FINDING YOURSELF AGAIN

A Self-Help Guide Through Loss, Change and Life Upheaval

Based on Relational Life Therapy

INTRODUCTION

When life falls apart, whether through infidelity, losing a job, grief, illness or simply years of putting everyone else first, it is very common to feel:

“Who am I anymore? I do not recognise myself.”

This happens because the old version of you - the one built around roles, relationships, achievements or survival habits - has been shaken or broken. You are left looking for a new sense of self.

This guide will take you through four clear questions:

1. Who were you in the past?
2. Who do you think you are now?
3. Who are you, deep down, in the present?
4. Who would you like to become in the future?

THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND THIS WORK

Understanding these ideas will help you get the most out of the exercises. Everything here is based on Relational Life Therapy, the same framework used to help couples build stronger, fairer relationships.

1. The Three Parts of You

You are not just one single way of being. You have three inner parts that shape how you feel and act:

- **The Wounded Child**

This part carries pain, shame, fear and old beliefs from your childhood and past experiences. When life goes wrong, this part often takes over and tells you things like “I am broken”, “I am not enough” or “I cannot trust anyone”. It reacts from hurt rather than clear thinking.

- **The Adaptive Child**

This part developed as a survival strategy when you were young. To feel safe and accepted, you learned to take one of two positions:

    - **One-Up (Grandiose stance):** “I will be strong, independent and in control. If I stay above things, no one can hurt me.” This often leads to

keeping people at a distance, refusing help or pretending nothing is wrong.

- **One-Down (Shame-based stance):** “I will be helpful, quiet and easy to please. If I stay small, people will not leave me.” This often leads to putting others first, ignoring your own needs or feeling you have to earn love and respect.

These patterns kept you safe when you were younger, but they often leave you feeling trapped, empty or lost in adult life.

- **The Wise Adult**

This is your true, healthy self. It is calm, honest, responsible and fair. It sees the difference between feelings and facts, separates what happens to you from who you are, and chooses how to respond rather than just reacting out of habit.

2. Identity Versus Circumstance

A key rule to remember:

You are not what happens to you, what you do, or how others treat you.

These are events, roles and labels, not your core identity. When we lose a job, face betrayal or make mistakes, we often start to think “I am a failure” or “I am unlovable”. This is the Wounded Child and Adaptive Child speaking. They confuse what occurs with who you are.

This guide helps you separate these things, so you can build your sense of self from the inside out, not from what life throws at you.

PART 1: WHO WERE YOU IN THE PAST?

Before the crisis, before the changes, before you felt lost

Purpose: We look back not to dwell on what is gone, but to understand what shaped you. You will see which parts of you felt true, and which were just ways of coping.

Questions to answer:

1. What did I value most in life before this change?

(For example: security, freedom, being liked, success, peace, loyalty)

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2. How did I usually handle difficult times or conflict?

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3. Did I tend to put other people’s needs first, or keep people at a distance?

(This will show if you leaned towards One-Up or One-Down patterns)

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4. What roles did I play?

(For example: “the strong one”, “the carer”, “the provider”, “the peacemaker”)

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5. Which parts of my past self-felt true and good? Which parts felt like hard work or hiding how I really felt?

How this works:

Your past gave you the tools to survive. But if you keep using those old tools in a new chapter of life, they stop working well. For example, if you were One-Down and always gave in to keep the peace, you may now feel you have lost yourself. If you were One-Up and always stayed in control, you may now feel lonely and disconnected. Seeing this pattern helps you choose something new.

PART 2: WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE RIGHT NOW?

The version you see in the mirror today, shaped by recent events

Purpose: When life falls apart, we often get stuck in a new story about ourselves. This step helps you see if that story is true or just fear and pain talking.

Questions to answer:

1. What labels or words do I use to describe myself at the moment?

(For example: hurt, failed, broken, unlucky, strong, survivor)

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2. What do I believe about myself because of what has happened?

(For example: “I cannot trust anyone”, “I am not good enough”, “I will never recover”)

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3. How am I behaving differently now compared to before?

(For example: more quiet, more angry, more careful, more afraid)

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4. Are these thoughts and feelings facts, or are they emotions and fears?

How this works:

This is often the Wounded Child speaking. Painful events create painful thoughts, but thoughts are not facts. If you lost your job, “I am unemployed” is true, but “I am worthless” is not. If you were betrayed, “I was hurt” is true, but “I am unlovable” is not. Separating the event from your identity stops you staying trapped in the pain.

PART 3: WHO ARE YOU ACTUALLY, IN THE PRESENT?

Looking past labels and roles to find your true core

Purpose: This is where you meet your Wise Adult self – the part that stays steady even when everything else changes.

Questions to answer:

1. If I take away my job title, my relationship status, what I own and what others think of me, what is left?

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2. What qualities and strengths do I still have, even after everything?

(For example: kindness, courage, patience, sense of humour, loyalty, intelligence)

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3. What do I still believe in, deep down, even if I have not lived it lately?

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4. What are my non-negotiables? What will I never accept again?

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5. What brings me a sense of calm or joy, even in small ways?

How this works:

Your core self never changes. It is just covered up by pain, roles and old habits. This step moves you from thinking “I am what happened to me” to “I am someone who has experienced things, and I still have value and purpose”. This is the start of moving towards the Same-As position: equal, honest and connected to yourself.

PART 4: WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME IN THE FUTURE?

Building your new identity, on purpose

Purpose: Life upheaval is painful, but it is also a blank page. You do not have to go back to the old version of you if it did not work. You can build a stronger, clearer version of yourself.

Questions to answer:

1. What kind of person do I want to be, regardless of what happens around me?

2. Which old patterns do I want to leave behind?

(For example: people-pleasing, shutting down, blaming myself, controlling everything)

3. What new habits or ways of thinking do I want to build?

(For example: speaking up, setting boundaries, asking for help, being kind to myself)

4. What does “a good life” look like for me – not what my family, friends or society expects?

5. What three small steps can I take this week to move towards this new version of me?
    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____

How this works:

The goal is to build your Same-As self. This means:

- No longer hiding behind being “super strong” (One-Up)
- No longer shrinking to keep others happy (One-Down)
- Standing in your own worth, with clear boundaries and an open heart.

You do not become this person overnight. You choose it, one small decision at a time.

SUMMARY EXERCISE: THE FOUR PARTS OF YOU

Use this space to bring everything together in simple lines:

WHO I WAS

Patterns, habits and ways of being from the past:

WHO I THINK I AM NOW

Labels, feelings and beliefs I hold right now:

WHO I REALLY AM

My core qualities, values and strengths underneath everything:

WHO I WANT TO BECOME

My new values, goals and the person I choose to be:

Losing your sense of self does not mean you are broken. It means the old version of you no longer fits.

- Who you were gave you experience and strength.
- Who you think you are is just a story you are telling yourself right now.
- Who you really are is steady beneath all the chaos.
- Who you become is the choice you make, every single day.

Remember: You are not starting from zero. You are starting from experience, and you are now building a life and identity that is truly yours.