Notice the Pattern

A Guided Reflection Workbook

Name what keeps happening. Get clear on what you need. Choose one next step.

The Rebuilding of Self · Kenya Ferguson



Before You Start

Reflection doesn't require pages of perfectly organized writing. It doesn't require that you have everything figured out before you begin, or that your thoughts arrive in the right order. The goal here is simpler than that: **slow the situation down just enough to see it more clearly.**

You don't need to complete this workbook in one sitting, though many people can work through the core of it in about 20–30 minutes. You might answer three questions and stop. You might come back two days later. That's fine. What matters is that you're paying attention.

Choose one situation or pattern.

Don't try to solve everything at once. Pick the thing that keeps coming up, the one that feels most stuck right now.

Answer only what's useful.

Not every prompt will apply to your situation. Skip what doesn't fit. Return to what does.

Short answers count.

A single honest sentence is worth more than three paragraphs of what you think you're supposed to say.

You're looking for clarity, not the "right" answer.

There is no graded version of this. You can't get it wrong. You can only get more honest.

☐ **A note on what this is:** This workbook is a self-reflection tool. It is not therapy, diagnosis, crisis treatment, or a substitute for professional mental health support. If you are in crisis or need clinical care, please reach out to a qualified professional.

Stage 1: Notice the Pattern

What Keeps Happening?

Something is repeating. Maybe it's a conflict that plays out the same way every time. Maybe it's a feeling you keep ending up in – exhausted, dismissed, frustrated, invisible – even across different situations or relationships. Maybe it's a behavior you keep returning to despite knowing better. You're here because some part of you already knows there's a pattern. This section is about looking at it directly.

Getting your thoughts out of your head and onto paper is one of the most useful things you can do when you're stuck inside something. Writing slows the loop down. It gives you a little distance. It lets you see the shape of what's happening instead of just feeling it over and over.

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1 — What situation keeps repeating?

Describe it plainly. What happens? Who is involved? You don't need to explain it or defend it – just describe it as simply as you can.

2 — What usually happens right before it?

Is there a trigger – a specific kind of moment, comment, tone, or feeling – that tends to come just before the pattern kicks in?

3 — How do you usually respond?

What do you do, say, think, or feel in that moment? Be honest here. There's no judgment in noticing your own reaction.

4 — What tends to happen after you respond that way?

Does the situation escalate? Does it end? Does it go quiet and then restart? What does the aftermath usually look like?

The pattern I keep noticing is...

Write one clear, concise statement. It doesn't have to be perfectly worded. It just has to be true.

Stage 1 (continued): What Am I Telling Myself?

Examining the Stories That Shape Your Reactions

When something keeps happening, we start to build a story around it – often without realizing we're doing it. That story shapes everything: how we interpret what people say, how quickly we react, what we assume is coming next. The story isn't always wrong. But it isn't always accurate either. And sometimes the story we're carrying is older than the situation we're in right now.

The purpose of this section isn't to replace a negative thought with a positive one. It's simply to get curious about what you're assuming, and to separate what you actually know from what you're filling in.

→ When this happens, what do you immediately tell yourself it means?

About the other person. About yourself.
About the relationship or situation. What's the first interpretation that arrives?

→ What are you assuming?

What are you treating as fact that you haven't actually confirmed?

→ What do you actually know?

What can you point to – something said, something done, something observable – that is true regardless of interpretation?

→ Are you reacting to what happened, what you fear might happen, or both?

This is one of the most honest questions you can ask yourself. Both are valid. But they call for different responses.

Two-Column Exercise

The Story I'm Telling Myself	What I Actually Know
Write what you're assuming, fearing, or interpreting...	*Write only what is observable or confirmed...*

You do not need to force a positive reframe. You are looking for clarity – and sometimes clarity just looks like "I don't actually know yet."

Stage 2: Name What I Need

What Do I Actually Need Here?

This is one of the harder questions to answer honestly – not because you don't know what you need, but because we often mix together what we need with what we want another person to do. Those are related, but they aren't the same thing. And when we rely entirely on someone else to meet a need, we can end up waiting for something that may not come, instead of looking at what we can actually do.

This section helps you separate those things. Not to dismiss what you want from others – those wants are real and often legitimate – but to get clearer on what is within your reach right now, and what might require a conversation, a boundary, or a different kind of decision.

What I want from another person or situation

What are you hoping they'll do, say, understand, or change? Be specific. It's okay to want things from others.

Examples: I want them to stop dismissing me. I want to feel like I matter. I want things to go back to how they were.

What I actually need, regardless of what they do

What do you need to feel okay, clear, or grounded – even if the other person never changes?

Examples: I need to stop explaining myself so much. I need to trust my own read of the situation. I need rest. I need one honest conversation.

Write here...	*Write here...*

Do I need more information?

Is there something I don't know yet that I need to find out before I can make a clear decision?

Do I need to say something?

Is there something that needs to be communicated – to someone else, or even just to myself?

Do I need to stop doing something?

Is there a behavior, habit, or response pattern that is costing you more than it's giving you?

Do I need time or space?

Not as avoidance – but as a genuine requirement to think, feel, or recover before taking action?

Stage 2 (continued): Where Is My Responsibility?

Looking Honestly at Your Own Role — Without Defaulting to Blame

This is a section that asks for honesty without cruelty. Looking at your own role in a pattern doesn't mean you caused it, and it doesn't mean the other person is off the hook. It simply means you're willing to look at the whole picture — including the parts you can actually do something about. That's where change becomes possible.

At the same time, not everything that keeps happening is your fault. Some patterns exist because of what other people do. Some situations are genuinely difficult because of circumstances outside your control. The goal here isn't to distribute blame evenly — it's to be honest about what belongs to you and what doesn't.

Where am I making this more complicated than it needs to be?

Are you overexplaining? Over-managing someone else's reaction? Waiting for perfect clarity before making any move? Sometimes the complication is a form of staying stuck.

Where have I been going along with something I don't actually agree with?

Not because you're weak — but because it felt easier, safer, or less confrontational. This isn't self-blame. It's just an honest look.

What is genuinely not mine to carry?

What are you taking responsibility for that actually belongs to someone else? Another person's mood, choices, reactions, or outcomes?

My honest answer about my own role:

Write a few sentences. Be fair to yourself. Be honest with yourself. Those two things can coexist.

Stage 3: Choose One Next Step

Not a Plan. Not a Promise. Just One Thing.

This is where reflection becomes practical. Everything you've worked through in the pages before this has been about seeing more clearly. Now you're going to use that clarity to identify one realistic next step – not a transformation, not a full strategy, not a list of things you should probably do. Just one thing. The smallest honest action that would move something forward.

One next step might be a conversation you've been avoiding. It might be stopping a behavior that's keeping you in the pattern. It might be getting more information before you make a decision. It might be giving yourself permission to stop waiting for someone else to change. Whatever it is, it should feel like something you could actually do – not something you think you're supposed to want to do.



1. **What is the one thing that feels most needed right now?**
   Not the biggest thing. Not the most impressive thing. The most needed thing. What is it?

2. **Is this something I can do on my own, or does it involve someone else?**
   If it involves another person, is that conversation realistic right now? If not, is there a smaller version of this step that you can take on your own first?

3. **What would make this step feel easier to take?**
   More preparation? A specific time you'll do it? Telling someone about it? Less thinking and more doing?

4. **What might get in the way?**
   Name the obstacle honestly. What tends to stop you from following through? Knowing this in advance makes it easier to not be surprised by it.

My one next step is:

Write it here. One sentence. Make it specific enough that you'll know when you've done it.

A Final Reflection

Before You Close This Workbook

Take a moment before you put this down. You just did something that a lot of people avoid: you slowed down long enough to actually look at something that's been repeating in your life. That's not a small thing. Most of us are moving fast enough that the pattern stays invisible – and what stays invisible stays in charge.

You don't have to have resolved anything to have made progress here. Sometimes clarity shows up as a question, not an answer. Sometimes the most useful thing you walk away with is the honest acknowledgment that something isn't working – and that you deserve something better than staying stuck in it.

What do you know now that you didn't quite have words for before?

Even if it's incomplete. Even if it's uncomfortable. What is a little clearer?

What do you want to remember from this reflection?

If you came back to this workbook in three months, what would you want to have written down here for yourself?

What are you willing to be patient with yourself about?

Patterns don't disappear because you named them once. Change is often slower than we want it to be. Where can you give yourself some room to still be figuring it out?

Come back to this workbook when the pattern resurfaces. Use a different color pen. Notice what has shifted and what hasn't. You are allowed to be in the middle of something and still be doing the work.

☐ **This workbook is a starting point, not a finish line.** If you find that what comes up here is bigger than one workbook can hold, please reach out to a qualified mental health professional. That is not a failure – it is one more honest next step.

CHECK BACK IN

After You Take Your Next Step

This page is for later. Come back after you've taken the next step you identified in this workbook. You are not looking for proof that you handled everything perfectly. You are simply noticing what happened.

Did I take the step I identified?

If yes — what happened? If no — what got in the way? Both answers are useful.

What did I notice about the pattern after taking that step?

Did anything shift? Did the pattern show up again? Did something feel different, even slightly?

What do I want to do next?

This doesn't have to be big. One more step. Or a decision to sit with this longer. Either is valid.

What am I learning about myself through this process?

Not what you've fixed. What you're learning.

You don't have to have it figured out. You just have to keep paying attention.

Notes & Writing Space

Use this page however is most useful to you.

Sometimes the most important things come up after the structured questions are done. Use this space for overflow thinking, additional observations about the pattern you're working through, or anything that came up during this reflection that you want to hold onto. There are no prompts here – just room.

Additional thoughts on the pattern

Anything that didn't fit cleanly into a prompt but feels important to write down.

What I want to revisit

Questions you skipped. Sections you want to come back to. Things you weren't ready to answer today.

Continue with The Rebuilding of Self

This workbook is one place to pause and look more closely. If you want to keep exploring the patterns, boundaries, communication, and decisions that come with rebuilding yourself, continue with the resources below.

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