

When we get in our own way

Understand the pattern. Find one place to respond differently.

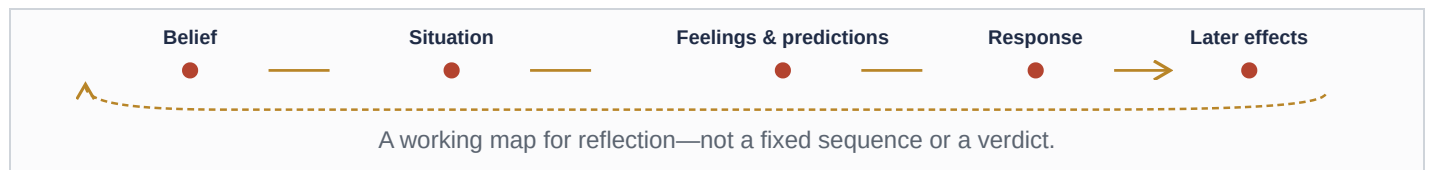
A pattern, not a character flaw.

Sometimes a response offers relief now but makes something we care about harder later. Try exploring that pattern with curiosity rather than blame.

Use this in session or on your own. Choose one recent, manageable example. Skip anything that does not fit.

For education and reflection · Not a diagnostic tool

1 ONE WAY TO MAP THE PATTERN — the parts can overlap or happen in a different order.



1 The belief or rule

What story about yourself shows up? For example: “If I cannot do it perfectly, I should not try.”

The story I notice: _____

2 The situation

What happened? Describe the event separately from what you think it means.

What happened: _____

3 Feelings, body sensations & predictions

What do you notice inside? What do you expect or fear will happen?

Feeling / body: _____

What I predict: _____

4 The response & its short-term purpose

Perhaps you delay, withdraw, over-prepare, or seek reassurance. What does that do for you in the moment?

What I do: _____

What it helps me avoid: _____

5 The later effects

What happens afterward? Does it seem to reinforce the old story? An outcome is not a verdict on your worth.

What happens later: _____

Check the context, too

Is there an unclear task, too much pressure, too little support, or a real safety concern? Not every difficulty is self-sabotage. Rest, boundaries, or practical help may be the useful next step.

Optional reflection: What past messages, expectations, fears, or current pressures might be contributing? You do not need to find a “root cause” before trying one change.

One small, different response

You do not have to change every belief—or feel confident—to begin.

Notice	PAUSE	Reframe	WIDEN THE VIEW	Respond	ONE STEP
Name the situation, your reaction, and what you are predicting.		Aim for a fairer view, not a promise that everything will go well.		Choose a manageable action that supports what matters to you. Adjust the task or ask for support if needed.	
ASK “What happened—and what am I telling myself it means?”		ASK “What else might happen? If it is difficult, what could help me respond?”		ASK “What is one helpful step within my control?”	

A worked example

A difficult email arrives. I think, “I’ll get this wrong,” and notice anxiety and a tight chest. I avoid opening it, which gives brief relief, but later the pressure builds.

A different response: “I can take time to work out my reply and ask for help.” I’ll spend five minutes on a rough draft before deciding what to send.

2 MY MOMENT, IN A FEW LINES

Use your example from page 1. Fragments are fine; leave blanks if needed.

When _____
 I tell myself _____
 I feel / notice in my body _____
 So I _____
 In the moment, this helps with _____
 Later, I notice _____

3 ONE THING I’LL TRY

Make it small enough to be doable—not impressive.

When I notice _____
 My smallest helpful step will be _____
 Support or resources I can use _____
 After trying it, I’ll look for _____

Notice what happened, what helped, and what you would adjust. The aim is to learn, not to prove yourself.

If the pattern happens again

Try treating it as something to explore, not another reason to criticize yourself. Where did you notice it—even afterward? What would make the next attempt more manageable?

Make room for effort, care, and actions that reflect your values—not only achievements. If you are working with a counselor, bring what happened, not just what worked.