

## **Conversation 4: The Self-Abandonment Pattern**

### **I've Spent So Long Adapting to Others**

### **I've Lost Connection to Myself**

There's a pattern that sits quietly beneath many of the challenges we encounter on our healing journey. It hides beneath people-pleasing, beneath perfectionism, the need for approval, beneath difficulty setting boundaries, beneath overthinking, over-giving, over-functioning, and constantly putting other people's needs before our own. Many people spend years trying to solve these problems individually without realising they're all connected by a single thread.

### **That thread is self-abandonment.**

People who struggle with self-abandonment are often caring, thoughtful, generous, and responsible. They're the people others rely on, the people who listen, the people who help, who show up, who keep going - which is exactly why self-abandonment can be so difficult to recognise.

From the outside, it looks like kindness, responsibility, loyalty, commitment, and love. But from the inside, something else is happening. Little by little, your relationship with yourself is beginning to weaken. The needs, feelings, and comfort of others have taken priority over your own and the opinions of others have become louder than your own voice.

Nobody chooses to abandon themselves but over time, they stop asking: what do I want, what do I need, what do I feel, what do I think, what matters to me? Not because those questions are

unimportant, but because somewhere along the way, other questions became more urgent:

- ♥ What will make *them* happy?
- ♥ What will keep the peace?
- ♥ What will avoid conflict?
- ♥ What will stop them leaving?
- ♥ What will make me acceptable?
- ♥ What will make me enough?

Self-abandonment begins with adaptation. As children, we depend on relationships for survival: connection is not simply desirable, it's essential to our wellbeing and growth.

But children quickly learn what helps them **maintain connection** and **what threatens it**. Some learn that expressing anger leads to rejection, that having needs creates problems, that disagreement creates tension, and that being themselves is less acceptable than becoming what other people want them to be.

Without consciously deciding to, they begin editing themselves. They hide their feelings, minimise their needs, and silence their opinions. They become more agreeable, helpful, accommodating, careful, and acceptable.

The adaptation works - at least initially. Connection is preserved, conflict is reduced, approval is gained and belonging feels more secure.

**But there's a hidden cost.**

Every time we abandon a feeling, a need, a preference, a boundary, or a truth to maintain a connection, we send ourselves a message: **my needs, feelings, truth, and comfort are less important. Other people matter more.**

Most people would never consciously choose this belief, yet many spend years living it. The result is often a strange and painful disconnection:

- ♥ You become highly skilled at understanding *other people*, but struggle to understand *yourself*.
- ♥ You know what **everyone else** needs but feel unsure about your **own** needs.
- ♥ You know what **everyone else** is feeling but feel disconnected from your **own** emotions.
- ♥ You know what **everyone else** wants but struggle to answer the simple question: **what do I want?**

This is one of the clearest signs of self-abandonment - not that you *care* about others, but that **caring about others** has come at the expense of **caring about yourself**.

Over time, self-abandonment can become so familiar that it stops feeling like a pattern. It simply feels like life.

- ♥ You say yes when you want to say no.
- ♥ You stay silent when you want to speak up.
- ♥ You tolerate behaviour that hurts you.
- ♥ You overextend yourself.
- ♥ You exhaust yourself.
- ♥ You ignore your intuition.

- ♥ You dismiss your feelings.
- ♥ You minimise your needs.

And because these behaviours have been repeated so often, they start to feel normal - but normal doesn't mean healthy, and familiar doesn't mean sustainable.

Eventually, most people reach a point where the cost becomes impossible to ignore. They feel exhausted, resentful, lost, and disconnected. They find themselves asking questions they've never asked before:

- ♥ Why don't I know what I want?
- ♥ Why do I feel invisible in my own life?
- ♥ Why do I always put everyone else first?
- ♥ Why do I feel so disconnected from myself?

The answer is often painful because self-abandonment doesn't only affect your relationships with other people: it affects the relationship you have with yourself.

- ♥ Every time you ignore your own needs, ***your trust in yourself weakens.***
- ♥ Every time you dismiss your own feelings, ***your connection with yourself weakens.***
- ♥ Every time you betray your own truth, ***your confidence in yourself weakens.***

Eventually, you stop feeling like the centre of your own life and become a supporting character in everyone else's story. The good news is that **recognising self-abandonment is not a sign of failure.** It's a sign of awareness.

Many people spend years treating the symptoms without ever identifying the pattern underneath. This conversation is inviting you to see that pattern - not to blame and shame yourself but to understand yourself.

Because **self-abandonment was never the problem**, it was the solution, the solution a younger version of you created to maintain connection, safety, acceptance, and belonging.

The heartbreak is not that you adapted, but that you spent so long adapting to everyone else you lost sight of yourself in the process. That's why this conversation matters because **you can't reconnect with yourself until you recognise where the disconnection began**.

For years you've believed that you needed more confidence, more boundaries, more self-esteem, more courage, and whilst those things matter, something simpler comes before all of them: **a willingness to turn your attention back towards yourself**. To listen, to notice, to remember, to reconnect.

The journey from self-abandonment to self-trust begins with a single realisation: **I didn't lose myself because I chose to, I lost myself to stay safe**.