

The Journal

Take your time with the journal; you're not trying to analyse yourself perfectly, you're trying to understand yourself more deeply. Approach the questions with honesty, curiosity, and compassion.

Which coping mechanisms shows up most often in my life today? People-pleasing, perfectionism, overthinking, anxiety, avoidance, emotional withdrawal, self-reliance, controlling behaviour, or something else?

When I think about my coping mechanisms, what need or problem might they've been trying to solve for me?

What were they protecting me from?

What did I learn about safety when I was growing up?

What made me feel safe?

What made me feel unsafe?

What did I learn about expressing my needs, feelings, opinions, or boundaries?

Were they welcomed, ignored, criticised, punished, or respected?

What did I learn I needed to do to feel loved, accepted, valued, or included?

Who taught me that lesson?

Which coping mechanisms have helped me survive difficult periods of my life?

How did they help me at the time?

What has carrying these coping mechanisms into adulthood cost me?

How have they affected my relationships?

My confidence?

My wellbeing?

My happiness?

My sense of self?

My peace of mind?

My connection to myself?

Is there a coping mechanism I've spent years judging or criticising?

What happens when I view it as a protective response rather than a personal flaw?

If this coping mechanism could speak, what would it say it's been trying to do for me all these years?

What would it want me to understand?

As I move forward, what coping mechanism am I now ready to replace with trust, confidence, self-respect, and healthier choices?

What would that look like in my everyday life?

As you finish writing, notice whether your perspective has shifted. You don't have to keep every coping mechanism you discover but understanding why and how it survived is the first step towards changing your relationship with it - which is the first step towards changing your life.