

The Closing Thought

Every coping mechanism begins as a solution. A solution to pain, to fear, to uncertainty, to a problem we didn't have the words to explain at the time.

For a while, that solution works. It helps us cope. It helps us adapt. It helps us survive. But there comes a moment in every healing journey when we realise that the things that once protected us are no longer shielding us in the way we hoped.

- ♥ The people-pleaser discovers that approval is not the same as connection.
- ♥ The perfectionist discovers that achievement is not the same as self-worth.
- ♥ The overthinker discovers that certainty is not the same as peace.
- ♥ The emotionally guarded person discovers that safety is not the same as intimacy.
- ♥ The self-reliant person discovers that independence is not the same as freedom.

What protected us *then* may be hurting us *now*.

Not because it was wrong or that it failed but because we've outgrown it. The truth is that many of our coping mechanisms are like old maps. At one point, they helped us navigate difficult terrain. They guided us through experiences we didn't know how to handle. They got us where we needed to go.

But a map is only useful if it reflects the landscape we're currently living in; many of us are still navigating our adult lives using

maps drawn by childhood experiences - maps created by fear, by uncertainty, by old beliefs about who we needed to be in order to be safe, loved, accepted, and enough.

Healing begins when we recognise that the landscape has changed - that we have changed, that perhaps it's time for a new map, one that's not built around coping, but around truth.

Freedom from our patterns and our coping skills begins with a simple, honest, declaration: thank you for protecting me but I can see what this has cost me. I'm ready to find another way.