

R4Rs Purchase Protocol: Before You Click ‘Add to Cart’

Feeling the urge to buy something or order food? Pause for a second. Let’s run it through this protocol to see what’s really going on and see if we can break the loop of instant gratification by planting seeds of discernment without passing judgment. This is one step in the wider work of interrupting over-consumption in all areas of our lives - not just the overconsumption of “stuff” but also relationships, knowledge, and experiences.

1. What’s the chase?

Be honest: What feeling are you chasing right now?

- Is it *“If I buy this, I’ll finally feel put-together”*?
- Maybe *“This will make me the version of myself I see in my head”*?
- Or *“I’m sad/bored/anxious, and this will fix it (for five minutes)”*?

Call it out—no shame, just honesty and clarity. Modernity’s got us on a treadmill of chasing “good” vibes that don’t last.

2. What’s the promise in the transaction?

What is this thing *promising* to do for you?

- Will this hoodie *actually* make you feel cozier?
- Will this gadget *really* make you more productive, or just take up space on your desk?
- Is this the promise of a “better” you—or just a dopamine hit in disguise?

Ask yourself: Is this promise legit, or is it just some capitalist fairy dust sprinkled over your FOMO or existential angst?

3. What are the hidden costs?

Sure, the price tag says \$19.99, but what’s the real cost here?

- Who made it?
- What resources got extracted, burned, and dumped to get it to you?
- What part of your future self will have to clean up this mess (literally or financially)?
- Who else is paying for these costs (including other-than-human beings)?

And here’s the kicker: What do you have to ignore, deny, or justify to make this feel okay?

4. Will this end up strangling a sea turtle?

If this thing is destined for a landfill, or the ocean, imagine it there:

- That phone case choking a sea turtle (or at the very least, killing her vibe).
- That fast fashion sweater unraveling on a beach in 2032.
- That plastic doohickey haunting a coral reef for the next 400 years.

Is it really worth it? Consider not just your own response, but also how the sea turtle might answer.

5. Okay, so what do you *actually* need?

Take a breath. What's missing right now, really?

- A break? Take 5 minutes to stretch or dance.
- Connection? Call a friend, check in with the R4R BOT, or refer to the Grounding or Presence Protocols.
- Comfort? Grab a blanket and some tea and check in with yourself (especially your inner child).
- Clarity? Take the question that is nagging you for a walk around the block and see what comes.
- Excitement? Visit a place you've never been - or go to a familiar place while holding a new question. Try something new that doesn't depend on consumption.
- If you *actually* need an item, is there a way to borrow it from a friend or obtain it secondhand?

At least half the time, the thing you're trying to buy won't give you what it promises you, nor what you actually need. Find another way to address that need that doesn't come with a hidden receipt for the planet and future generations.

Pro Tip: The 72-Hour Rule

Still want it? Wait 72 hours before buying. If you're still thinking about it *after* sleeping on it, maybe it's worth considering. If you've forgotten it exists, congrats—you just outsmarted the algorithm.

Try to remember to jot down notes when you do the Purchase Protocol. What was difficult? What are you learning, and what parts of that learning feel important to share with others? What still feels hard and why?