

The Closing Thought

When we look back on our lives, it's easy to feel upset when we focus on what our coping mechanisms have cost us.

- ♥ The good relationships they've ended.
- ♥ The bad ones they began...
- ♥ The opportunities they limited.
- ♥ The anxiety they created.
- ♥ The exhaustion they produced.
- ♥ The ways they kept us stuck.

And those costs are real. But before you look too deeply at what these patterns cost you, take a moment to acknowledge what they gave you.

- ♥ They helped you survive.
- ♥ They helped you adapt.
- ♥ They helped you navigate experiences you may not have been equipped to understand at the time.
- ♥ They helped you find safety, connection, acceptance, certainty, control, and protection in the best way you knew how.

The truth is that many of the things you've spent years criticising about yourself were never trying to harm you. They were trying to help you. They simply learned their job a long time ago and have never updated their skills.

Healing is not about attacking those patterns and coping mechanisms, declaring them wrong or becoming someone entirely different. Healing is about recognising that the

strategies which once protected you may no longer be the strategies that best serve you.

Thank them for what they did, learn from what they taught you, and begin gently to choose something new.

- ♥ The people-pleaser was trying to protect inclusion.
- ♥ The perfectionist was trying to protect self-worth.
- ♥ The overthinker was trying to protect certainty.
- ♥ The self-reliant one was trying to protect against disappointment.
- ♥ The anxious one was trying to protect against danger.

Every pattern was trying to protect something precious, but the question is no longer: **why am I like this?** The question has become: **do I still need this level of protection?**

There comes a point in every healing journey when survival mode is no longer the goal. Living is. Perhaps one of the kindest things you can say to your coping mechanisms is: **thank you for helping me survive. I think I'm ready now to do something different.**