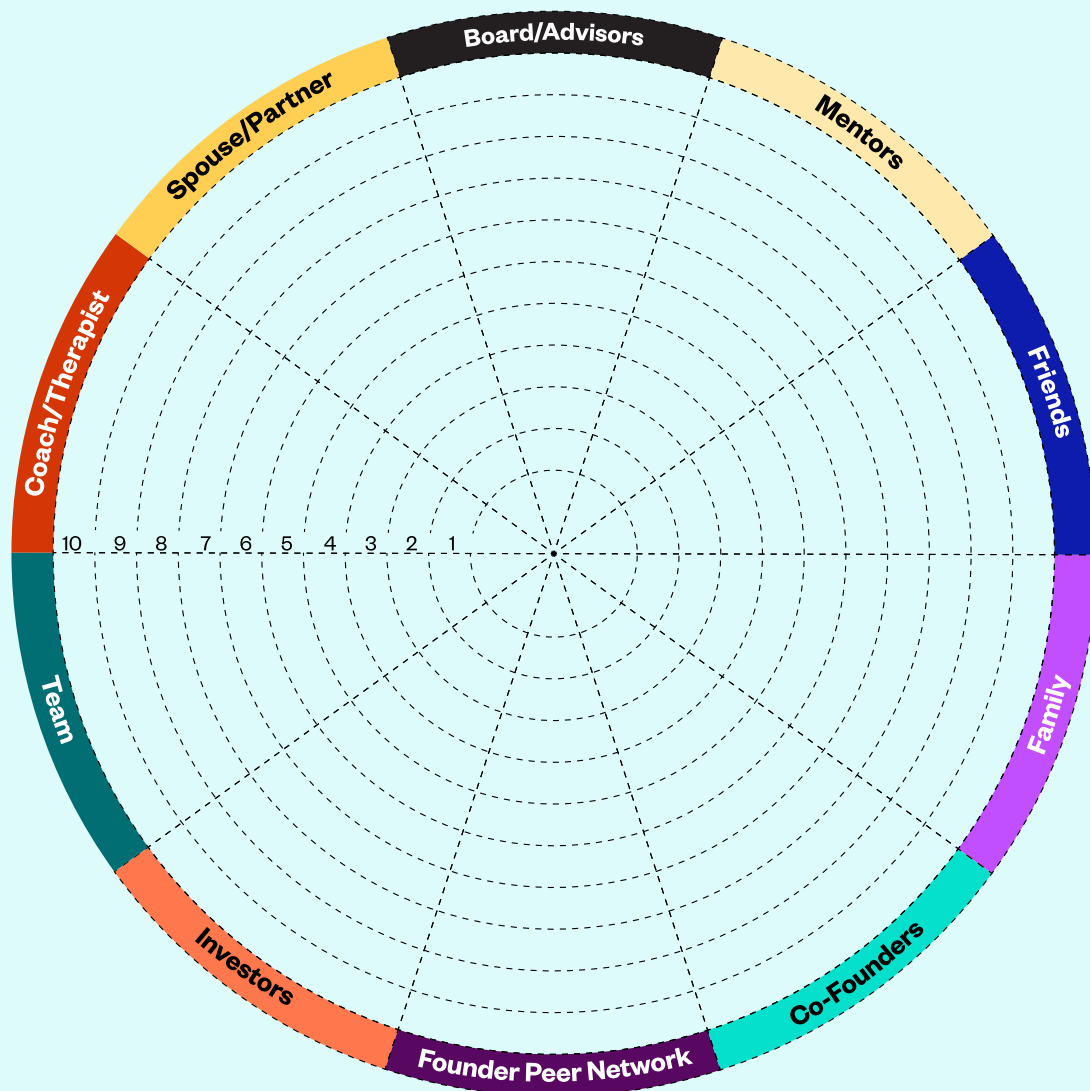
Part of this workbook was first shared with Endeavor Entrepreneurs at the Outliers Retreat in Comporta, Portugal in May 2026, and it was so well received we decided to make it widely available. **Whether you're an ecosystem builder, investor, or founder, we hope you enjoy it, too.**

1. Wheel of Support

The 10 sections in the Wheel of Support represent key support systems in your life.

Seeing the center of the wheel as one and the outer edges as 10, rank the level of support you feel you have in each area by drawing a straight or curved line to create a new outer edge. The new perimeter represents your Wheel of Support.

This diagnosis is the first step to understanding where you may be operating alone, maybe without realizing it.



To reflect:

- Where are my weakest areas of support, and why?

2. The Challenge Assessment

How to think about the key individuals in each of your categories. For this step, think about your relationship from two perspectives on a scale from zero to 10:

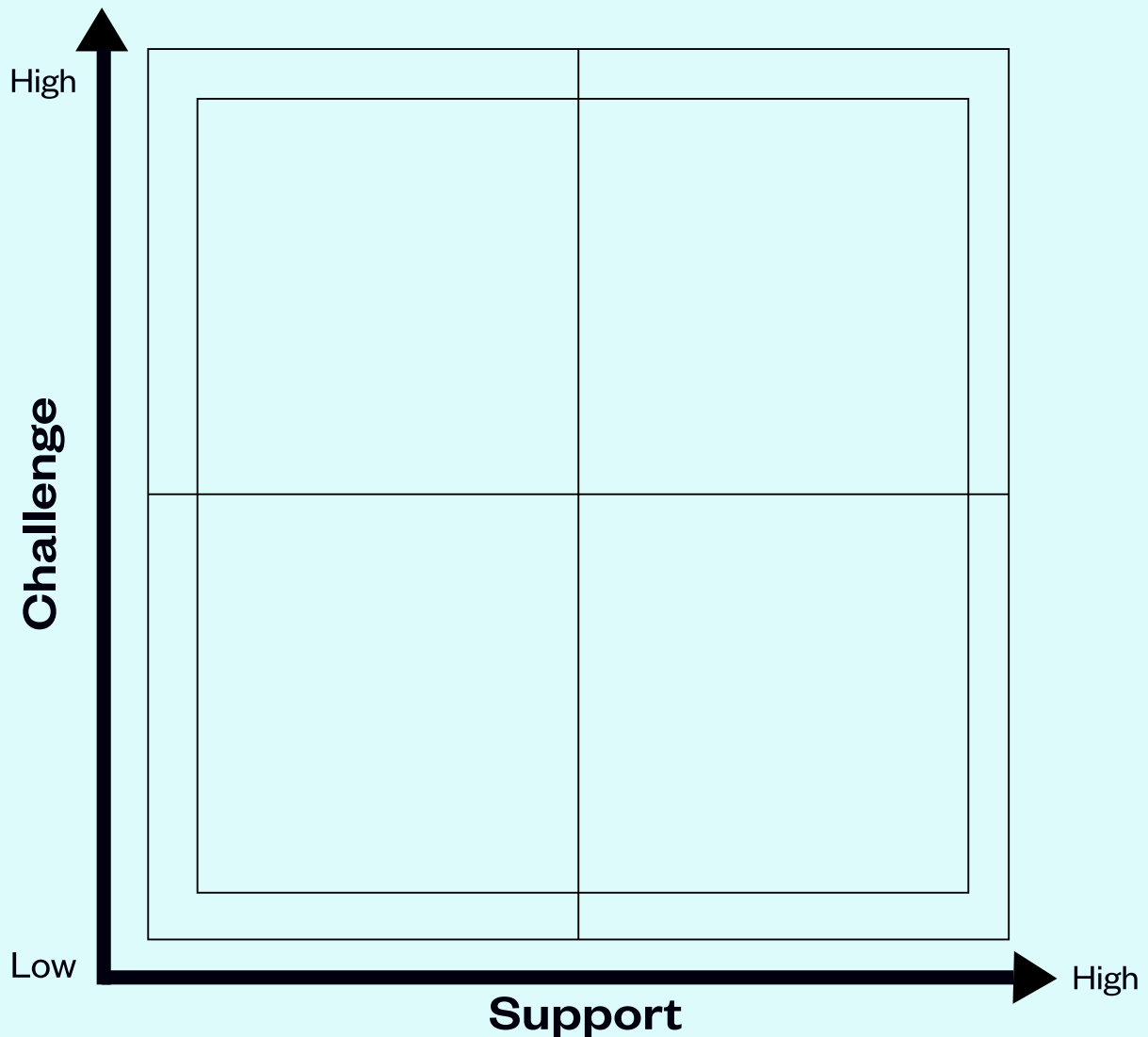
- **How much do they show up to support you?**

Think about emotional openness, acceptance, validation, empathy.

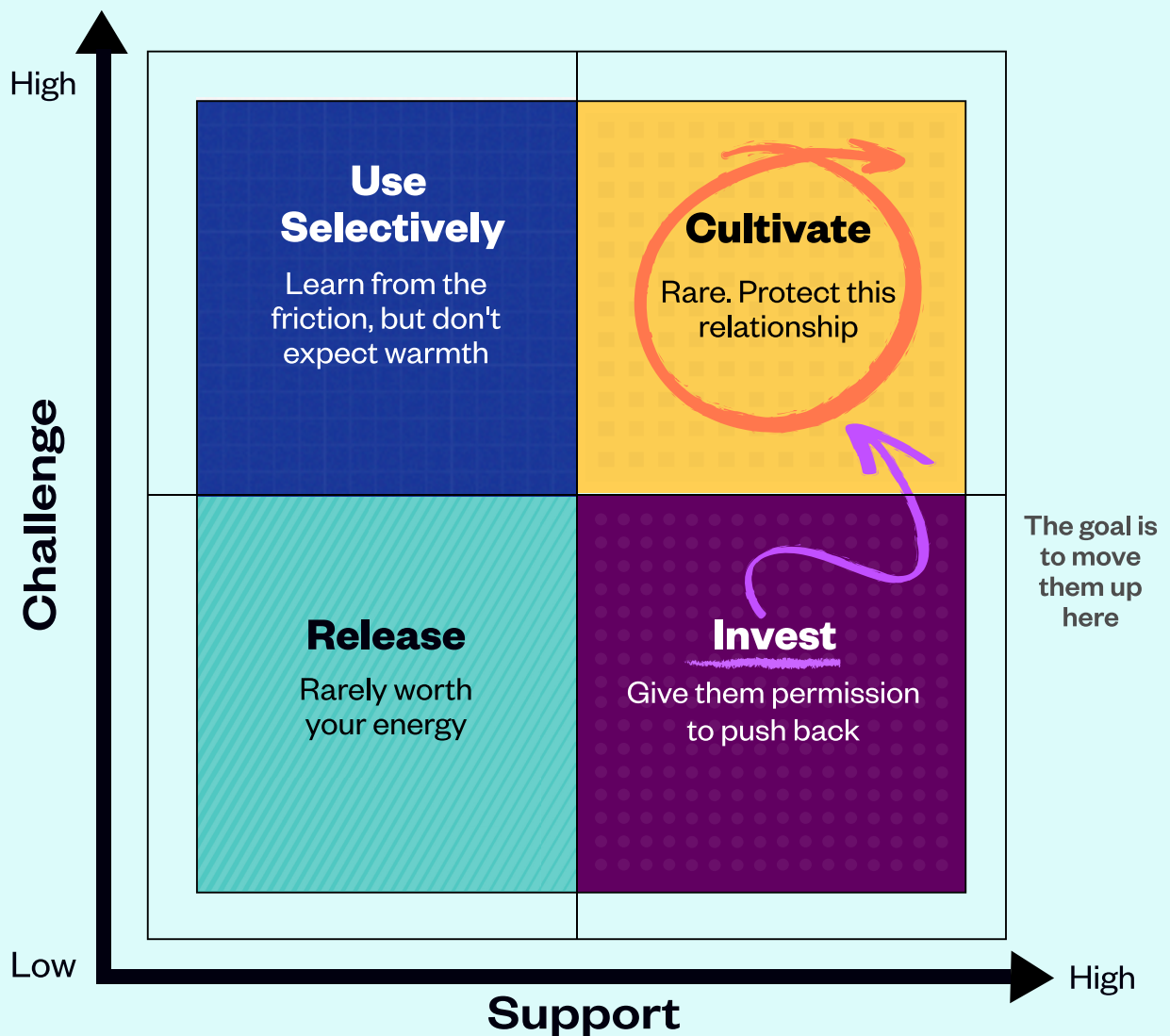
- **How much do they challenge you?**

Think about honesty, stress-testing ideas, questioning behaviors, sharing unsolicited feedback.

Try to qualify each one separately and add their names to the point in the chart where both scores meet.



Where people land will give you insight on the nature of your relationship and how you can evolve it, if you so choose. Generally, the more people you can count on to be supportive and challenging at the same time, the stronger your system will be.



To reflect:

- How many people are in CULTIVATE today? How proactive are you about maintaining these relationships?
- If you give people in the INVEST quadrant permission to push back, could they be moved into the CULTIVATE quadrant?
- How much energy do you dedicate to relationships in USE SELECTIVELY or RELEASE?

3. The Self-Assessment

Having the right people around you doesn't help if they only ever see the curated version of you. For your support system to be able to truly support you, you need to:

- A. Show yourself fully
- B. Give people permission to react honestly

Here is a quick audit to reflect on how open you've been with your support system.

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Name one struggle you're facing right now.

Who have you told about it? And who haven't you told, but probably should?

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When did you last update your board, investors, or mentors on what is really on your mind?

What is the reason not to?

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Pick the last hard piece of feedback you received.

How did you receive it? Who did it come from? Do you feel more people could have given you the same feedback but may not have felt comfortable doing so?

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If you had a crisis tomorrow, who'd be the first call?

Do they have enough context about your business and your life to actually help or would you be starting from zero?

To reflect:

- Looking at your answers, is there one relationship you could deepen by sharing something you haven't yet, or asking for feedback you haven't asked for?
- If your support system only knew what you've told them so far, how accurate would their picture of your reality be?

