

The Practice

Replace Criticism with Curiosity

Over the next week, your practice is simple. Every time you notice a pattern you'd normally criticise yourself for, pause and become curious instead. You don't need to *change, fix, or stop* the pattern – your only task is to notice it and ask yourself a different question:

Instead of: Why am I like this?

Ask: What might this be trying to do for me?

Instead of: What's wrong with me?

Ask: What makes this reaction understandable?

Instead of: I need to stop doing this.

Ask: When did I first learn this pattern?

You may find yourself doing this several times a day. Perhaps you replay a conversation in your mind, worry about disappointing someone, hesitate before expressing an opinion, apologise unnecessarily, or feel responsible for someone else's emotions. Whatever the pattern is, resist the urge to judge it. Simply notice it, name it, become curious about it. Imagine you're researching your own life with compassion and interest rather than criticism and blame.

At the end of each day, spend a few minutes reflecting on what you noticed:

- ♥ Which patterns appeared most often?
- ♥ What seemed to trigger them?

- ♥ Did any of them make more sense when viewed through the lens of protection rather than dysfunction?

The purpose of this practice is to start becoming aware of your patterns because *awareness* is where every lasting, sustainable change begins. Remember: we can only change a pattern when we're aware of it.

This week, your job is not to change yourself. Your job is to understand yourself a little better than you did before. That alone is powerful work.

Notes from my daily observations:

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