

The Pattern or Personality? Self-Check Guide

What This Worksheet Is For

A lot of people describe themselves with labels like avoidant, anxious, distant, cold, needy, guarded, or hard to read.

Sometimes those words seem helpful.

But sometimes they make you stop looking deeper.

This worksheet is here to help you slow down and ask a better question:

Is this really who I am... or is this something I learned to do?

That one question can change a lot.

Because if something is a pattern, it can be understood.

And if it can be understood, it can start to change.

This is not about judging yourself.

It is about noticing what happens, why it happens, and what it may be trying to protect.

Use simple answers.

There is no need to sound wise.

Real is better than polished.

Before You Start

Pick **one behaviour** you want to understand better.

Examples:

- pulling away when people get close
- going quiet during conflict
- acting like you do not care
- needing lots of reassurance
- over-explaining yourself
- shutting down when you feel pressured
- staying distant even when you want connection

Try to focus on **one pattern only** while filling this out.

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1. What is the behaviour I keep repeating?

Write the behaviour as simply as possible.

My answer:

Example answers:

- I pull away when someone starts getting too close to me.
- I go quiet when I feel hurt instead of saying what I feel.
- I act like I do not need anyone, even when I do.
- I over-text and panic when someone pulls back.
- I shut down when someone is upset with me.
- I say yes when I mean no, then feel resentful later.

Helpful tip:

Try to describe **what you do**, not who you are.

Better:

- "I go distant when I feel pressured."

Less helpful:

- "I am just messed up."
 - "I am avoidant."
 - "I am too much."
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2. When does this usually happen?

Think about the moment the pattern shows up.

My answer:

Example answers:

- When someone wants more closeness than I feel ready for.
- When I think someone is disappointed in me.

- When I feel criticised.
- When I do not know what someone is thinking or feeling.
- When someone asks me what I need.
- When I feel emotionally responsible for another person.

Helpful tip:

This part helps you spot the **trigger**.

You are looking for the kind of moment that makes the behaviour switch on.

3. What do I usually do next?

What is your automatic move?

My answer:

Example answers:

- I stop replying properly.
- I change the subject.
- I tell myself I need space and then disappear.
- I become overly nice so there is no conflict.
- I get defensive and explain myself too much.
- I act calm on the outside, but shut down inside.
- I chase for reassurance.
- I leave emotionally before I leave physically.

Helpful tip:

Be honest here.

This is not about being good.

It is about being accurate.

4. What does this feel like in my body?

Keep it very simple.

You do not need fancy words.

My answer:

Example answers:

- tight chest
- knot in my stomach
- heavy feeling
- numbness
- pressure in my throat
- restless energy
- tense shoulders
- buzzing feeling in my body
- sudden tiredness
- like I want to get away

Helpful tip:

This part matters because patterns often start in the body before they become words or actions.

5. What do I think might happen if I do not do this pattern?

This is a big one.

If you did **not** pull away, shut down, over-explain, chase, or go silent... what do you fear might happen?

My answer:

Example answers:

- I might get hurt.
- I might get rejected.
- I might get swallowed up by someone else's needs.
- I might be judged.
- I might have to feel too much.
- I might lose control.
- I might be seen too clearly.
- I might disappoint someone.
- I might get trapped in something I do not want.
- I might be abandoned.

Helpful tip:

This question helps uncover what the pattern is trying to **save you from**.

6. What might this pattern be trying to protect?

This is where you look underneath the behaviour.

My answer:

Example answers:

- It may be trying to protect me from rejection.
- It may be trying to protect me from feeling weak.
- It may be trying to protect me from conflict.
- It may be trying to protect me from feeling exposed.
- It may be trying to protect me from being disappointed.
- It may be trying to protect me from being controlled.
- It may be trying to protect me from being too needy.
- It may be trying to protect me from shame.

Helpful tip:

A lot of patterns are not random.

They are trying to help in an old way.

That does not mean they are helping now.

But it does mean there is usually a reason they exist.

7. Where might I have learned this?

Do not overthink this.

You are not trying to write your life story.

Just notice where this pattern may have made sense.

My answer:

Example answers:

- Growing up, it did not feel safe to talk about feelings.
- I learned that needing people led to disappointment.
- Conflict in my house felt big, so I learned to go quiet.

- I had to stay easy to be around.
- I learned to be independent because support was unreliable.
- I felt judged a lot, so I learned to hide what I really felt.
- Love felt inconsistent, so I became watchful and guarded.
- I learned to people-please to keep the peace.

Helpful tip:

You are not blaming.

You are understanding.

There is a difference.

8. Is this pattern helping me now, or just feeling familiar?

Be honest.

Sometimes something feels safe simply because it is known.

My answer:

Example answers:

- It feels familiar, but it is hurting my relationships.
- It helps me avoid discomfort in the moment, but I feel alone later.
- It protects me short term, but keeps me stuck long term.
- It stops conflict, but it also stops honesty.
- It helps me feel in control, but I do not feel connected.
- It used to help, but now it creates distance I do not want.

Helpful tip:

This is where the truth starts getting clearer.

Something can feel automatic and still not be good for you anymore.

9. What is a more truthful sentence than the label I usually use?

Instead of calling yourself a label, try describing the pattern more honestly.

Usual label I use:

A more truthful sentence:

Example shifts:

Instead of:

- “I am avoidant.”

Try:

- “I learned to create distance when closeness feels unsafe.”

Instead of:

- “I am needy.”

Try:

- “I get scared of losing connection and look for reassurance.”

Instead of:

- “I am cold.”

Try:

- “I shut down when I feel overwhelmed or hurt.”

Instead of:

- “I am too much.”

Try:

- “I learned to believe my feelings were hard for others to handle.”

Instead of:

- “I am bad at relationships.”

Try:

- “I repeat a few protective patterns when I feel vulnerable.”

Helpful tip:

This part is powerful because it turns shame into understanding.

It does not excuse the pattern.

It just explains it more truthfully.

10. What would a small healthier response look like next time?

Do not aim for perfect.

Aim for one small step.

My answer:

Example answers:

- Instead of disappearing, I could say, "I need a little time to think, but I do want to come back to this."
- Instead of shutting down, I could say, "I feel overwhelmed and need a moment."
- Instead of chasing reassurance, I could pause and ask myself what I am afraid of first.
- Instead of saying yes automatically, I could say, "Let me think about that."
- Instead of acting like I do not care, I could admit, "This actually matters to me."
- Instead of over-explaining, I could give one honest sentence and stop there.

Helpful tip:

Small changes are easier to repeat.

Repeated changes build trust.

11. What do I want to remember when this pattern shows up again?

Write one simple reminder to yourself.

My answer:

Example answers:

- This is a pattern, not my whole personality.
 - I do not need to obey every old reaction.
 - Feeling unsafe is not the same as being unsafe.
 - I can pause before I repeat this.
 - I am allowed to stay present and honest.
 - This response makes sense, but I do not have to live here forever.
 - I can be kind to myself and still change.
 - Old protection is not always current truth.
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Quick Reflection

What did I learn from this worksheet?

My answer:

Example answers:

- I realised I call it personality when it is really protection.
 - I noticed I pull away most when I fear disappointment.
 - I can see that my pattern makes sense, but it is costing me connection.
 - I learned that the label is too simple for what is really going on.
 - I realised I stop at the label instead of asking deeper questions.
 - I can see that this pattern is old, familiar, and changeable.
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Final Reminder

You are not the label.

You are a person who learned a response.

That response may have made sense once.

It may have protected you.

It may have helped you cope.

But that does not mean it is your deepest truth.

The goal is not to shame the pattern.

The goal is to understand it well enough that you are no longer trapped inside it.

A pattern can be practiced without being permanent.