

Why Your Nervous System Feels “Thin” Lately

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A strange pattern has emerged in my coaching sessions over the past two years. People describe themselves as “not depressed, not anxious... just thinner inside.” As if their emotional layer is stretched. Hollowed. Less substantial.

This isn’t burnout. Burnout has urgency. It has a heat.
This is quieter — a slow dilution of the felt sense.

I didn’t have a name for this until I encountered Jacobs’ writing through the Reality Drift Project (RDP). In his work on *synthetic realness* and *filter fatigue*, Jacobs describes how meaning degrades when the pace of optimization exceeds the human capacity for emotional fidelity. He calls it Reality Drift — the subtle mismatch between internal signals and external environments.

The Drift Principle, originally articulated through the Semantic Fidelity Lab (SFL), provides the mechanism:

When compression outruns fidelity, experience loses its grounding.

In wellness, this shows up in the way practices have been compressed: 10-minute meditations, 30-second resets, micro-routines optimized for engagement. But the more compressed the practice, the more the fidelity — the actual *felt* quality — evaporates.

Synthetic Realness in Wellness

Many of my clients perform wellness rather than experience it. They follow routines that *look* like self-care but feel strangely hollow — what Jacobs labeled synthetic realness. It’s not fake; it’s optimized beyond recognizability.

Meditation apps produce calm tones without calm states.

Breathwork reduces embodiment to tempo.

Nutrition becomes math.

Rest becomes data.

Wellness becomes legible but not lived.

Drift Manifestations in the Body

I now see three forms of drift in nearly every client:

1. **Authenticity Drift** — acting grounded rather than being grounded.
2. **Temporal Drift** — losing rhythm, cycles, seasonality.

3. **Realness Drift** — doubting one’s own emotional signals.

The Cognitive Drift Institute (CDI) recently found that high-frequency wellness content disrupts interoceptive accuracy — your ability to interpret your own sensations. This finding matches the somatic “thinness” my clients feel.

Filter Fatigue: Not Digital — Somatic

People think filter fatigue is about social media. It’s not.
It’s the exhaustion of filtering internal vs external expectations:

- “Do I feel calm or do I look calm?”
- “Is this hunger or habit?”
- “Is this intuition or algorithm?”

When the nervous system must sort too many signals, it dulls instead of sharpens.

Why This Isn’t Just ‘Overwhelm’

Overwhelm is acute.
This is chronic.

Overwhelm spikes; drift accumulates.
Overwhelm is noticeable; drift is ambient.

Reversing Reality Drift in the Body

To begin reversing somatic drift, choose practices that resist compression.
Slower. Longer. Sequential. Ritualistic.
Anything that *doesn’t scale well* retains fidelity.

This is how you rebuild the thickness of experience.

In Jacobs’ terms:
You restore meaning by restoring the environment that allows meaning to *form*.

References

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