

When Connection Suddenly Feels Unsafe

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA, ATTACHMENT & PROTECTIVE RESPONSES ♥

There is no right or wrong answer.

Some experiences leave deep marks that continue to shape how we think, feel, respond, and relate.

These questions can help you notice which memories still have a strong hold on you—so healing can meet you where you are.

Take your time.
Be kind to yourself.
You are not alone.



SOMETHING HAPPENS

An event, interaction, or situation occurs.



MY NERVOUS SYSTEM GIVES IT MEANING

It interprets the situation based on past experiences.



A PROTECTIVE RESPONSE APPEARS

My body and mind act to protect me from danger.



I CAN LEARN TO NOTICE WHAT I NEED NOW

Awareness creates choices and helps me feel safer.



Which event was worst?



Which memory still feels most alive?



Which experience most changed how you see yourself?



Which event seems connected to the symptoms troubling you now?



Which memory does your body react to most strongly?



Which experience feels unfinished?



Is there a pattern rather than a single event?

Common Triggers & Protective Responses

DISAGREEMENT

"They don't like me anymore."



PROTECTIVE RESPONSE

Appease or shut down

I MAY...

- Try to keep the peace
- Agree quickly
- Shrink or go quiet
- Hide how I feel

DISTANCE

"They're leaving me."



PROTECTIVE RESPONSE

Pursue or panic

I MAY...

- Seek reassurance
- Text or call repeatedly
- Feel anxious or helpless
- Overreact or cling

CLOSENESS

"If I need them, I'll get hurt."



PROTECTIVE RESPONSE

Withdraw or pull away

I MAY...

- Keep distance
- Avoid vulnerability
- Stay independent
- Numb or disconnect

A MISTAKE

"I've disappointed them."



PROTECTIVE RESPONSE

Shame or over-explain / fix

I MAY...

- Feel ashamed
- Over-explain myself
- Try to make it right
- Become self-critical

Your reactions are not random.
They are your system's best effort to keep you safe based on what you learned in the past.
You can learn new ways of relating in the present. ♥



Revelation 21.5
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Awareness today can change your tomorrow.



Your Story, Then & Now

A REFLECTIVE WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to explore a moment when connection felt unsafe.
Go gently. There is no rush. You are in control.



THEN (What my protective part believed then)	NOW (What is true and possible now)
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 1. WHAT HAPPENED? What was the situation or interaction?		
 2. WHAT DID MY PROTECTIVE PART EXPECT? What did it think might happen?		
 3. WHAT HAPPENED IN MY BODY? What sensations, emotions, or reactions did I notice?		
 4. WHAT FEELS FAMILIAR ABOUT THIS? What past experience does this remind me of?		
 5. WHAT IS ACTUALLY TRUE NOW? What's the reality in this moment?		
 6. WHAT WOULD SAFETY, BOUNDARIES, OR REPAIR LOOK LIKE? What do I need now? What would be helpful?		



Your reaction may have an old story behind it.
Understanding the story
gives you more choices in the present.

