

The Wound That *Keeps Returning*

Understanding Your Emotional Loop

This worksheet guides you through the cycle of old pain, present-day triggers, and the patterns that keep you stuck — so you can begin to understand yourself with more clarity and compassion.

Work through this at your own pace. There is no right or wrong answer — only what is true for you.

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SECTION ONE

The Original Hurt

Our present-day reactions are often rooted in earlier emotional experiences — childhood, family dynamics, rejection, abandonment, criticism, loss, or repeated experiences of feeling unsafe, unseen, or unworthy. The goal isn't to assign blame. It's to understand what your nervous system learned.

CORE IDEA

The wound is not just what happened. It is what you had to believe about yourself in order to survive it.

Common beliefs formed from early wounds:

"I'm too much."

"I'm not enough."

"People leave."

"My needs are a problem."

"I have to earn love."

"I can't trust anyone."

"If I'm vulnerable, I'll be hurt."

"I have to stay in control to be safe."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1 What kind of hurt does this current pattern remind me of?

2 When have I felt this way before? What did I need that I did not receive?

3 What did I start believing about myself as a result?

4 What did I learn to do to protect myself?

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SECTION TWO

The Present-Day Trigger

A trigger may look small from the outside, but internally it can feel enormous — because your body is responding to both the present moment and the past. The trigger is the doorway. The deeper wound is what gets activated underneath.

Common triggers:

▪ A partner doesn't text back

▪ Someone criticizes your work

▪ A friend seems distant

▪ You feel excluded from a group

▪ A spouse goes quiet

▪ You're not acknowledged or thanked

▪ Someone sets a boundary

▪ Plans are cancelled

The surface story vs. the deeper meaning:

THE SURFACE

THE WOUND SAYS

"They didn't text back."

"I don't matter."

THE SURFACE

"They disagreed with me."

THE WOUND SAYS

"I'm being rejected."

THE SURFACE

"They need space."

THE WOUND SAYS

"I'm being abandoned."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1 What happened right before I reacted? What was the moment that set things off?

2 What story did I immediately tell myself? What emotion came up first?

3 Did my reaction feel bigger than the situation? What old fear may have been touched?

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SECTION THREE

The Protective Reaction

When the wound is activated, you react in predictable ways — not randomly, but as an old survival strategy. These patterns are not character flaws. They are the ways you learned to protect yourself.

REACTING

Anger, blame, defensiveness, urgency, arguing, or trying to force resolution.

"I need to protect myself before I get hurt again."

WITHDRAWING

Pulling away, going quiet, becoming distant, or acting like you don't care.

"If I disconnect first, I won't feel the pain of rejection."

CHASING

Over-explaining, seeking reassurance, apologizing too much, or people-pleasing.

"If I can get them close again, I will feel safe."

SHUTTING DOWN

Numbness, freezing, dissociation, blankness, or feeling unable to speak.

"This is too much. I need to disappear inside myself to survive it."

CORE IDEA

Your reaction was once protection. Healing begins when you can honor the protection without letting it run your life.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Do I usually react, withdraw, chase, or shut down? Circle yours above, then describe what it looks like for you:

- 2 What is this reaction trying to prevent? What does it fear would happen without it?

- 3 How old does this reaction feel? How long have you been doing this?

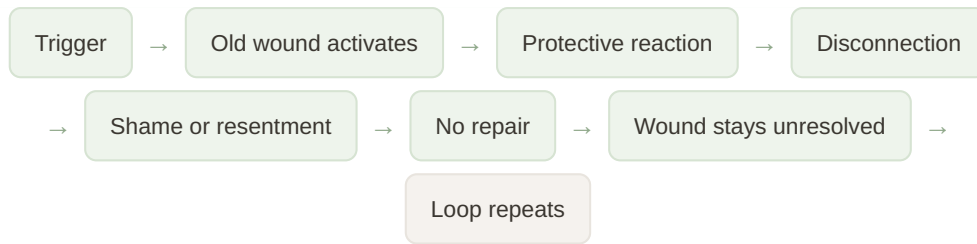
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SECTION FOUR

How the Loop Keeps Repeating

The painful cycle continues because the protective reaction often creates the very outcome the wound is most afraid of.

THE WOUND LOOP



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1 What pattern keeps repeating in your relationships or inner life?

2 What does the other person usually do after you react? What feeling are you left with?

3 What never gets said, felt, or repaired?

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SECTION FIVE

The Deeper Wound Beneath the Pattern

The real issue is rarely the argument, the text, the tone, or the disagreement. It is the emotional meaning attached to it — what the event confirms or threatens in you.

Common deeper wounds:

Abandonment

Rejection

Shame

Betrayal

Invisibility

Not feeling chosen

Not feeling protected

Feeling like a burden

Feeling powerless

Feeling unsafe with closeness

Feeling fundamentally defective

THE DEEPER QUESTION

Instead of asking only "Why did I react that way?" — ask: "What hurt place inside me was trying to get my attention?"

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What did this situation make you feel about yourself? (unwanted, unimportant, ashamed, abandoned, trapped, unsafe?)

- 2 What younger part of you knows this feeling? How old might that part be?

- 3 What did that part need then? What does it need from you now?

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SECTION SIX

The Pause Point

The pause point is the moment between activation and reaction. It does not mean suppressing your feelings. It means slowing down enough to recognize: *"Something old is here."*

When you feel activated, move through these questions:



What just got touched in me?



What am I afraid is happening right now?



How old does this feeling seem?



What do I want to do to protect myself right now? Would that help me repair — or repeat the loop?

CORE IDEA

Healing begins when you can notice the wound before the protector takes over. The goal is not to become perfectly calm — it's to create enough space to choose a different response.

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SECTION SEVEN

The Repair Point

Repair may happen internally, relationally, or both. The wound begins to heal when it is met differently than it was met before.

INTERNAL REPAIR

"Of course this hurts. This makes sense. I am here with you now."

RELATIONAL REPAIR

"When that happened, I felt scared and pulled away. I want to say what was underneath instead."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What would repair look like here? Do you need to speak, grieve, set a boundary, or offer yourself compassion?

- 2 What does the hurt part of you need to hear? What would your grounded adult self say to it?

- 3 Is this relationship capable of repair? What can you repair inside yourself, even if the other person cannot participate?

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SECTION EIGHT

The New Pattern

Healing doesn't mean you never get triggered. It means you learn how to return to yourself when you are.

OLD PATTERN

I feel hurt

I react, withdraw, chase, or shut down

I feel worse

Nothing changes

The loop continues

NEW PATTERN

I feel hurt

I pause and name the wound

I care for the younger part of me

I choose a grounded response

I move toward repair or protection

New responses might sound like:

"I need a minute. I'm activated, but I want to come back to this."

"I notice I'm making this mean I don't matter. I want to check that out."

"Part of me wants to shut down, but I'm going to stay present."

"I want reassurance, but I don't want to chase. I'm going to ask clearly."

"This touched something old. I need to care for that before I respond."

"I can be hurt and still stay connected to myself."

CLOSING REFLECTION

1 What is one small shift you could make the next time you feel this wound activated?

2 What does the part of you that keeps getting hurt most need to know?

The Wound That Keeps Returning

This worksheet is for personal reflection and may be used alongside therapy or coaching.
It is not a substitute for professional mental health support.