

The Pattern Map

Not "what's wrong with me?" — "why might this have made sense once?"

The Trigger Mirror is for one moment. This room is for the moments that rhyme — the thing you keep doing, long after you started noticing. The map has one rule that changes everything: patterns aren't flaws to be ashamed of. They're old strategies that once worked. You don't shame a strategy out of existence; you retire it. About fifteen minutes.

I keep finding myself... choosing unavailable people · staying too long · leaving too early · rescuing everyone · refusing help · needing control · avoiding conflict · exploding after staying quiet · assuming rejection · overexplaining · apologizing constantly · procrastinating · sabotaging success · needing approval · believing love must be earned · believing rest must be earned.

ONE

Name the pattern

In your own words, or borrow from the list above. If several are waving at you, pick the one that costs the most right now.

TWO

Where did I learn this?

Patterns are taught — by a house, a person, a chapter of your life where this was the smart move. When did doing this first make sense? Who did you learn it beside?

THREE

What did this pattern once do for me?

This is the map's center. Overexplaining once kept the peace. Refusing help once meant not being let down. Every pattern in the list above was, at some point, protection. What was yours protecting?

FOUR

Does it still serve me?

Answer honestly in both directions. Some old strategies still earn their keep — deciding to keep one *on purpose* is a real answer. And some are charging rent on a house you left years ago.

FIVE · IF IT DOESN'T

The smallest experiment

Not "never do it again" — that's how patterns win. One situation, this week, where you could try the other thing once and see what actually happens. Small enough to survive failing.

If the pattern traces back to something that still has a charge, the Shadow Work room is built for going that deep — on a day when you have it in you.

IF IT STIRRED SOMETHING UP

Coming back down

Breathe in through your nose for four, out through your mouth for eight — longer out than in — for a few minutes. Then name five things you can see, four you can hear, three you can touch. Stirred-up feelings after writing like this are common and tend to pass; if they don't, that's information that this deserves more support than a page can give.

If you're in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, please don't work through it alone here. In the US, call or text 988 (the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), or chat at 988lifeline.org — available 24/7. Outside the US, findahelpline.com lists helplines around the world.

A BLESSING ON THIS WORK

This work is a gift. Share it freely with anyone who needs it — print it, copy it, pass it on whole. It is not for sale, by us or by anyone, and it shouldn't be changed. Above all, keep the crisis lines and the words about seeking professional help exactly as they are — for someone, those may be the lines that matter most. It exists to help people heal, and to raise the vibration of the world. That will never cost anything here.

— *Aether & Root* · aetherandroot.com/inner-work