

Conversation 1: Understanding Your Story

The Foundational Idea That Patterns Make Sense

Most people live their life with the same unanswered questions they've been asking for years:

- ♥ why am I like this?
- ♥ why do I care so much what people think?
- ♥ why do I overthink everything?
- ♥ why do I struggle to trust people?
- ♥ why do I find it so difficult to say no?
- ♥ why do I keep ending up in the same situations, having the same arguments, feeling the same emotions, despite promising myself things will be different this time?

The wording changes, but the question underneath remains the same: **what's wrong with me?**

For many people, those questions have become so familiar that they no longer notice them at all; in other words, they're unaware of the hidden doubts that influence the way they see themselves and their lives.

These doubts and questions appear in moments of self-criticism, in failed resolutions, in relationship difficulties, and in every attempt we make to become someone better. The assumption is that if we **struggle repeatedly** there must be **something fundamentally flawed within us** - something broken, something defective.

This conversation we're having right now begins with a different question: **what if there's nothing wrong with you?** Not because your struggles are imaginary, or your pain isn't real, but because there's a huge difference between being broken and **being shaped in a way that makes you feel like you don't fit.**

Most people spend years trying to fix themselves before they've taken the time to understand themselves. They fight against their patterns, they judge their reactions, they criticise their coping mechanisms, and they become frustrated by behaviours they can't seem to control. What they rarely stop to consider is that every pattern and every coping mechanism has a history.

Nothing develops in isolation.

Human beings don't wake up one morning with low self-worth, people-pleasing tendencies, anxiety, perfectionism, a fear of rejection, emotional avoidance, or a deep need for approval. These things emerge gradually; they're learned, they're practised, they're reinforced, they develop in response to experiences. Eventually they become so familiar that they stop feeling like patterns and **start feeling like personality.**

The problem is, when something's defined as 'personality', we assume it's who we are, something we're stuck with and can't change, but often it's simply what we've learned from other people in our environment.

One of the most powerful moments in any healing journey occurs when a person realises that their patterns and coping mechanisms make sense - not perfect sense, or healthy sense,

not even useful sense, just sense. The moment a pattern makes sense, shame begins to lose its grip. We start to see there's nothing wrong with us, but plenty that wasn't right with what we learned about ourselves growing up.

Consider a child living in an unpredictable environment. Perhaps criticism arrived without warning, affection was inconsistent, emotions were dismissed, ignored, or punished. Perhaps love felt conditional or conflict felt dangerous. Children don't have the luxury of leaving difficult environments; they can't change the adults around them or redesign their circumstances.

But what they can do is adapt.

They become watchful, careful, responsible, agreeable, helpful, quiet - in other words, they become whatever they believe they need to become to remain emotionally safe. The remarkable thing about children is not how resilient they are, but **how creatively they learn to survive.**

- ♥ A child who learns to anticipate everyone's needs before their own is often praised for being thoughtful.
- ♥ A child who never causes problems is often praised for being easy.
- ♥ A child who excels and achieves may be praised for being driven.

Yet beneath many of these behaviours the child is subconsciously asking much deeper questions:

- ♥ what do I need to do to be accepted here?
- ♥ what do I need to do to belong?

♥ what do I need to do to feel safe?

Children don't have the words to ask those questions directly, so they spend years answering them with their behaviour instead. Eventually those behaviours become habits, those habits become patterns, and those patterns become identities.

The child eventually grows into an adult who doesn't recognise that their identity is made up of the multiple behavioural adaptations they made as children. They say:

"I've always been anxious."

"I've always put others first."

"I've always worried."

"I've always struggled with confidence."

"I've always been this way."

But have you? Or have you spent years repeating a strategy that once served a purpose?

This is one of the most important distinctions we'll explore throughout The Healing Library Summer School:

- ♥ A pattern is not your personality.
- ♥ A coping mechanism is not your character.
- ♥ An adaptation is not your identity.

Many people spend decades believing they're observing and critiquing themselves when in fact they're observing and critiquing their learned survival strategies.

This is why understanding your story matters. **Without understanding**, we tend to judge ourselves harshly. **With**

understanding, we become curious - and curiosity changes everything.

Judgment asks, what's wrong with me?

Curiosity asks, why does this make sense?

Judgment creates shame.

Curiosity creates insight.

Judgment keeps us trapped.

Curiosity opens the door to change.

The goal of this conversation is not to convince you that your past explains everything, nor is it to suggest that you're powerless because of what happened to you. The goal is much simpler. I want you to begin viewing yourself through a different lens:

- ♥ A lens of understanding rather than criticism.
- ♥ A lens of compassion rather than blame.
- ♥ A lens that recognises that the person you became did not happen by accident.

You were shaped by experiences, relationships, environments, expectations, what and who **was present**, what and who **was absent**. Every life leaves an imprint; every experience leaves clues. Those clues help explain the person you are today.

As we move through The Healing Library Summer School, we'll spend time exploring those clues - not because we want to live in the past, but because **the past helps us understand the**

present and understanding the present is how we begin **creating a different future.**

For now, I want to leave you with a single thought: what if the things you dislike most about yourself are **not evidence that you are broken**, but **evidence that you were intelligent enough and creative enough to adapt.**

Your **patterns** tell a story, your **reactions** tell a story, your **fears** tell a story. Your life makes far more sense than you realise. Understanding *that* story is where your healing can truly begin.