

The Exercise

Pattern Detective

The purpose of this exercise is to help you begin connecting your present-day patterns to the experiences that may have shaped them. This isn't about proving anything; it's about becoming curious...Choose one pattern from your life that you'd like to understand better. It might be:

- ♥ Overthinking
- ♥ People-pleasing
- ♥ Difficulty saying no
- ♥ Fear of rejection
- ♥ Perfectionism
- ♥ Avoiding conflict
- ♥ Struggling to trust people
- ♥ Putting everyone else's needs before your own
- ♥ Constant self-criticism

Write down the pattern you'd like to focus on. Describe it as specifically as possible. For example: I apologise even when I've done nothing wrong. I worry about upsetting people. I replay conversations in my head for days. I work harder than I need to because I'm afraid of making mistakes or being replaced.

Write about how this pattern helps you. Even if the pattern causes problems, assume for a moment that it's trying to help you in some way. Ask yourself:

- ♥ What does this pattern protect me from?
- ♥ What risk does it help me avoid?
- ♥ What need does it help me meet?

You might realise that people-pleasing helps you avoid rejection, perfectionism helps you avoid criticism, overthinking helps you feel prepared, avoiding conflict helps you feel safe.

Where do you think you learned this pattern? You don't need to know the answer with certainty, simply explore possibilities.

Think about when you first remember feeling this way. How old were you?

Who or what may have taught you this pattern?

What has this pattern taught you about yourself and other people?

When you've finished, step back and look at your answers. The goal is not to analyse every detail, but to recognise something important: **this pattern did not appear out of nowhere; it developed for a reason.**

You may want to change it, you may decide it no longer serves you in *any way whatsoever*, but before you change your pattern or ask it to leave, it helps to understand why it arrived in the first place. That understanding is the beginning of self-compassion and self-compassion allows space for change to begin.

Repeat this exercise as many times as you need with different patterns.