Love Blueprint: From Me To Us

UNDERSTANDING ME WAS THE BEGINNING. NOW LET'S EXPLORE US.

Bella Tanzer



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Introduction

Attachment theory, or what I like to call our emotional blueprints, might sound like just another relationship buzzword, and you might be thinking, “Here we go again.” But these blueprints are like the invisible codes inside us that shape how we connect, respond, and seek closeness, often without us even realising it.

This workbook isn’t about dry theory or overwhelming psychology. It’s a hands-on, practical guide built from real-world experience for couples who want to connect and understand each other on a deeper level.

Welcome. I’m Bella, a relationship coach and counsellor. Together with my husband Roman I run the FLOW Collective, a coaching and counselling service that has thriving relationships at its heart. I specialise in romantic relationships helping partners to understand themselves and each other better and to build habits that create lasting, happy relationships.



In my work with couples, I've noticed something: no matter how hard couples try — doing communication exercises, reading books, scheduling date nights — some keep hitting an invisible wall. They stay stuck in the same cycles of disconnect.

I remember one couple in particular. They were committed to work on their marriage, but no matter what they did, their arguments always spiralled in the same way. She felt lonely and unheard; he felt overwhelmed and shut down. Their love was real, but something was blocking their connection.

That was when I started looking deeper.





What Are Emotional Blueprints?



These emotional blueprints - also called attachment styles in psychology - are like the software running quietly in the background of your emotional system. They shape how you connect, respond, and seek closeness, often without you even realizing it.

Each of us carries a unique emotional blueprint formed in early life, which guides how we relate to others - especially our partners.

The way we're wired emotionally - how we seek closeness or pull away, handle conflict and comfort - often shows up as invisible patterns in our adult relationships. Once we learn to see our blueprint, we have a chance to work with it and move towards feeling more secure and relaxed in our relationships.

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is for you if:

- You want to understand what's going on beneath the surface in your relationship.
- You're curious about your emotional blueprint but don't have time to read long books to make sense of it.



There are two ways to approach this workbook - and ideally, you'll do both:

Start with understanding.
Some sections offer insightful shortcuts into emotional blueprints. In just an hour or two, you'll gain a new lens through which to see your relationship - and once you see life through this lens, you can't unsee it.

Then go deeper.
Other sections invite you to slow down, reflect, and work through questions and exercises. This is where real transformation happens. If you skip this part, your insights may stay in your head. But if you take the time, they will will start to live in you.

It's like watching a marathon versus putting on your running shoes and joining the race.

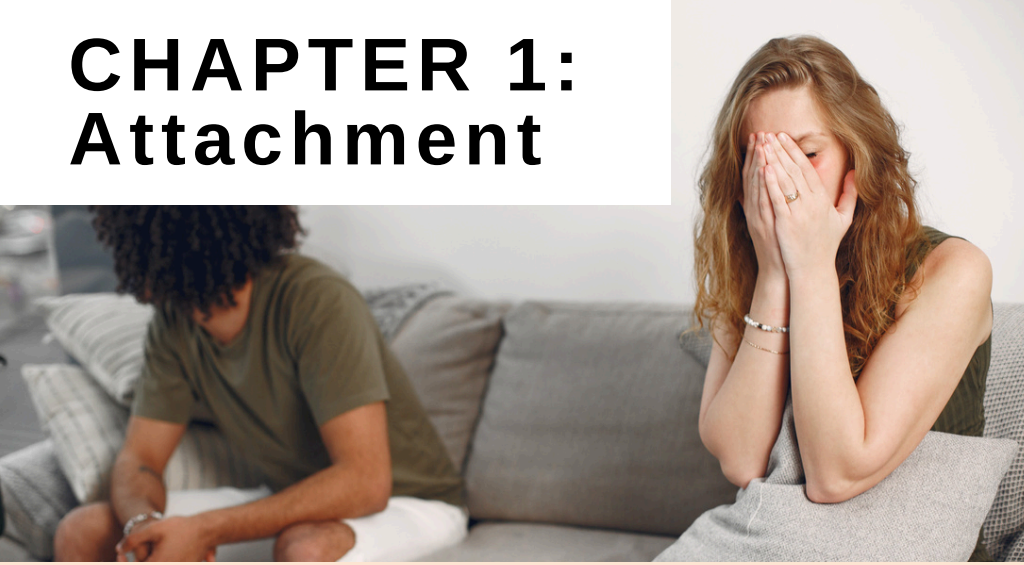
What You'll Find Inside

What awaits you in this ebook are clear, powerful insights, relatable stories, space for reflection and practical tools to help you move from feeling stuck to seeing things more clearly - and relating more deeply.

Let’s start with the foundations: what emotional blueprints are, how they work, and why they matter in your relationship.



CHAPTER 1: Attachment



Chapter 1: Attachment - The Missing Piece in Couples' Connection

Sometimes, even when partners are deeply committed and trying their hardest, something still doesn't click. They talk, they try, they love each other deep down, but the same arguments keep coming back. The intimacy feels uneven. One partner feels lonely; the other feels they space is being invaded. Both end up misunderstood.

That's what I kept seeing in my work.
For a while, I just focused on helping couples communicate better, manage conflict more skilfully, and find new ways to express love. For some, that was enough. But for many, it wasn't. That was when I realised something deeper was going on.

That something was the emotional blueprint aka attachment style that each of us carries from our earliest experiences. It shapes how we connect, how we deal with stress, express our needs, and respond to others' emotions. It runs deep and is often invisible - until we learn to see it.

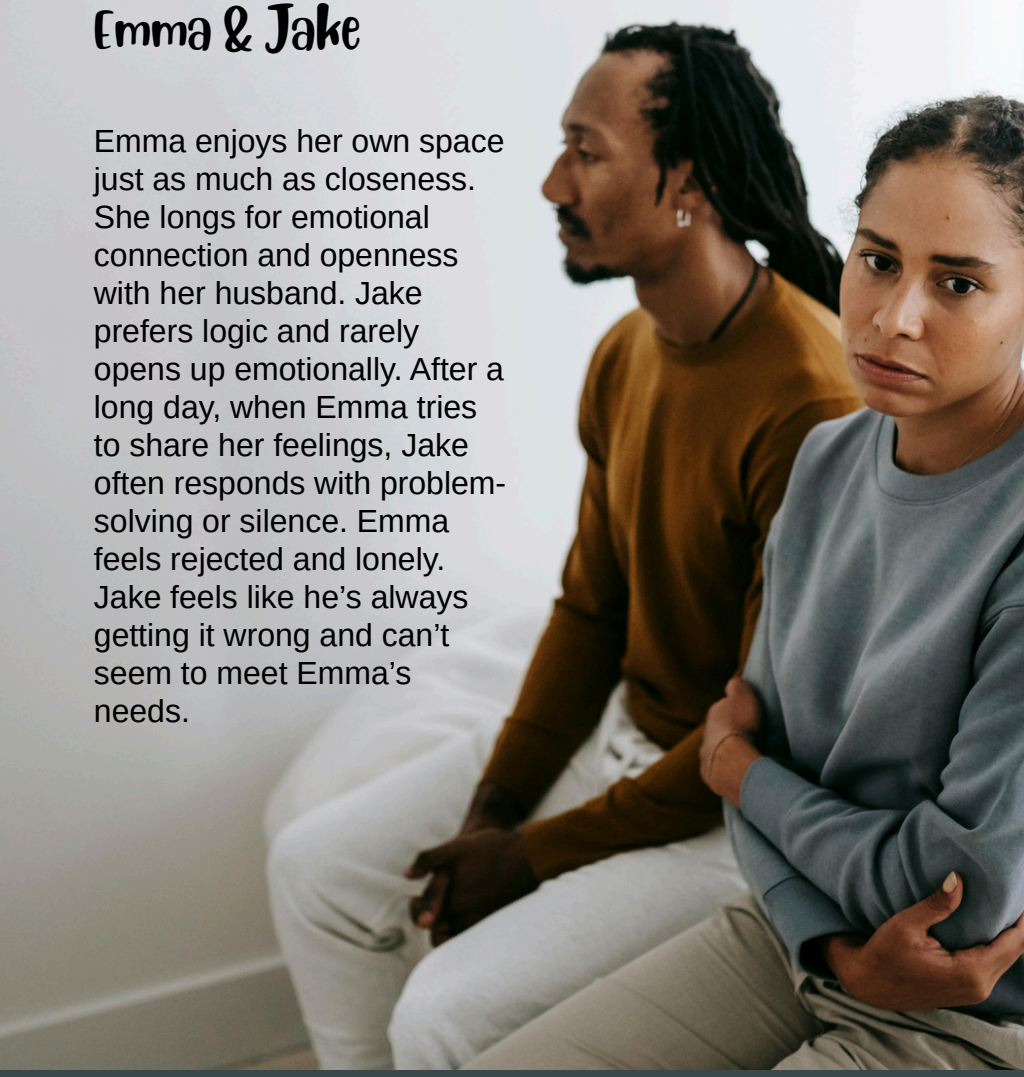
Real Stories, Real Patterns

Let me introduce you to a few couples. These are composite stories — drawn from the experiences of different people. All details have been changed to protect their privacy, and the photos you'll see are representative, not the actual couples themselves.
And yet, as you read, you may notice something that feels familiar. Their experiences might echo moments from your own life, because while every story is unique, the patterns are often universal.



Emma & Jake

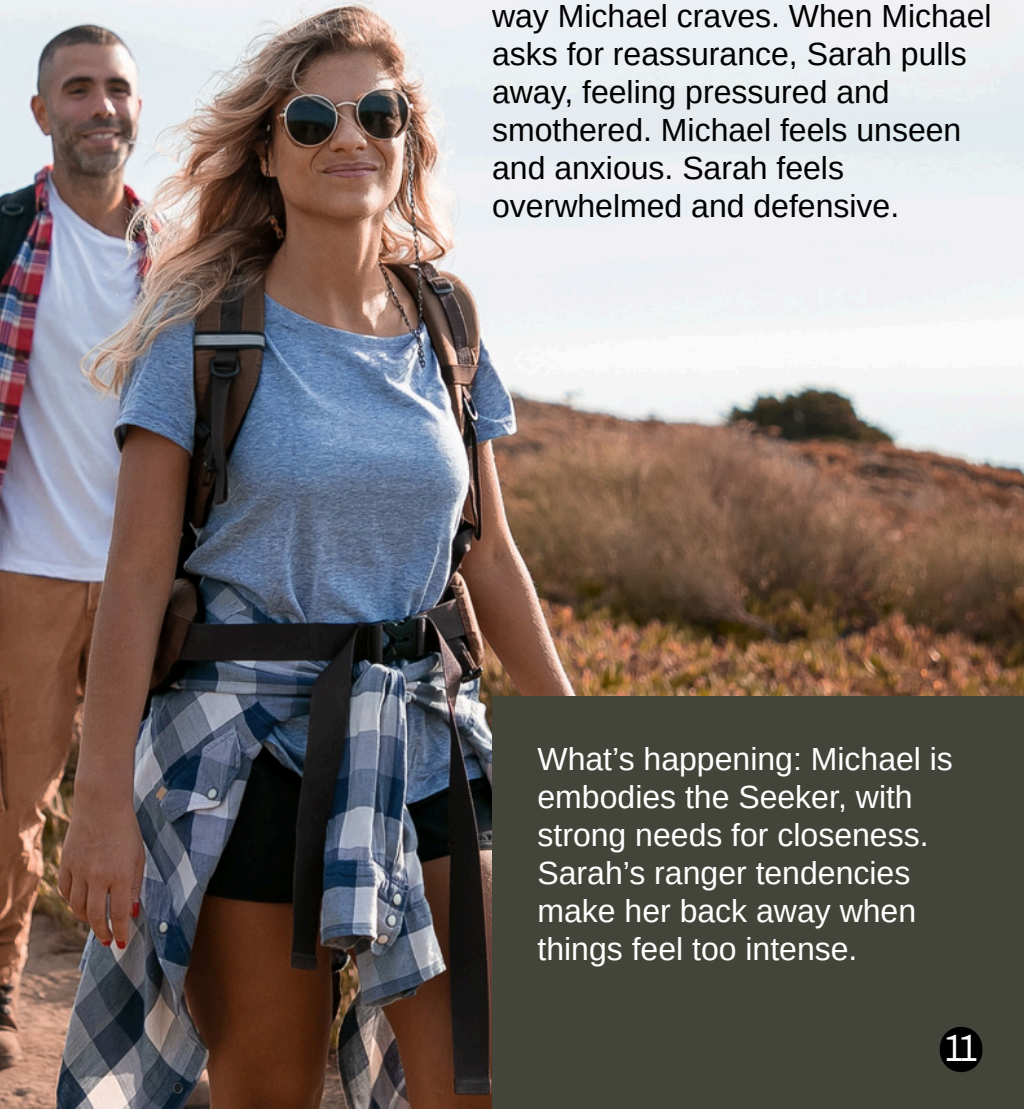
Emma enjoys her own space just as much as closeness. She longs for emotional connection and openness with her husband. Jake prefers logic and rarely opens up emotionally. After a long day, when Emma tries to share her feelings, Jake often responds with problem-solving or silence. Emma feels rejected and lonely. Jake feels like he's always getting it wrong and can't seem to meet Emma's needs.



Underneath it all: Emma embodies the Guardian, a blueprint that is comfortable with emotional closeness. Jake leans toward the Ranger archetype, tending to pull away when emotions get too intense.

Sarah & Michael

Michael longs for praise and reassurance, needing signs of affection to feel secure. Sarah is confident, independent, and doesn't often express affection the way Michael craves. When Michael asks for reassurance, Sarah pulls away, feeling pressured and smothered. Michael feels unseen and anxious. Sarah feels overwhelmed and defensive.



What's happening: Michael is embodies the Seeker, with strong needs for closeness. Sarah's ranger tendencies make her back away when things feel too intense.



Alex & Fatima

Their relationship mostly feels calm, but both experience a subtle tension. Sometimes Fatima leans in, seeking closeness and reassurance from Alex, wanting to share her thoughts or linger near him. Other times, a quiet fear overtakes her, and she retreats inward—becoming unusually silent or distant—leaving Alex to navigate the ebb and flow without overt conflict.

Beneath the surface: As a guardian Alex provides a stabilising anchor, allowing Fatima who is a riftwalker to come forward at her own pace. Nevertheless, the rhythm of approach and withdrawal is challenging for both: Fatima wrestles with her desire for connection versus her fear of not being understood, and Alex quietly balances patience with his own need to feel calm, sometimes struggling to keep their bond steady in the emotional push–pull.



Reflection Space

Take a moment to reflect using a journal or your device, there are no right or wrong answers here. Feel free to share with your partner afterwards if you feel safe doing so.

- Which of the couples did you resonate with most? What feelings or memories came up for you?

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- How do arguments with your own partner typically start and how do they usually end?

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- When was the last time you felt misunderstood by your partner? What happened? How did you feel?

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Use these reflections as a starting point to explore your own emotional blueprint.

Seeing the Roots

Think of emotional blueprints like the roots of a tree — hidden but powerful. The roots determine whether the tree can thrive, how strong it is in a storm and how much it can grow. When you become aware of these roots, you can tend to them and that changes everything above ground.



In your relationship, learning about emotional blueprints helps you to:

- Understand why you and your partner react the way you do
- See recurring arguments with fresh eyes
- Learn how to give and receive love in ways that feel safe
- Start shifting patterns that no longer serve you

How This Workbook Will Help

This book is your shortcut to meaningful insight and real change. Here's how it's designed to guide you:

Discover Your Emotional Blueprint
Start with a simple quiz to identify your own archetypal parts.

Understand Attachment Basics
Learn what emotional blueprints (also called attachment styles) are, how they develop, and why they matter in adult relationships.

Explore the Blueprint Archetype that Are Relevant for You
Read the sections that apply to you and your partner. Take what resonates and leave the rest.

Practical Tools and Prompts
Use reflection questions, journaling prompts, and couple-friendly exercises that spark real change.

Real Stories and Real Advice
I'll share composite stories of real couples to bring these ideas to life.



Quiz – Discover Your Attachment Style

This quiz will help you identify which patterns show up most in your close relationships — and bring more awareness to what might be happening beneath the surface.

Step 1: Answer Each Question Honestly

Below, you'll find 25 statements. Use the following scale to rate how true each one feels for you in the relationship with your partner.

1 = Not at all true
2 = Slightly true
3 = Somewhat true
4 = Mostly true
5 = Very true

#	Statement	**Your Score**
1	I worry that the people I love will leave me.	
2	I prefer to handle my emotions on my own rather than share them.	
3	I feel comfortable depending on others and letting them depend on me.	

CHAPTER 2: QUIZ

1 = Not at all true
2 = Slightly true
3 = Somewhat true
4 = Mostly true
5 = Very true

#	Statement	Your Score
4	I often think my partner doesn't love me as much as I love him/her.	
5	I feel smothered or overwhelmed when someone gets too close.	
6	I struggle to trust that people will stay consistent with me.	
7	I value emotional closeness in my relationships.	
8	I find it hard to relax in a relationship — I'm always a bit on edge.	
9	I tend to pull away or shut down when things get intense.	
10	I often replay arguments or small moments, looking for signs I'm not loved.	
11	I feel confused — I want connection but also fear being hurt.	
12	I can express my needs clearly without feeling ashamed.	
13	When my partner needs space, I panic or feel abandoned.	
14	I try to be completely self-sufficient in relationships.	

CHAPTER 2: QUIZ

1 = Not at all true
2 = Slightly true
3 = Somewhat true
4 = Mostly true
5 = Very true

#	Statement	Your Score
15	I feel like I can never fully relax in love — something always feels unstable.	
16	I find it hard to ask for help or comfort, even when I need it.	
17	I fear being too much or too needy in relationships.	
18	I feel anxious when I don't hear from someone I care about.	
19	I sometimes feel numb, detached, or "checked out" emotionally.	
20	I generally feel safe and secure in close relationships.	
21	I want to be close, but when someone gets too close, I push them away.	
22	I often feel like I'm walking on eggshells — I don't know what version of the other person I'll get.	
23	I enjoy being emotionally open and vulnerable with my partner.	
24	I fear losing myself in a relationship.	
25	I feel torn between craving love and not trusting it.	

Step 2: Transfer Your Scores into the Boxes Below

Now take your scores from Step 1 and copy them into the matching numbered box.
We'll label the boxes A, B, C, and D .

	Questions To Add Up	Your Total
Box A	Questions 3, 7, 12, 20, 23	
Box B	Questions 1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 17, 18	
Box C	Questions 2, 5, 9, 14, 16, 24	
Box D	Questions 6, 11, 15, 19, 21, 22, 25	

Example:
Box A (Questions 3, 7, 12, 20, 23)
= 5 + 4 + 5 + 5 + 4 = **23**
Box B (Questions 1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 17, 18)
= 4 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 3 = **23**
Box C (Questions 2, 5, 9, 14, 16, 24)
= 2 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 1 = **8**
Box D (Questions 6, 11, 15, 19, 21, 22, 25)
= 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 3 = **16**

Step 3: Discover What Your Scores Mean

Each box you filled in reflects a different attachment style. Your highest score(s) indicate which style is most dominant for you — though many people have elements of more than one.

Here's what each box means:

Box A — The Guardian
(Questions 3, 7, 12, 20, 23)
If this is your highest box:
You likely feel comfortable with closeness and with being on your own. You are able to express needs, and trust others to be there for you. You can enjoy intimacy without becoming overly anxious or distant.

Common Patterns:
· Emotionally open and responsive
· Comfortable with intimacy and independence
· Able to repair conflict and seek connection

Growth edge:
Everyone can be pulled off balance in stressful or triggering situations, even guardians. Your work may involve maintaining secure responses under pressure or recognising when a partner's style triggers you.

Box B — The Seeker
(Questions 1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 17, 18)

If this is your highest box:
You seek close connection with others and are able to go very deep in relationships. On the flip side you may worry about being abandoned or not being loved enough. You might need reassurance and feel especially sensitive to distance, silence, or perceived rejection.

Common patterns:
· Fear of being too much or not enough
· Overthinking small signs of disconnection
· Strong need for closeness and validation

Growth edge:
Learning how to self-soothe, recognise your worth without constant external reassurance, and communicate needs calmly without panic.

Box C — The Ranger
(Questions 2, 5, 9, 14, 16, 24)

If this is your highest box:
You are likely to value independence and might feel uncomfortable with emotional intensity. You may prefer to process things alone and can shut down when others get too close or you have the impression that they are needy.

Common patterns:
· Shutting down or pulling away when things get intense
· Struggling to express vulnerability
· Equating closeness with loss of freedom

Growth edge:
Allowing support, risking emotional openness, and learning that connection doesn't mean losing yourself.

Box D — The Riftwalker
(Questions 6, 11, 15, 19, 21, 22, 25)

If this is your highest box:
You may feel emotions very intensely and notice a strong desire for connection. At the same time, relationships can feel confusing or uncertain, and you might swing between seeking closeness and needing space. This mix of longing and caution is a natural part of your attachment style.

Common patterns:
· Deeply valuing love but fearing betrayal
· Feeling “too much” and “not enough” at the same time
· Frequently experiencing emotional highs and lows, often it feels like they come out of the blue.

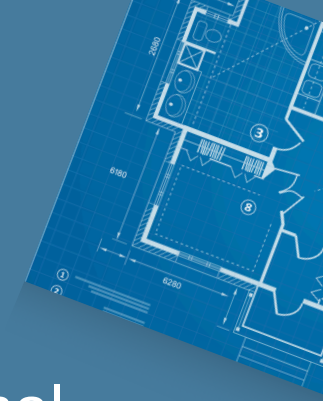
Growth edge:
Building safety and consistency — first with yourself, then with others. This often involves healing from past trauma and developing new models of trust and regulation.

A Few Notes:

- You might score high in more than one box. That’s normal — attachment isn’t fixed. Many people have a primary style and a secondary one, especially depending on the relationship.
- Emotional Blueprints can change over time, especially through therapy and healthy relationships.
- This quiz is a guide, not a diagnosis — but it’s a great first step in understanding how you love, protect, and seek connection.

CHAPTER 3

Understanding the Blueprints



So, What are Emotional Blueprints, Exactly?

If you've ever felt baffled by why you or your partner sometimes react strongly or feel disconnected, you're not alone. This chapter will help you understand a key piece of the puzzle: emotional blueprints, also called attachment styles — the patterns that quietly shape how you connect and respond.

Where It All Began

Thanks to the pioneering work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, we now understand that from the moment we're born, our brains are wired to seek connection - not just to survive, but to feel safe, loved, and understood. How we experience closeness with our earliest caregivers creates an emotional blueprint that quietly shapes our relationships throughout life.

Reflection Exercise



Take a moment to gently recall your earliest memories of feeling safe - or maybe unsafe - with a caregiver or significant adult.

What feelings or thoughts come up for you?

How do you think those early experiences might still influence how you relate to others today, especially your partner?

Why the Blueprints Show Up in Romantic Relationships

As adults, our romantic partner becomes our main attachment figure. In other words, he or she becomes family to us and we tend to behave around them accordingly. This closeness brings incredible joy, but also the risk of feeling deeply hurt, misunderstood, or even rejected. That's why your partner may act differently with you than with others, because your relationship reminds them of their closest early relationships.





Reflection Space

Think of a recent moment when your partner's reaction felt intense or confusing.

- Looking through the emotional blueprint lens, what do you think was really going on beneath the surface?
- How might your own blueprint have influenced your response?

Jot down your reflections in your diary or on your device:

The Four Love Blueprints

Psychologists often describe four attachment styles using the words secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganised. Here, I'll use empowering terms that feel more like archetypes and less like labels:



Comfortable with closeness and independence; trusts both self and others. Like a sturdy tree that sways but doesn't break.



Longs for reassurance and closeness; can feel unsettled if connection seems uncertain. Like a child calling out, hoping to be seen and held.



Values independence; pulls away when emotions feel overwhelming. Like a lone explorer who feels safest in open space.



Desires closeness sometimes but feels uncomfortable when someone gets too close at other times, often feeling pulled in two directions. Like a traveller navigating a steep, unpredictable path.

Reflection Space

Read through the descriptions on the previous page. Notice which patterns feel familiar in your partnerships or other relationships.

- Can you identify moments when you have acted most like a Guardian, Seeker, Ranger, or Riftwalker? What did you do or say?
- How did this affect how you acted or communicated with those around you?



What Modern Science Says

Your blueprint isn't fixed. Thanks to neuroplasticity, our brains ability to change and form new connections, it's possible to shift old patterns, especially within safe, loving relationships. Counselling, therapy, supportive partners, and positive life experiences can all help you rewrite our emotional blueprint over time.



Reflection Space

Looking Back, Moving Forward

A Safe Connection

Think of a time, in a romantic relationship or another close bond, when you felt truly safe and understood.

- How did that person behave with you and talk to you?
- What effect did their presence have on how you felt in your body?

Relationship-Shaping Experiences

- Which early or past experiences most shaped how you show up in romantic relationships?

Growth Over Time

- What are you learning about what helps you feel safe and secure in love?
- If you're in a partnership now, how does your partner support your healing and growth (even imperfectly)?
- If you're not in a relationship, what qualities would you want in a future partner to help you feel safe and seen?

Takeaway Time



Reflection Space

Who You're Becoming in Relationships
Before moving on, notice what stood out for you in this chapter.

- What is one insight that feels important to you?
- What is one small step you might take to feel more secure and connected in your relationships?

“Do You Love Me Enough?”

Life from the Seeker’s perspective



Some people move through relationships always slightly on edge, scanning for signs of disconnection: a missed message, a delay in reply, a sigh in the partner’s voice. To others, these moments may seem neutral , but for Seekers, they can feel like a threat. Not because they’re dramatic, or too much, or needy, but because their nervous system has learned that love is fragile and closeness isn’t always secure.

If that resonates with you, I invite you to explore the experience and survival strategies of the Seeker Blueprint. Or maybe you have a partner who has characteristics of the Seeker — then this chapter will help you understand the lens through which they are experiencing the world.

CHAPTER 4: THE SEEKER



How the Seeker Pattern Forms

Individuals who grow into Seeker patterns often had caregivers who were inconsistent when they were young —warm and loving at times, but distracted, unpredictable, or unavailable at others. This created confusion: moments of closeness gave hope, but the unpredictability left the child unsure when love and care could be counted on.
In this environment, emotions ran high. A child might cling more tightly, cry louder, or work harder to gain attention and reassurance. Deep down, they learned:
"It isn't safe to relax—I have to hold on tightly, or love might slip away."

From here, the Seeker blueprint begins to form. Seekers learn to:

- Stay highly attuned to shifts in others' moods and ways of behaving
- Long for closeness, reassurance, and emotional connection
- Worry about being abandoned, rejected, or "too much"

What began as a survival strategy in childhood becomes the standard pattern: This involves a deep sensitivity and longing for connection, but also a fear of being left by.

What's Really Behind the Seeker Blueprint?

At the heart of the Seeker blueprint is a longing to feel deeply wanted, emotionally safe, and clearly loved. If this is you, you don't just want affection — you need to know it's real, consistent, and won't disappear.

The silence between messages can feel unbearable, not because you don't trust your partner, but because your nervous system whispers: What if I've been forgotten? What if I've done something wrong? This isn't just in your head. It's in your body — the way your heart races, your stomach tightens, your thoughts spin — often rooted in early experiences where love was unpredictable.



Reflection Space

Understanding Your Core Need

- What do you most long for in your close relationships?
- How do you usually try to know that love is real or consistent?
- Can you identify moments when you felt this need deeply? What triggered it?

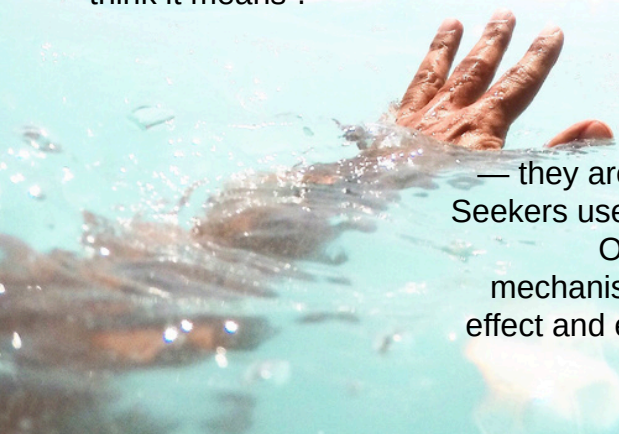
Stories from the Heart: The Seeker's Experience



Aisha sits forward, phone in hand. Her partner hasn't replied in over two hours. "I know he's probably just at work," she says, "but I can't stop thinking… what if I upset him?"

Liam reaches for his partner's hand during a quiet evening at home. She pulls her hand away, murmuring that she's tired. Liam smiles, but the seeker inside of him deflates. "It's not just the hand," he says later. "It's what it means — or what I think it means".

Sophia's partner is leaving on a short trip. "I should be fine," she insists. "It's only a few days. But I feel this deep fear in my chest — like he'll forget about me. Or something will happen and he won't come back the same."



These aren't overreactions — they are protective strategies that Seekers use to keep themselves safe. Often, though, these coping mechanisms can have the opposite effect and end up causing more pain.

The Tenderness Beneath the Tension



Seekers are often incredibly intuitive. You're likely the first to notice when something feels off, the first to reach out, the first to try to repair disconnection. You care deeply. You invest fully. You want to understand your partner, to be close, to feel emotionally in sync. These are gifts, not weaknesses.

The challenge is learning to feel safe in the "in-between moments," when your partner is quiet, feels distant, or just living their life separately from you.

Building Your Inner Sanctuary: Learning to Feel Safe Inside Yourself



Recognising these patterns is just the start. The next step is learning how to calm the inner storm when anxiety takes over.

One of the most important shifts for Seekers is learning that closeness doesn't have to be constant to be real. You can still be loved when a message remains unanswered. You can still matter when someone needs space.

This is the slow, gentle work of regulating your nervous system — noticing the panic when it rises and saying to yourself, : "*I hear you, but I am okay.* Over time, you may need less reassurance. You may still want connection — of course — but you won't feel like you're losing your footing every time it slips momentarily out of view.



Reflection Space

Your Path to Feeling Safe

- When do you notice your nervous system becoming anxious or unsettled in your relationship?

- What practices or thoughts help you feel more grounded and safe inside yourself?

- How might you remind yourself that your worth and your partner's love aren't constantly being tested?

Truths Seekers need to hear

It is okay to be you.
You are not too much, too intense,
or too clingy.
You do not have to earn love by
being perfect or by pleasing others.

You do not need to be constantly available
to be a good friend
You have limits too.
It's okay to say no.
You are worthy of closeness and care —
even when you're anxious or afraid.

If Your Partner is a Seeker

If you have a partner or loved one who is a Seeker, understanding and compassion from you can make a world of difference. Their reactions are rarely about you as a person. They are about their blueprint getting stirred. Here are my top 3 tips for loving seekers well:

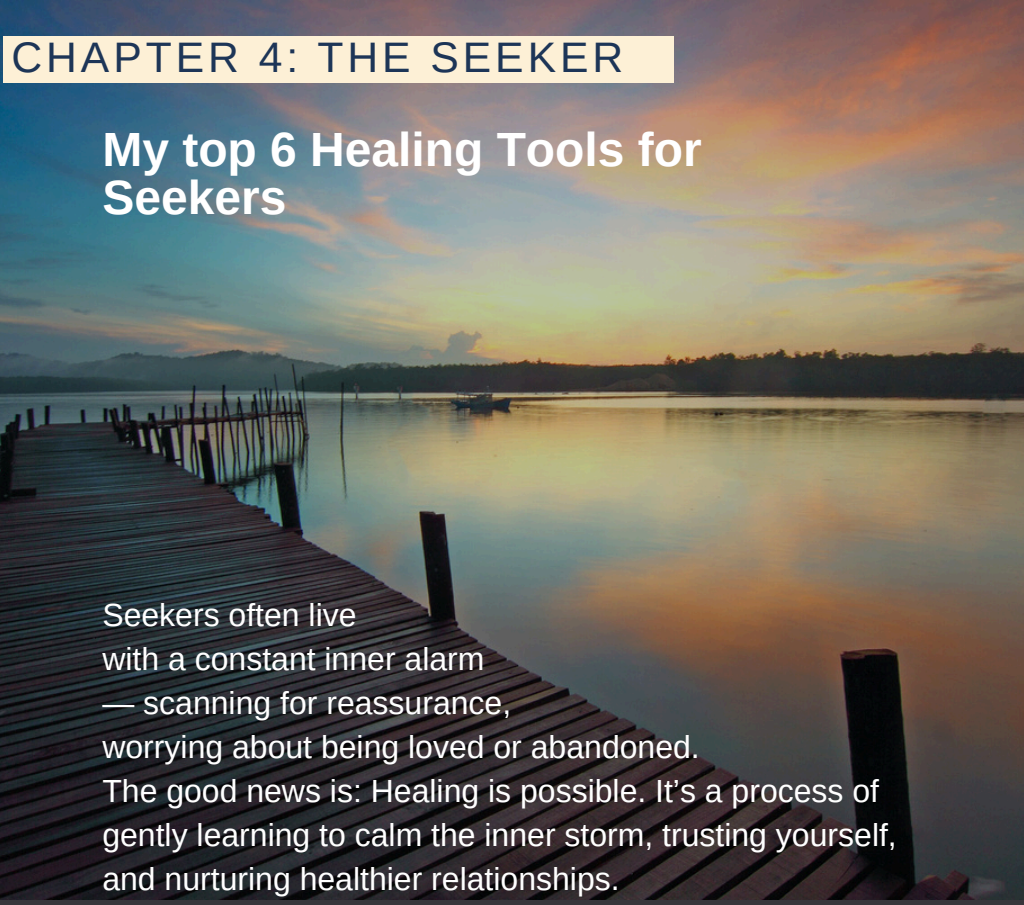
Use reassuring words, and repeat them more often than you might find necessary.

Avoid pulling away when your partner gets emotional — that's often when he or she needs you most.

Don't shame your partner for needing closeness. It's a big part of who they are.



My top 6 Healing Tools for Seekers



Seekers often live
with a constant inner alarm
— scanning for reassurance,
worrying about being loved or abandoned.
The good news is: Healing is possible. It's a process of gently learning to calm the inner storm, trusting yourself, and nurturing healthier relationships.

Tool 1: Notice the Seeker Within You

Healing begins with awareness. Many seekers don't initially realise how much their early experiences shape their feelings in relationships. Recognising your emotional blueprint without criticising yourself for it is a crucial first step towards healing.
Speak to yourself using kind words like: "I notice I am feeling anxious. I am wondering what's triggered it. What do I need right now?"



Tool 2: Use Calming Tools when your Inner Storm Rages

Here are my personal top 5 Self-Soothing practices

a. Breathe

Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, hold for two, exhale slowly for four through your mouth. Repeat five times using the fingers on one hand to count.
Reflection:

How does your body feel before and after this breathing exercise?

b. Soothing Touch

Gently place your hand on your heart to signal safety to your nervous system. I often speak reassuringly to myself at the same time using words like: “This feels hard, I know. You are safe. You are not alone.”

Which words feel most comforting to you? How does your body respond when you use them?

c. Safe Inner Space

Imagine a peaceful, safe place that brings inner calm. My personal safe inner place is a covered beach chair in a landscape in the North of Germany. I can bring it up anywhere, anytime, always carrying this special memory from a long-gone holiday with me. When I bring up the image, I can almost feel the wind on my skin and hear the sound of seagulls.

Having used this image a lot, my body now instantly relaxes when I think of it.



What could become your safe inner space? What image, whether something you know or something you instinctively love, comes to mind? Practice bringing up this image whenever you need to feel calm.

d. 5-4-3-2-1 Exercise

When life spirals out of control, use this grounding technique for the five senses:

- **Five** things you see
- **Four** things you can touch
- **Three** things you hear
- **Two** things you smell
- **One** thing you taste

This exercise is a great way to focus on what is in the present rather than being swept away by our inner feelings of turmoil.

What did you notice about your surroundings and your feelings after doing this exercise?



Tool 3: Compassionate Letter Writing

Write a letter or email to yourself from the perspective of your wise, caring future self to your present anxious self.

Before you start

- Reflect on feelings honestly without judgment
- Trace the roots of your anxiety back to past experiences
- Offer kindness and patience to yourself
- Celebrate your resilience and progress



Writing the Letter

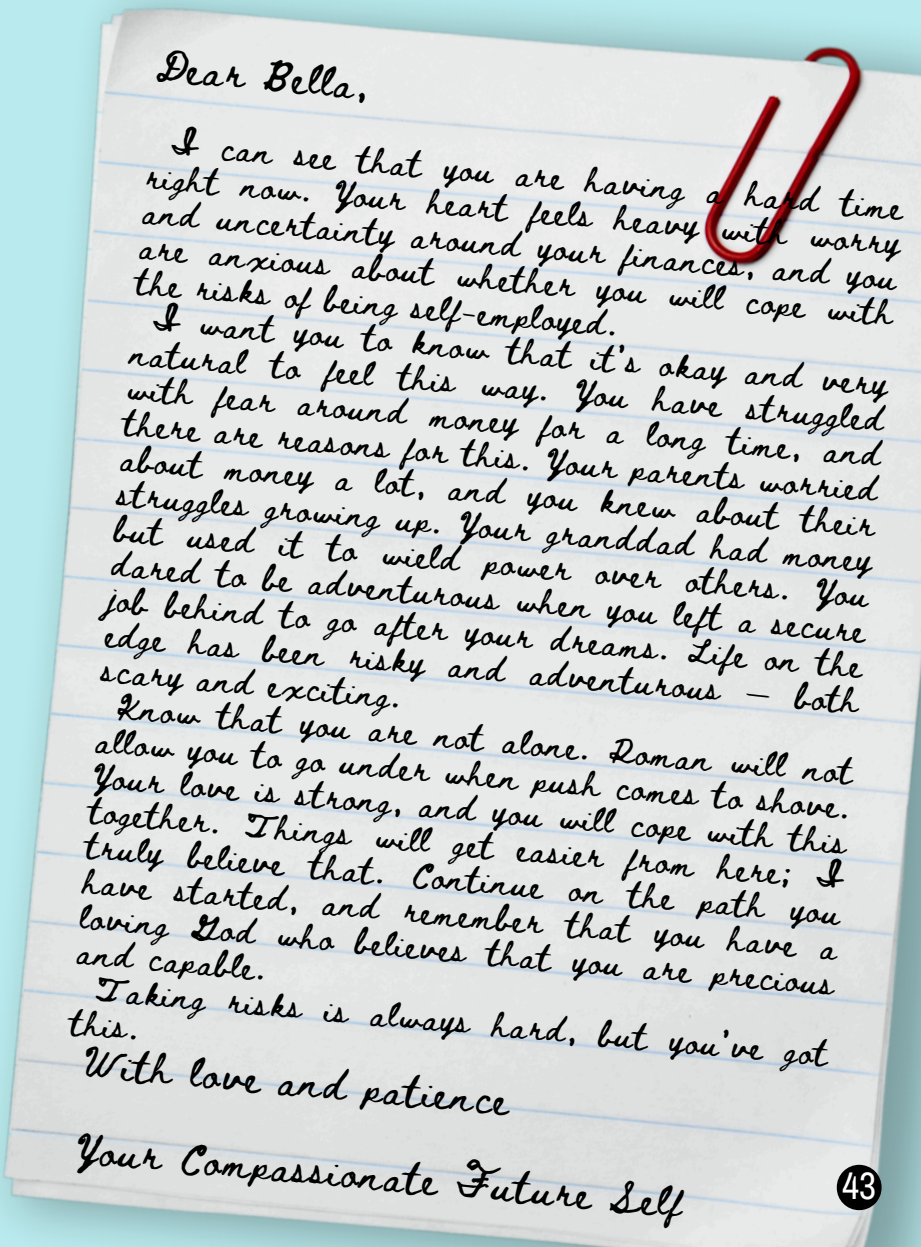
Step 1

Close your eyes and imagine your future self — wise, caring, patient, and full of compassion.

Step 2

Begin writing a letter from that future self to your present self. Consider:
What do you notice about your feelings right now?
Where might these feelings come from?
How can your future self offer reassurance, guidance, and support?
What strengths and resilience can your future self celebrate in you?

Here's an example of a letter I wrote to myself when I was just starting out in private practice. I'm sharing it with you in the hope that it inspires you to write your own compassionate letter about a situation that feels meaningful in your life right now.



Dear Bella,

I can see that you are having a hard time right now. Your heart feels heavy with worry and uncertainty around your finances, and you are anxious about whether you will cope with the risks of being self-employed.

I want you to know that it's okay and very natural to feel this way. You have struggled with fear around money for a long time, and there are reasons for this. Your parents worried about money a lot, and you knew about their struggles growing up. Your granddad had money but used it to wield power over others. You dared to be adventurous when you left a secure job behind to go after your dreams. Life on the edge has been risky and adventurous – both scary and exciting.

Know that you are not alone. Roman will not allow you to go under when push comes to shove. Your love is strong, and you will cope with this together. Things will get easier from here; I truly believe that. Continue on the path you have started, and remember that you have a loving God who believes that you are precious and capable.

Taking risks is always hard, but you've got this.

With love and patience

Your Compassionate Future Self

Step 3

After writing, take a moment to read the letter aloud to yourself. Notice how your body and mind respond.

- How did it feel to receive compassion from your future self?
- What insights or encouragement did your letter provide?
- How can you bring this compassionate perspective into your daily life?



Tool 4: Learn to Communicate Your Needs with Confidence

Purpose:

Communicating your needs calmly and clearly is key to building connection and understanding in relationships.

Steps:

1. **Practice what relationship expert John Gottman calls a soft start up.**
Begin by talking about your feelings rather than what the other person is doing wrong.

2. **Describe the situation clearly:**
Name the specific situation and a concrete need.

3. **Use examples for guidance:**
“I feel anxious when I don’t hear from you all day.I need reassurance that you love and care for me.”

“I felt sad when I didn’t get the job I really wanted. When something like this happens, I need a listening ear. Can you please take some time for me to process what happened this afternoon? You don’t need to do anything, just be there.”

4

Practice tolerating brief discomfort: Use self-soothing strategies from earlier exercises when reassurance isn't immediately available.

- What needs are most important for you to communicate to your partner?
- How might you start expressing these calmly and clearly?
- What self-soothing strategies could help if reassurance isn't immediate?



Tool 5: Create Soothing Habits of Connection with Your Partner

Suggestions:

1. **Daily Check-In Ritual:** Spend 5 minutes before or after a meal talking about your day. Share stresses and highlights.
2. **Share Appreciation:** Daily, tell your partner one genuine thing you appreciate about them and ask them to do the same.
3. **Agree on a Safe Word:** Choose a word to signal when you need calm presence or emotional support.
4. **Physical Connection:** Gentle, regular touch (holding hands, hugs) releases oxytocin and reduces anxiety.



Reflection Space

- Which of these habits could you start incorporating this week?
- What might get in the way, and how could you navigate it?
- How does each habit make you feel in your body and mind?

Tool 6: Embrace Professional Support for Deeper Healing

Some wounds run deep. Counselling or therapy can help you trace your current experiences back to the roots of your emotional blueprints. Attachment-focused work, in particular, can help you explore the origins of relational patterns and practice new ways of connecting.

Consider counselling or therapy if you notice:

- You feel stuck in old patterns
- Anxiety or fear repeatedly interferes with your relationships
- You want structured guidance to practice new ways of connecting with yourself and your partner

Choosing a counsellor or therapist:

- Look for someone you feel comfortable with
- If you are interested in attachment-focused work, ask if they approach therapy through this lens (e.g., Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT))



“I need my space.”

Life from the Ranger’s perspective



Some people move through relationships maintaining their distance, often feeling uneasy about emotional closeness. They like their space and intimacy can feel overwhelming, risky, or unpredictable. Not because they don’t want connection, but because their early experiences taught them to rely on themselves and manage their own emotional needs.

If that resonates with you, I invite you to explore the experience and survival strategies of the Ranger Blueprint. We will look at how it forms, how it manifests, and how growth is possible if you would like to shift things. Or maybe you have a partner who has characteristics of the Ranger — then this chapter will help you understand the lens through which they are experiencing the world.

How the Ranger Pattern Forms

Children who grow into Ranger patterns often had caregivers who, in one way or another, were less available emotionally. Sometimes this looked like practical and reliable caregiving where love was shown through action and problem-solving rather than emotional conversations. Other times, it looked like more distant caregiving, where children felt unseen or unsupported.

While these early experiences can look different on the surface, they share a common thread: It did not feel safe or reliable to turn to emotions for comfort.

Children in these situations often reached the same conclusion early on:
“It’s safer to depend on myself than to rely on others for emotional support.”
From here, the Ranger blueprint begins to form.



Rangers learn to:

- Rely on themselves for safety and stability
- Value facts, practical solutions, and self-sufficiency

What began as a survival strategy in childhood becomes a lasting pattern: strength in independence, but also a tendency to keep emotional needs tucked away.

The Heart of the Ranger Blueprint

Rangers tend to favour analysis, observation, and factual information over emotions or speculations. Emotional intensity, particularly in close relationships, can feel challenging or overwhelming.

Typical Ranger responses in emotionally charged situations include:

- Pulling back or withdrawing from the interaction
- Focusing on facts, descriptions, or analysis rather than feelings
- Shutting down internally or minimising the emotional content
- Displaying defensiveness when the emotional space feels unsafe

These behaviours are protective, not indicative of a lack of care. They reflect an early learning that closeness without boundaries can feel unpredictable or threatening. Emotional spaces are perceived as less structured and harder to control, triggering a need for self-reliance and emotional distance.



Reflection Space

When a partner shares feelings, what is your typical response?
Do you notice a shift toward factual analysis, withdrawal, or defensiveness when feelings are communicated?
How do these reactions affect your relational closeness or communication with your partner and loved ones?

Shifts in the Field: Stories of Change for Rangers



Claire & Alistair

Claire avoids discussing emotions with her partner Alistair. After a minor disagreement, she experiments with a new kind of communicating. She texts:
"I felt shut out today, and it made me want to withdraw. I'm working on being more open with you."
Her partner responds with understanding. For the first time, Claire experiences a sense of shared understanding without feeling overwhelmed by emotional intensity.

Joseph & Gill

Joseph rarely asks for help. But for the first time when his car breaks down, instead of silently struggling, he calls his partner Gill:
"I could really use a hand."
The relief is immediate — both because assistance is provided and because Joseph navigated the discomfort of vulnerability with his fiancée.





Reflection Space

- Can you identify specific situations in your recent relationships where you withdrew or focused on facts when the other person wanted to connect on an emotional level?
- How did this behaviour affect your partner's sense of connection or safety?
- Are there recurring themes or triggers that consistently bring out your Ranger strategies?

My 6 Top Tips for Rangers Who Want to see Shifts

The Ranger blueprint can feel like living behind a shield — protective but isolating. Growth for this archetype involves learning to engage with closeness without losing independence, and to tolerate emotions without becoming defensive.



Tool 1: Recognise Your Protective Patterns



Become aware of your Ranger strategies realising that they are learned responses that you have developed and perfected over time, often over many years. The good news is that we can unlearn what does not serve us any longer and that we can relate to our partners in new ways. This will require stepping out of our comfort zone, but the reward will be great if we dare to do that.

Notice without judgment when you:

- Withdraw from emotional discussions
- Shift to factual or analytical perspectives
- Minimise or avoid engagement with feelings



Reflection Space

What physical or mental cues signal that you are entering a protective pattern (e.g., tense posture, racing thoughts, analysing instead of feeling)?

Tool 2: Connect with your Emotions

a. Emotion Grid

When you notice yourself withdrawing from others, pause for a moment and do the following:

1. **Look at the list of core feelings on the emotion grid.**
2. **Identify which feelings are present** for you in this moment.
3. **Rate the intensity** of each feeling on a scale from **1 (low / not present) to 5 (high / very strong)**.

FEELING	INTENSITY 1	2	3	4	5
 ANGER					
 SADNESS					
 JOY					
 SADNESS					
 DISGUST					

If this feels difficult, remember: every emotion carries important information. Use the descriptions below to help you understand what each emotion is signalling.



ANGER

Anger – tells us that we perceive injustice or that a boundary has been crossed.



SADNESS

Sadness – tells us that we have lost something, which can include a dream or expectation that has been shattered.



JOY

Joy – tells us about what is working and what feels rewarding



FEAR

Fear – tells us what we perceive as a threat.



DISGUST

Disgust – tells us about things that we perceive as harmful or wrong.



b. Quick Body Scan

When you find yourself withdrawing or shutting down do this exercise:

- **Ground & Breathe:** Stand or sit, feel your feet on the ground, take 2 deep breaths. Notice any tightness or tension in your body.
- **Name & Connect:** Pick one area of tightness. Ask: “What emotion might this tightness reflect?” Then ask: “What recent event could be linked to this feeling?”
- **Release & Ready:** Breathe into the tension, consciously relax that spot, and visualize moving forward with awareness and ease.

Example of a Body Scan:

1. Ground & Breathe:
You notice your shoulders are tight while standing during a break. Take two deep breaths, feeling your feet on the trail.

2. Name & Connect:
Ask yourself: “What emotion might this tightness reflect?”
You realise it’s frustration.
Then ask: “*What recent event could be linked?”*
You recall a stressful meeting with your manager earlier that day. You did not feel respected by him.

3. Release & Ready:
Breathe into your shoulders, let them drop slightly, and imagine moving forward with lighter, calmer energy.



Tool 3: Know Your Needs

For many Rangers, it can feel uncomfortable or off-putting to label something as a “need.” Often, my ranger clients share that the word need feels “needy” to them. But just like emotions, needs provide specific information about what must happen for us to feel okay or happy. Needs are directly linked to our feelings

.

For example:

- If you feel sad, you might need reassurance or connection.
- If you feel angry, you might need space or independence.

The key is to identify the feeling first, then connect it with the corresponding need.

Common needs include:

- Space,
- understanding,
- reassurance,
- connection,
- independence,
- kindness,
- honesty,
- safety,
- support,
- patience,
- reliability

Daily Exercise:

- Recall a recent situation.
- Identify one feeling and one need.
- Write a sentence connecting them, for example:

"T*his morning I felt frustrated when my partner didn't ask about my interview. I need support when something important happens."*

"*I felt annoyed when our plans changed. I need reliability."*



Reflection Space

Reflect on the moments when you tried a small act of vulnerability. What did you notice about your thoughts, emotions, and body sensations?



Tool 4: Practice a Soft Start-Up

Sharing doesn't mean making a demand. It's about offering a factual, concise expression of what you feel about a particular situation and a relating need or request. The key is to start gently - that is why relationship researcher John Gottman calls it a gentle or soft start-up. A soft start-up is a simple way to keep safety in the conversation while practicing honest engagement.

Examples:

- *"I noticed I felt uneasy when plans changed. I'd appreciate more clarity next time."*
- *"I felt frustrated when equipment wasn't ready. I need reliability so we can do the job safely."*
- *"I felt overlooked when my input wasn't asked for. I need to feel included when decisions affect me."*

Notice the pattern above. Each start up begins with

- a feeling feeling you noticed
- followed by a situation
- and finishes with a particular need or request.



Daily Sharing Practice:
Each day, recall one small situation.

Step 1: Name the feeling. → **Step 2: Link it to a concrete situation** → **Step 3: Share the need or request.**

The practice isn't about always getting a perfect response from others. It's about building what I call the sharing muscle so your feelings and needs don't stay bottled up.

Tool 5: The Safe Space Letter

The goal of this exercise is to practice structured emotional expression in private before you start thinking about sharing about feellings with others.

Exercise:
Write a letter to a trusted person without sending it.

Include:

- Appreciation for them
- A moment of closeness
- One emotion
- One need difficult to voice
- End with an , e.g., “I value our connection and am working on expressing feelings more clearly.”

Example:

Dear Sue,

Yesterday, when we were asked to adjust plans last minute, I really appreciated how you stayed calm and steady. It helped me focus and reminded me that we work well together under pressure.
I also enjoyed that quick laugh we shared afterward about the mix-up — it lightened the moment and reminded me of our connection.
What I don't usually share is that I felt uneasy when the plan changed. Sudden shifts bring up uncertainty for me, and it's not easy to admit that. In those times, I realize I need more clarity to stay grounded and effective.
I value our partnership, and I'm working on expressing my feelings and needs more openly so we can keep building trust.

Love, Ron



Tool 6: Get Professional Trail Support

How Counselling or Coaching Can Help a Ranger
Rangers are trained to stay calm, capable, and self-reliant, but that can make it hard to admit when stress builds up or when emotions get heavy. Coaching or Counselling offers a space to step out of that “always strong” mode and check in. It’s not about weakness — it’s about sharpening awareness and protecting both your health and your partnership.

Coaching/Counselling can help you to learn tools to

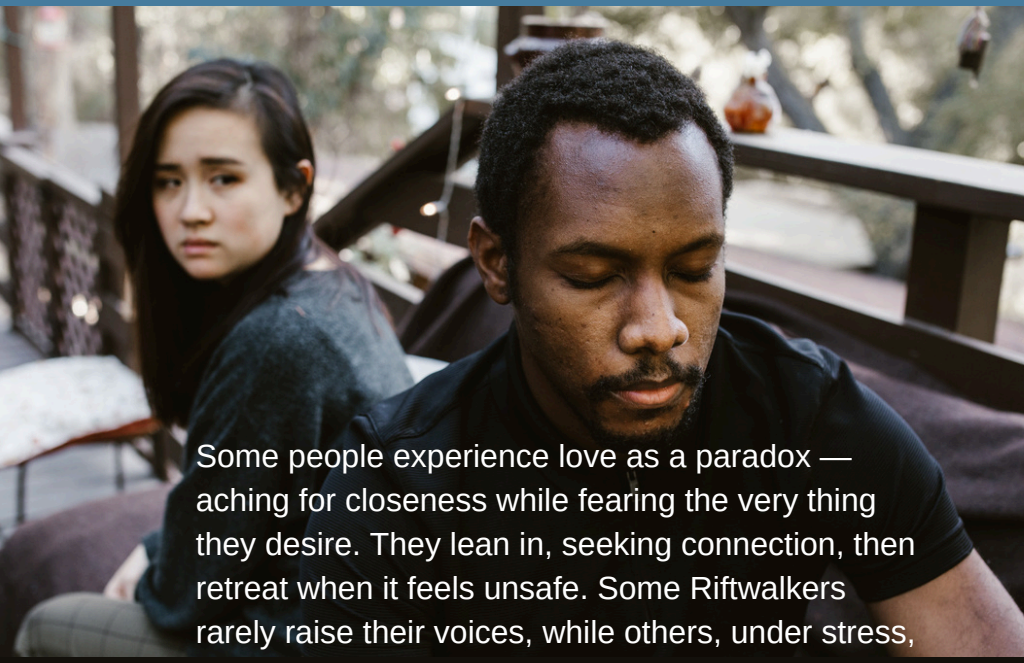
- **Catch stress early** before it turns into burnout.
- **Turn emotions into useful signals** by linking them to needs like clarity, support, or space.
- **Improving communication** with your partner and others by practicing clear, calm sharing instead of bottling things up.

Tips for Rangers When Looking for a Counsellor.

- Start with a low-pressure chat. Many therapists offer short phone consultations. Use that time to see if they get you and the connection feels respectful.
- Name your goals upfront. If your focus is reducing stress, improving communication, or building healthier partnerships, say tell them clearly.
- Expect practice, not perfection. Professional support isn’t about dramatic breakthroughs every session — it’s about steady tools you can bring back to your daily work and relationships.

“I need you, but I don’t feel safe.”

Life from the Riftwalker’s perspective



Some people experience love as a paradox — aching for closeness while fearing the very thing they desire. They lean in, seeking connection, then retreat when it feels unsafe. Some Riftwalkers rarely raise their voices, while others, under stress, find fear transforming into sharpness or even anger. If any of this this sounds familiar, you may carry what psychologists call disorganized attachment. Here, we call it the emotional blueprint of the Riftwalker, because living with this pattern often feels like standing at the edge of a rift, torn between safety and danger, connection and isolation.
This chapter explores where this blueprint begins, how it plays out in relationships, and , most importantly, how to step off the edge and find steadier ground.

Where the Riftwalker Blueprint Begins

For many Riftwalkers, childhood was confusing, harsh, and unpredictable.

Caregivers might have been warm and loving one moment, then frightening or punishing the next. Some children faced physical punishment, sharp criticism, or emotional neglect.

A child in that kind of environment learns quickly:

- Safety isn't guaranteed.
- Love can vanish without warning.
- Staying hyperaware might prevent harm — or at least prepare for it.

By adulthood, this wiring often shows up as a storm of mixed signals: yearning for closeness but struggling to trust it, retreating when connection feels too intense, or — for some — lashing out when fear feels too big to contain.



Reflection Space

How do I notice the patterns of longing for connection withdrawal, or hypervigilance showing up in my current relationships?

When I long for closeness, what fears or doubts tend to arise for me?

What early experiences might be influencing how I respond to love, safety, or trust today?



Stories of Riftwalkers

Jason and Nadia — The Pull and Retreat

Nadia's childhood was strict and unpredictable. As an adult, she often worries that Jason won't stay. When he tries to be close, she sometimes freezes, unsure how to respond. Later, loneliness floods in, and she reaches for him again — seeking closeness but unsure how to hold on when she finds it.

Aaron and Priya — When Fear Turns to Anger

Aaron grew up in a house where affection was tangled with punishment. When Priya doesn't answer his call after a difficult day, Aaron's fear of abandonment surges. That fear flips into sharp words — anger meant to shield him from the unbearable sting of rejection. Moments later, shame floods in. He doesn't want to hurt Priya, but his nervous system hasn't yet learned another way to feel safe.

The Complexity of the Riftwalker Blueprint

Being a Riftwalker can feel like living in a storm. You may notice:

- Seeking closeness and then retreating suddenly
- Struggling to regulate emotions when fear is triggered
- Reading small shifts in others as danger or rejection
- Feeling “too much” or “not enough,” often in the same moment
- Difficulty trusting that love is real or consistent

Reflection Space



Which of these Riftwalker experiences resonate with you most? Can you give an example from your own life?

Can you recall a time when you interpreted a small shift in someone’s behavior as rejection or danger? How accurate do you think your interpretation was?

How easy or difficult is it for you to believe that love can be real and consistent? Why?

Truths riftwalkers need to hear:

You are not broken -
your patterns are survival strategies.
Feeling fear and longing at the same time
makes sense,
especially when your early experiences
taught you that life and relationships
weren't always safe.
Healing takes time and repetition
and that's okay.
You deserve safe, steady, and reciprocal love.
Your body and nervous system
can learn safety and trust.



If Your Partner is a Riftwalker

Being in a relationship with a Riftwalker requires presence and patience. Their reactions might sometimes leave you baffled or hurt. When this happens remember, this is not about you, but about their emotional blueprint being activated.



My top 4 tips for loving riftwalkers well.

1. Offer consistency and calm responses.
2. Respect their need for closeness and space without withdrawing love.
3. Celebrate small steps of vulnerability — they are milestones.
4. Avoid taking sudden shifts personally; these are nervous-system responses, not choices.

With time and intention safety and trust can be built, creating a relationship that feels less like walking an edge and more like resting in a shared meadow. At the same time it is important that you also stay present with yourself, your energy levels, needs for comfort and space.

My top 6 Healing Tools for Riftwalkers



Riftwalkers often live with a quiet but persistent tension—a sense that danger could appear at any moment, or that safety and love might vanish without warning.

The good news is: healing is possible. It's a process of learning to soothe your nervous system, notice and respond to your triggers with compassion, and gradually build a sense of safety in yourself and in your relationships. Having practical tools can make this process more accessible.

Below are six healing tools that serve as practical techniques to regulate your nervous system, notice and respond to triggers, and gradually strengthen your sense of calm and safety.

Tool 1: Notice the Riftwalker Within

The first step towards healing is realising that you are running an internal program shaped by your learned responses to a sometimes unsafe environment. Your reactions—sometimes intense, sudden, or confusing—are not flaws. They are echoes of earlier experiences, often rooted in childhood trauma, when love felt unpredictable and life didn't always feel safe. Recognizing these responses as survival strategies can help you meet yourself with compassion instead of judgment. The good news is that you have learned these behaviours which means that you can also unlearn them and replace them with behaviours that are more helpful in your present environment.

Reflection Space



How does recognizing your reactions as learned behaviors change the way you feel about yourself?

Which unhelpful behaviors would you like to replace, and what new behaviours could you practice instead?

When you feel triggered speak kindly to the frightened part inside of you. You might say:

"I notice I'm reacting strongly right now.
I am feeling frightened.
My nervous system is remembering something from an earlier time in my life.
What do I need to feel a little safer right now?"

Learning to speak to ourselves this way can feel difficult, especially if we have a loud inner critical voice telling us to "get our act together" or insisting there's no reason we should feel this way. Compassionate self-talk is a practice—and each time you notice your inner critical voice and respond with care, you strengthen your capacity for safety and self-understanding.





Tool 2: Calm the Body First

For Riftwalkers, the path to healing begins in the body, not the mind.

Why is that?

Because our nervous system needs to feel safe before our brain can start to believe it. In other words, we cannot think our way to safety—we need to feel it physically. Riftwalkers often live in a constant state of hyper-awareness, so cultivating safety begins with calming the nervous system.

This may sound basic—or even unnecessary to some—but research consistently shows that addressing the body first is essential for sustainable healing.

Many of the tools I use with Riftwalkers are already described in the Seeker chapter under Tool 2: Use Calming Tools When Your Inner Storm Rages. These same practices form the foundation of the work Riftwalkers need to do as well.
In addition, here are some extended exercises and variations of those techniques that may be especially helpful for Riftwalkers.

Over the years, I've worked with many Riftwalkers and realized that we need to focus on grounding and breathing before any other work can take place. When the amygdala —the part of the brain responsible for fight or flight—is activated, it must be calmed before we can fully access the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain which governs logical thinking. Put simply: we cannot think rationally if our body is in distress.
Once the fight-or-flight response has been soothed, we can begin to use tools for deeper emotional, cognitive and relational work.



"What have you noticed about yourself when your fight-or-flight response is triggered?"



a. **Breathing Hands**
This is one of my favourite breathing exercises because it's simple and always available—you only need your hands and your breath.

Here's how it works:

1. Spread one hand wide, like a star.
2. With your other hand, slowly trace up and down each finger.
3. Inhale as you trace upward.
4. Exhale as you trace downward.
5. Do this for all five fingers, then repeat as needed until your breathing slows and your body begins to soften.

How could you integrate this exercise into your routines when feeling stressed?

b. Combined Anchor- Breath- Safe Place Practice
This simple practice pairs a physical movement with breathing and a visualisation to create a reliable signal of calm.

1. **Choose Your Anchor**
   Pick a small hand movement — like pressing your thumb and finger together or placing your palm over your chest

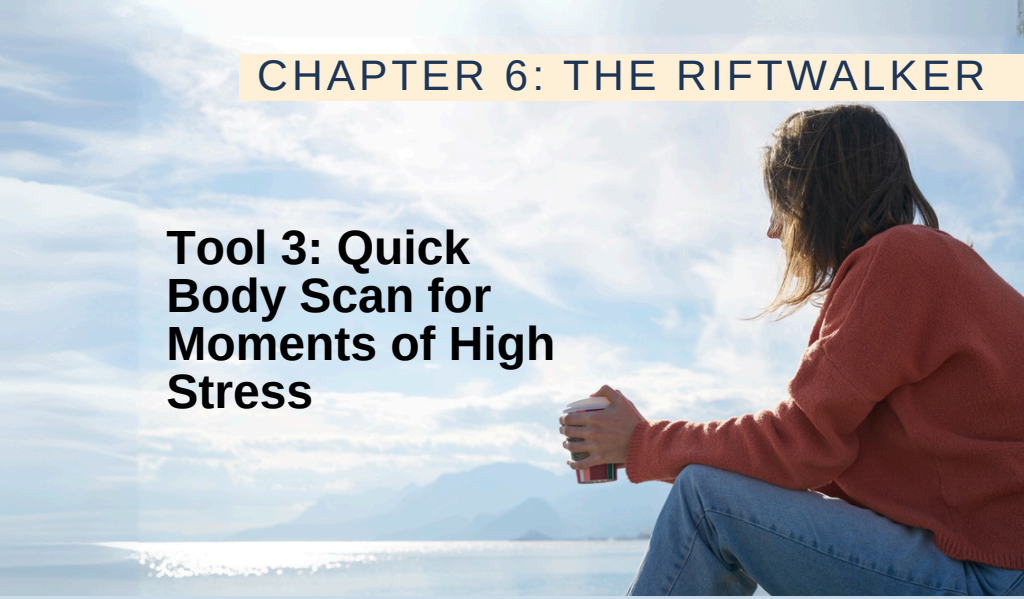
2. **Pair It with Breathing**
   Inhale slowly for a count of four, pause for two, exhale for four. Repeat 3 times.

3. **Imagine Your Safe Place**
   Visualize a setting where you feel deeply safe — a quiet cabin, a favourite park, or even a childhood blanket fort. Notice the colours, smells, textures, and sounds in that special calming place. Let your body soak in that sense of safety.

4. **Practice Daily**
   Repeat this exercise regularly when you're calm so that the hand movement becomes a shortcut to safety

What did you notice in your body and mind when using your anchor, breath, and safe place?





Tool 3: Quick Body Scan for Moments of High Stress

1. **Pause and Breathe** – Stop for a moment. Take 2–3 slow, deep breaths.
2. **Notice One Spot** – Choose the area where tension or discomfort is strongest (e.g. chest, stomach, jaw, shoulders).
3. **Place a Hand There** – Gently rest your hand on that spot to offer comfort and attention.
4. **Name the Feeling** – Silently label it: *"This is anxiety," "This is fear," "This is shame."*
5. **Breathe and Soften** – Inhale slowly, imagining your breath reaching that spot; exhale and let your body soften slightly.

Tip: Even 1–2 minutes of this practice helps your nervous system recognize that vulnerability and discomfort can exist safely.

What happened when you focused on a tense spot and offered it attention?"



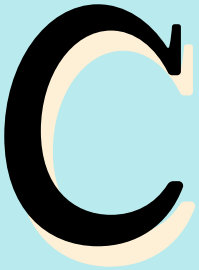
Tool 4: 5 min C.A.R.E. journalling practice

The **compassionate letter-writing exercise** from the Seeker chapter is an excellent practice for Riftwalkers. It helps you connect with your younger self, acknowledge survival strategies, and respond with kindness.
However, when you feel very triggered and want something short and simple, I recommend journalling using the care **C.A.R.E**.practice is a quick, accessible way to regulate intense emotions and build self-compassion when triggers feel overwhelming.

Before You Begin:

- Keep a journal in an accessible place or grab your computer so you can start quickly.
- This exercise only takes about 5 minutes and helps you notice a trigger, connect it to your patterns, and respond with self-compassion.

C.A.R.E. Journalling Practice Steps:



Capture the Trigger (1min)
Write down what is currently upsetting or activating you.
Include both the situation and your internal reactions (thoughts, feelings, body sensations).

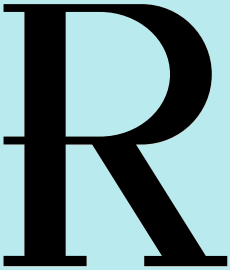
Example:
“I feel tense and worried because my friend hasn’t responded to my message.”



Acknowledge Your Patterns (1min)
Reflect on how your younger self might have experienced similar situations.
Name any survival strategies you notice (clinging, withdrawal, hyper-vigilance).

Example:
“When I was a child, I worried adults might disappear or not care. Now I feel the same need for reassurance.”

C.A.R.E. Journalling Practice Steps (continued):



Respond with Compassion (2min)
Write a few kind, supportive sentences to yourself, as if you were a caring adult or friend.

Example:
“It’s okay to feel anxious. I am here. You are safe now, and your feelings are valid.”



Explore Needs & Close (1min)
Ask yourself gently: “What do I need right now to feel a little safer or calmer?”
List 1–2 simple actions: deep breaths, grounding, stretching, or reaching out for support.

End with a short affirmation: “I am learning to care for myself. My feelings are valid.”



what parts of the CARE practice felt most helpful for calming or supporting yourself?"

Tool 5: The Riftwalker Reassurance Protocol

From Rationalising to Regulating and Reconnecting
When loneliness or fear of abandonment rises, the instinct is to overthink — analysing texts, tone, timing, or body language. But Riftwalkers don't need more thinking; they need a reliable sequence to ground, soothe, and reconnect. This protocol combines some of the practices we have already learned:



1 Regulate First

Use your body to signal safety:

- Breathing Hands – Trace your hand slowly, in for 4, pause for 2, out for 4.
- Anchor & Safe Place – Touch your anchor and visualize your safe space.
- Grounding Object – Hold something comforting, like a small stone or place your hand on your heart.

2 Name the Feeling

Say the truth, without judgment:

- *"I feel scared."*
- *"I feel lonely."*
- *"I feel unsafe waiting."*

3 Offer Soothing Words

Place a hand over your heart and say:

"This is fear. It makes sense that I am feeling that."

4 Choose a Healthy Action

- Send a soft signal to your partner: *"Thinking of you."*
- Do a calming ritual like stretching, walking, or journaling.
- Call a safe friend — not to analyse, but to share presence.

5 **Reflect After the Wave**

When calm, reflect:

- Is there evidence of actual disconnection?
- What reassurance would help next time?
- Do I need to share my feelings calmly?

Practice Example: Maya

Maya notices her partner hasn't texted back for two hours. Her chest tightens; thoughts spiral to "He's losing interest."
She stops. Places her hand on her heart. Breathes slowly.

"This is fear. It's okay to feel it."

Instead of sending anxious texts, she grounds herself, then sends one neutral message:

"Hope your day is okay – thinking of you."

When her partner replies later, Maya reflects:

"I reacted to old fear. Next time, I can regulate before reaching out."



"How does using the Riftwalker Reassurance Protocol affect your sense of safety and self-compassion?"



Tool 6: Communicating Feelings and Needs Safely

For Riftwalkers, sharing feelings or asking for what we need can feel risky—past experiences may have taught us that openness leads to rejection or danger. This tool helps you practice expressing yourself in small, safe ways, starting with understanding what you're feeling and what you need.

Steps:

1. **Identify Your Feeling and Need** – Pause and notice what you're experiencing in your body and mind. Ask: "What am I feeling right now? What do I need?"

2. **Choose a Safe Person** – Someone who has shown care, consistency, or respect.

3. **Share Simply** – Communicate your feeling or need in a small, clear way:
   "I'm feeling anxious."
   "I'd like some support with this."
   Tip: Start with low-stakes situations. Even small successes help your nervous system learn that connection and expression can be safe.

? How did it feel to express your feelings or needs in a small, safe way?



Embrace Professional Support

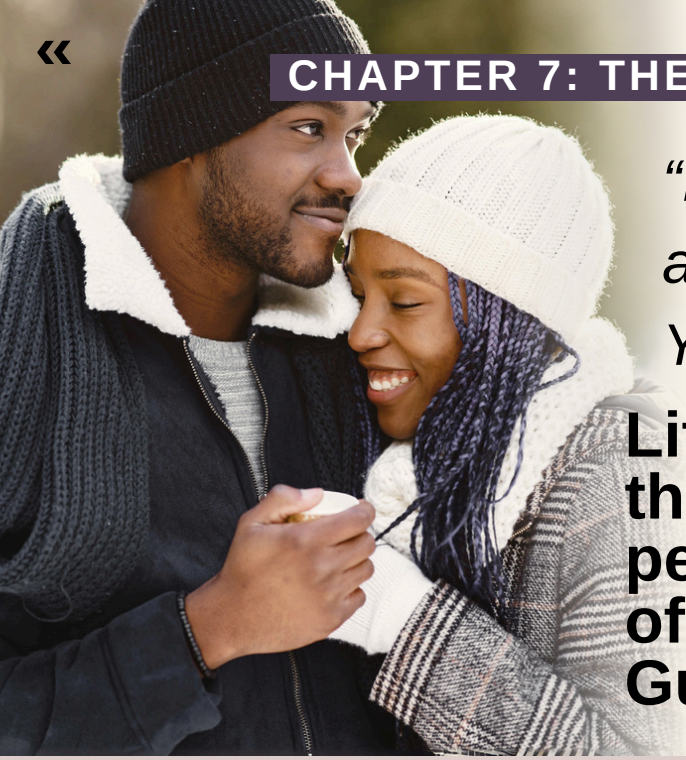
Therapy is especially helpful for riftwalkers because calm and safety can be learned through relationships, even professional ones. Experiencing consistent, caring, and predictable responses from a therapist helps retrain your brain and nervous system, making it easier to feel secure, regulate emotions, and form healthier relationships.

Counselling or Therapy can help Riftwalkers by:

- Helping you understand that your reactions are learned responses, often rooted in past trauma.
- Teaching tools like grounding, breathing, and safe visualisations to calm your nervous system.
- Providing consistent care so you can start to trust connection.
- Guiding you to express feelings, set boundaries, and ask for support in ways that feel safe.

When looking for a counsellor, it helps to think about:

- Someone who understands trauma or attachment patterns.
- Finding a therapist who is consistent and caring
- Someone who offers practical tools alongside emotional support.
- Your own trust in the counsellor is key!



CHAPTER 7: THE GUARDIAN

“I’m Steady, and I Trust You”

Life from the perspective of the Guardian.

Some people move through relationships with a quiet confidence — not because life has always been easy, but because something inside them trusts. They believe in the bonds they’ve built. They can allow space without spiralling. They tend to respond instead of reacting.

This is the essence of the Guardian Archetype — what attachment theory calls secure attachment. A Guardian is steady, grounded, and calm in connection. They know that love can be safe and reliable, and their presence offers reassurance to others. Guardians enjoy closeness and intimacy, yet they are also comfortable in their own company.

If this feels like you, or like something you’d like to grow into, this chapter is for you. Being a Guardian doesn’t mean being perfect. It means being resilient — bringing a steady presence to relationships, even when life gets messy or difficult.

The basis for the Guardian Blueprint

Becoming a Guardian doesn't require perfect parents—just consistent care most of the time. This archetype develops when caregivers are generally responsive, reliable, and supportive, even if they sometimes make mistakes. Children learn that, overall, their needs will be met, and that it's safe to trust and rely on others.
As a result, Guardians usually feel comfortable expressing emotions, asking for help, and forming close, healthy relationships. This emotional blueprint can also develop in adulthood through supportive friendships, romantic relationships, or counselling.

What this Emotional Blueprint Feels Like

Guardians trust that they are worthy of love and that others can be counted on. They expect care and offer care in return. They don't need perfection — just consistency, honesty, and respect.
Just because you are a guardian doesn't mean you never feel jealous, sad, or afraid. It means you know how to feel those emotions without losing your balance. You can soothe yourself, reach out in healthy ways, and stay connected without losing your sense of self. And if things don't go according to plan you tend to get back on your feet fairly quickly.

The Guardian in Action



Anna and Daniel

Anna grew up learning to rely on herself because her parents were emotionally unavailable. She kept people at a distance, afraid to be vulnerable. Daniel, with his secure upbringing, stayed calm and steady. When Anna withdrew after arguments, Daniel didn't chase or punish. He gave her space and stayed kind and open. Over time, Anna began to believe that love didn't have to be a fight. Daniel's steady presence helped her feel safe enough to lower her guard.

Ellie and Tom

Tom's Seeker blueprint meant he needed constant reassurance. Ellie's Guardian blueprint made her unshaken by his emotional waves. She didn't try to fix him; she simply showed up steady and loving. Over time, Tom learned to regulate his own nervous system. Their daily rituals — like check-ins and shared meals — built safety. Tom felt more secure, and Ellie's calm presence was the anchor.





If Your Partner is a Guardian

If you have a Guardian partner and you're not a Guardian yourself, being with someone secure can feel both comforting and challenging. Their calmness might make old fears feel louder or leave you wondering if they truly care, simply because they don't react the way you expect. The image of a Guardian can help: think of them as a steady, protective presence—someone whose calm and reliability create a safe container around the relationship. This doesn't mean you won't feel triggered, but it does show what consistent care and secure attachment look like in action. Their patience provides a space where your vulnerability can be met with understanding and safety. It's not about one person "fixing" the other—it's about building trust, patience, and love together. When you feel stuck, their steadiness is an invitation to explore what safety could feel like for you too.

My 3 top tips for Loving Guardians Well

1. Respect their need for balance between closeness and distance.
2. Practice open and kind communication, and show interest in their feelings and needs.
3. Express appreciation for their positive and consistent presence.



Reflection Space

In what ways do I bring steadiness and care into my relationships, and how does that shape the connection I have with others?



Truths to Remember if you are a Guardian

You don't have to be perfect
to be a good partner.
Your calmness is contagious.
It helps both you and your partner feel safe.
Boundaries aren't rejection —
they are a way of expressing self-love.
Your needs matter
just as much as your partner's.
Growth is a process— there's always
room to deepen your security.

My Top 6 Self Care Tools for Guardians

Tool 1: Acknowlege the Gift of being a Guardian



Many guardians don't realize what a gift it is to feel secure in themselves and what gift they themselves bring to their relationships — it just feels normal.

Reflection Space



Take a moment to reflect on your ability to feel loved and safe. Think back to the people who raised you and passed on this gift or the relationships that helped you to develop secure attachment later in life.

Write down three memories where you felt truly connected and safe — with a partner, friend, or family member. What happened? How did your body feel? What did your partner do to help you feel safe?

Tool 2: Use your breath to self soothe

Secure attachment doesn't mean you never get activated or stressed—it means you've learned ways to soothe yourself.

Breathing

You're probably already using your breath instinctively to calm down. If not, a simple technique is to take a deep breath in through your nose and slowly breathe out through your mouth.

Another effective exercise is **Breathing Hands**:

- Inhale for 4, hold for 2, exhale for 4.
- While breathing, spread the fingers on one hand like a star and trace its outline with the other hand.

This is a great way to self-regulate. If you have children in your life this is also a simple and effective way to help kids deal with stress.



Tool 3: The Container Practice



Visualize a Container
Imagine a strong, safe container—a box, bag, or chest—that can hold your thoughts and worries.



Place Your Worries Inside
When stressful thoughts or emotions arise that don't need immediate attention, notice how they feel in your body. Then place them in your imaginary container. Decide when would be a good time to revisit them so they can be acknowledged and addressed when you have the time and capacity.



Stay Present
Pay attention to how leaving these worries in the container allows you to focus on the present moment and create emotional space.



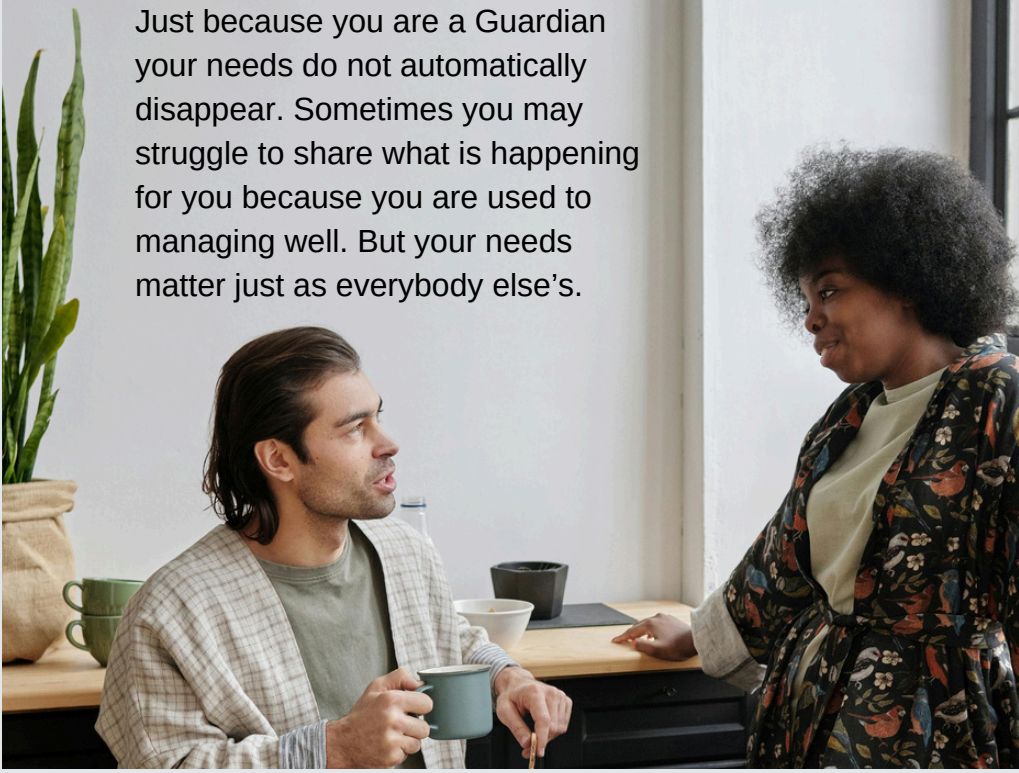
Revisit with Compassion
When it feels safe, open your container and examine its contents. Approach your thoughts and feelings with honesty, curiosity, and compassion. You might journal about them, or discuss them with a trusted partner or friend.



What does your container look like? What worries could you put in today and what would be a good time to revisit them.

Tool 4: Express Your Needs Without Fear

Just because you are a Guardian your needs do not automatically disappear. Sometimes you may struggle to share what is happening for you because you are used to managing well. But your needs matter just as everybody else's.



Exercise: Self-Check Dialogue and Soft Start Up

Ask yourself:

- What do need more of in this relationship?
- What do I need to change?
- Then communicate using Gottman's soft start up using this structure:

"I feel ___ when ___ happens. What I'd love instead is ___."

Example: "I feel lonely when we skip our evening chats. What I'd love is 15 minutes to connect after dinner."

Tool 5: The Boundary Bridge

Your steadiness is powerful, but it doesn't mean you need to carry your partner's emotions or be their therapist.

Here is a simple exercise to reflect on your boundaries:

Draw a bridge. On one side is you; on the other is your partner. Each plank is an act of connection — a hug, a conversation, a laugh. Draw a line where your side ends and theirs begins. That's your boundary.

Ask yourself:

- Where is my boundary being overstepped?
- Where can I step back and trust my partner to walk their part?

Supporting someone doesn't mean losing yourself. Your love is strongest when it's grounded in healthy boundaries.

What is one small step you could take to communicate or maintain a healthy boundary with your partner?



Tool 6 : Growing Together — Anchored in Secure Relationships

Relationship can thrive when we invest patience, care, and effort.

Relationship Rituals

Choose small daily and weekly rituals to reinforce connection with your partner, e.g.

- Sunday morning coffee with no phones
- A nightly check-in: “How are we as a couple? ”
- A 20-second hug or a 6 second kiss when one of you comes home. This is how long it takes for oxytocin to be released!

These simple acts say: I care for you and I enjoy doing life with you.

What daily and weekly rituals could you start or add to your positive interactions with your partner?





Consider Counselling or Therapy

Therapy can be helpful for Guardians because it offers a steady, caring space to explore your role in relationships while also looking after your own well-being. Having consistent support from a therapist makes it easier to stay grounded, manage stress, and bring balance into the connections you're part of. It's not about carrying everything alone but learning how to share the load and strengthen trust.

Counselling or Therapy can help Guardians by:

- Giving you space to reflect on how you show up in relationships and why it matters.
- Teaching tools for managing stress, setting boundaries, and responding calmly.
- Offering consistent care so you can recharge and stay resilient.
- Guiding you to express your needs clearly, listen deeply, and handle change with steadiness.

When Looking for a Counsellor, it Helps to Think about:

- Someone who understands relationships and attachment patterns.
- Finding a therapist who feels reliable, steady, and supportive.
- Someone who offers both practical strategies and space for reflection.
- How comfortable and safe you feel with them—your trust is key!

Reflection Space



Take a moment to reflect on what you've learned in this book.

- Write down one insight about yourself or your relationships that feels most important to carry forward.
- Then, consider one small action you can take this week to nurture safety, trust, or closeness—whether it's a conversation, a moment of self-care, or simply pausing to breathe and check in with your feelings.

This is your invitation to keep moving forward—gently, patiently, and with kindness.



If you'd like to keep reading, here are some well-known books that go deeper into the territory of attachment :

Attached by Amir Levine & Rachel Heller
– A popular, practical introduction to the main attachment styles in adult relationships.

Hold Me Tight by Dr. Sue Johnson
– A guide to Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) that helps couples strengthen bonds and heal conflict.

Wired for Love by Stan Tatkin
– A science-based approach to helping couples understand and work with their attachment differences.

Polyvagal Theory in Therapy by Deb Dana
– If you're interested in nervous system regulation and how safety and connection are wired into our bodies.

Loving Bravely by Alexandra Solomon
– Great for anyone wanting to build relational self-awareness before or during partnership.



Moving Forward Together

If you've made it this far, you've already taken a powerful step toward deeper understanding—of yourself, your partner, and the ways you both relate. You've explored the roots of emotional blueprints, seen how they shape your connections, and discovered that healing and growth are possible.

If you've noticed differences between you and your partner, don't worry. It's not a sign that something is broken. It's an invitation to learn, to grow, and to walk the path of connection side by side. Feeling secure isn't fixed or exclusive—it's a skill, a practice, and a possibility that unfolds within relationships, whether the ones you have now or those you'll build in the future.
Remember, you don't have to do this alone. Support is available, whether through The Flow Collective or other caring professionals who understand attachment and relational patterns. Reaching out can make a meaningful difference on your journey.



RELATIONFIT
COUPLES COACHING

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This ebook is for informational and educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional therapy, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of a qualified mental health professional with any questions you may have.

The names and circumstances of the client stories in this book have been changed to protect privacy. The stories are composite stories and do not represent particular individuals.

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You've explored the patterns.

What would you like to do next?

Understanding what happens between you can open up new possibilities. If you'd like some support putting that understanding into practice, there are a few ways to continue.

1

WE'RE BOTH READY TO WORK ON OUR RELATIONSHIP

Explore 2:2 Couples Coaching, where the two of you work with both of us to understand what's happening between you and create meaningful change together.

getrelationfit.co.uk →

2

I'M READY, BUT MY PARTNER ISN'T

Love Catalyst is a personalised three-month journey focused on what you can understand, influence and change from your side.

getrelationfit.co.uk/love-catalyst →

3

WE'RE NOT READY FOR COACHING – OR I'D RATHER START ON MY OWN

Try SPARK – 30 days of simple, 10-minute relationship practices you can explore individually or together, designed to bring more connection into everyday life.

getrelationfit.co.uk/spark-programme/ →

Choose what fits where you are right now.

