

It's All About YOUR Mindset!

A Mindset Makeover Coaching Mini-Series

Book One: Reframe

Transform limiting beliefs into lasting growth

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Series Vision

Welcome to *It's All About YOUR Mindset!*

If you're reading this, you're probably someone who knows there's more to life than just getting by and you're hungry for change that lasts. This series was born out of honest, heartfelt conversations with people who want meaning, growth and genuine transformation. If you're craving a practical shift or a more authentic way of living, something more profound than another self-help tip, you're right where you belong.

This isn't about chasing perfection or faking positivity, it's about giving yourself permission to slow down, listen in and build lasting shifts from the inside out. My goal? I want every book in this mini-series to feel like a conversation with a wise, caring friend. The kind of friend who listens, tells it like it is and helps you see new possibilities, not by handing out advice but by walking the journey with you. I hope each book feels insightful, practical and, above all, honest.

Book One: Reframe

We kick things off by shining a light on the beliefs, many inherited or outdated, that often guide your choices without you realising it. This isn't about snapping your fingers to 'fix' yourself but about slowing down to notice what's really running the show and learning how to rewrite those stories so your mind and your life start to feel more like home.

Book Two: Rebuild

Once you start to see things through a fresh lens, it's time to get practical. Together, we'll focus on building habits, routines and supportive rhythms that genuinely suit who you are and what matters most to you. No hustle, no impressing, just building a foundation that actually fits.

Book Three: Reset

Sometimes life gets cluttered or heavy. In this phase, you'll learn how to pause, clear mental and emotional static and make space for what matters most. We'll talk about rest, realignment and creating the room you need to hear yourself again. No guilt, just honesty and self-respect.

Book Four: Refocus

Here, we go deeper into what truly sparks you. Forget what the world thinks. We're tuning in to your values and what energises you, helping you become more intentional about where your time and attention flow. This is about living anchored to what truly lights you up.

Book Five: Recharge

Change takes energy and this book is all about protecting your well-being - mind, body, and soul. Learn real-life ways to fill your cup, keep your spark alive and show up for yourself even when the days are tough.

Book Six: Rise

Now that you've made these changes, we'll talk about the ripple effect, how your growth naturally lifts the people around you. Whether it's at home, at work or within your community, you become living proof that transformation is possible, and your example gives others permission to do the same.

Wherever you're beginning, this series will meet you right there, no ideal version of you required. Just bring your willingness and curiosity. Take what clicks. Experiment. And together, let's help your mindset serve the life you're truly meant to live - one page, one intentional step and one honest reflection at a time.

Preface: Why We Begin with Reframing

True transformation always begins with a shift in perspective. Before we can form new habits, chase new goals or experience real growth, we need to first make a conscious decision to see things differently. That's where real change takes root.

Book One: Reframe is the opening to my mini-series, *It's All About YOUR Mindset!* This isn't a book about striving for perfection, it's an invitation to open your awareness, dig a little deeper and become aware of the subtle words, assumptions, and worries that guide your everyday choices.

This project is inspired by countless honest conversations I've had with people who feel hemmed in by invisible barriers. It doesn't matter whether you're a leader, a parent, a student or a professional, so many of us are wrestling with the same question: "How do I get out of my own way?"

What I've learned is that the answer usually isn't about learning another new trick, it's about changing how we relate to the stories we already tell ourselves. The narrative running in the background shapes what we believe we're capable of and what we think is off-limits.

Every chapter in this book offers a different lens, whether it's spotting hidden obstacles, reimagining what failure means or learning to use your self-talk as a genuine springboard for growth.

My advice as you go through this book is to take it slow. Give yourself space to try out the exercises and reflect on what comes up for you. You don't have to wipe the slate clean or become someone else. The goal is to see familiar things in a brand-new way and to start building from there.

I'm glad you're here. Let's get started on your mindset renovation together!

Tope Songonuga

Founder, Mindset Makeover Mission®

Programme Purpose

Book One: Reframe is more than just a book, it's a companion for anyone who wants to experience real change. My aim isn't to hand you a list of theories but to walk alongside you through honest stories, practical strategies and gentle insights. Along the way, you'll learn how to break free from old fears and beliefs you might've inherited or absorbed, and step into a way of thinking and living that feels lighter and more possible. If you're ready for a mindset that opens more doors, this is where that shift begins.

Chapter Overview

Chapter One: The Invisible Wall

Every one of us bumps up against invisible barriers we can't always name. Maybe it's a quiet hesitation or an old story in our heads that says, "You can't." We'll start by noticing those hidden walls, understanding where they come from and trying out a few practical ways to loosen their grip.

Chapter Two: Failure Isn't Final

We all stumble but what if a setback were just a signpost or a signal, not a verdict? In this chapter, you'll discover how to get curious about your mistakes, pull out the lessons and bounce back with a bit more confidence every time.

Chapter Three: Fear and Freedom

Fear is normal, it's the brain's way of trying to keep us safe but you don't have to let it steer your choices. Here, we'll talk about how to listen to fear without letting it lead and how to find small acts of courage that move you onward, even when you feel wobbly.

Chapter Four: The Language of Growth

The words you use, with yourself and others, shape how you see what's possible. We'll look at ways to replace old language with more encouraging alternatives and give you down-to-earth techniques for integrating these changes into your daily life.

Chapter Five: The Power of Perspective

How you view the world and your place in it matters. We'll work with simple, practical tools to shift your focus, see things from fresh angles and find new openings even in situations that once felt stuck.

Chapter Six: Becoming the Architect

As we reach the final chapter, the conversation turns to ownership and personal agency. You are not defined by the scripts, patterns or blueprints handed down by others. Instead, you have the power and the responsibility to shape the direction of your life. In this chapter, I'll guide you to step confidently into the role of both architect and builder for your own mindset.

This is where theory becomes practice and intention becomes impact. We'll explore how to design your beliefs and habits thoughtfully, so they align with your deepest values. Together, we'll look at tools for reviewing and redesigning what isn't serving you, so you can construct not just any life but a life - and legacy - that feels truly your own.

By the end of our work here, you'll walk away knowing you have everything you need to continuously adapt, refine and expand your mindset well beyond these pages.

Chapter One: The Invisible Wall

When We Bump Into It

We all have moments where something inside us just stops, nothing dramatic, nothing anyone else would notice, just a quiet pullback. You might really want to apply for a new role but suddenly find a dozen reasons to delay or you could spend weeks researching a programme you already know you will genuinely benefit from but never press "enrol." Maybe you have something valuable to add in a meeting, yet your voice stays caught in your throat. Sometimes it's as small as retyping a message for the fifth time and still leaving it in draft form.

On the surface, it looks like caution or timing, underneath, it's often a blend of fear, uncertainty and not quite believing we're ready. That's why the wall feels invisible; it isn't made of actual obstacles, it's made of beliefs we've collected over time:

"Someone else could do this better.", "I always mess things up.", "People like me don't get opportunities like this.", "If I try, I'll prove I'm not good enough."

We rarely say these out loud but they quietly shape what we do or don't attempt and with each decision driven by doubt, the wall thickens.

The good news is that if the wall is built from beliefs, it can be dismantled the same way, brick by brick, choice by choice, not through force but through noticing, questioning and acting even when we don't feel entirely fearless.

The Voice That Says You Can't

The inner voice that hesitates isn't usually harsh. It can sound calm, protective and sensible: *"You've tried before, why risk feeling disappointed again?", "You've got enough on your plate.", "Things are fine as they are, why create pressure?"*

It's trying to keep you safe. The problem is that safety and growth don't always overlap. Sometimes the "safe" choice keeps you stuck in an identity you've outgrown.

Instead of trying to silence the voice, try listening differently: *Is this wisdom or avoidance? Is this caution or just fear replaying old stories? If this voice is trying to protect me, from what exactly?*

When we name the fear, it stops operating in the background and becomes something we can work with consciously. Awareness doesn't magically remove doubt, it just puts you back in the driver's seat.

Mindset: Two Core Lenses

There are many frameworks on mindset, but one useful lens is the difference between fixed and growth beliefs.

A **fixed mindset** sounds like: *"I'm not good at that."*, *"This is just how I am."*, *"I don't have what it takes."* Challenges feel like proof of limitation.

A **growth mindset** sounds like: *"This is unfamiliar now, but I can improve."*, *"I'm learning how to do this."*, *"Skill grows with practice."*

Challenges feel like part of the process.

Two people can go through the same situation and walk away with opposite conclusions. Imagine both are preparing for a presentation: one avoids preparing because they believe they're "bad at presenting," then confirms that belief when the presentation goes poorly. The other recognises they're nervous, prepares anyway and gets a little better each time. Same nerves, different lens, different trajectory.

This isn't about forced positivity, it's about leaving the door open to growth.

The Science of Change

For years, people assumed personality and ability were mainly fixed by adulthood but we now know the brain continues to adapt throughout life. Each time you try something uncomfortable - learning, speaking up, setting a boundary, making a decision - your brain creates or strengthens pathways that make that behaviour easier next time. Repetition isn't proof you're failing, it's how new patterns form; this is the concept of neuroplasticity. Practice, not fixed personality traits shape our mindset.

Because change affects the nervous system, not just our thoughts, progress often feels awkward before it feels natural.

Sometimes resistance is not a sign you shouldn't do something, it's simply your brain adjusting to unfamiliar territory.

Stories Behind the Wall

A client once told me she "just couldn't speak confidently in meetings." She assumed confident people were simply wired differently. Over time, she realised that it wasn't that she was afraid of speaking, it was being judged she was afraid of. Once she shifted her internal script from *"They're analysing me"* to *"They're asking for my input,"* the fear didn't vanish but it stopped running the show. A few months later, she found herself chairing meetings she once dreaded.

Another client avoided anything technical and would always pass it to others. It was the threat of embarrassment, not ability that was holding him back. When he finally had to learn, he reframed his thinking: *"I'm not terrible at this, I'm just inexperienced."* That was enough to create space to learn. Eventually, he became the one supporting colleagues through new software.

Belief didn't follow change, change followed belief. What this highlights is that the obstacles we perceive are often constructed from narratives, not abilities. With a bit of

courage and a positive reframe, we can break down those walls and discover our true potential.

Spotting Your Own Wall

We often hide behind phrases that sound true but keep us small: *"That's just me."*, *"I'll do it when I feel ready."*, *"It's not the right time."*

Instead of asking whether those statements sound reasonable, ask whether they repeat a pattern. Where do you consistently pull back? What kinds of situations trigger hesitation? What fears show up when you imagine doing the thing anyway?

The goal is never blame, it's clarity. You can't shift what you can't see; recognising these repetitions can lead us to discover our invisible barriers.

Realising we have a wall isn't about self-judgment, it's an invitation to recognise, *"This is what holds me back."* Awareness empowers us to make choices and take steps forward.

Reframing the Belief

When you notice a belief that's been holding you back, that's a significant moment. It's like arriving at a crossroads. One path is familiar - you keep thinking the way you always have, responding the way you always do. It's comfortable and there's nothing "wrong" with staying there but it usually keeps you exactly where you are. The other path asks you to look at the situation from a different angle, to loosen your grip on the story you've been telling yourself and consider whether another interpretation serves you better.

Reframing doesn't mean pretending you're fine or forcing positivity and it's not about minimising how you feel. It's about acknowledging the emotion *and* widening the lens a bit: *"What else might be true here?"*, *"Is there a more helpful way to understand what just happened?"*

For example, if something doesn't go the way you hoped, the automatic reaction might be: *"This proves I'm not good at this."* Instead, you could try: *"That was uncomfortable but here's what I learned from it."*

Or if someone gives you feedback, rather than shrinking or becoming defensive, you might ask: *"What part of this is useful for my growth?"*

That's not about excusing unhelpful behaviour from others, it's about staying open to information that moves you forward rather than shutting down.

A practical shift many of my clients find helpful is adding the word *yet* to their internal dialogue: *"I don't know how to do this... yet."* It doesn't change the situation but it changes the direction. This is the 'Power of Yet' at work.

There's also a pattern that tends to show up whenever we're stretching ourselves:

1. Something challenging or uncomfortable happens.

2. There's an emotional reaction - frustration, self-doubt, embarrassment, fear.
3. We create a story about what that experience means.
4. That story influences whether we move forward or pull back.

The key to growth lies in step 3; the story, not the event, often determines the outcome. So, the invitation isn't to avoid discomfort but to pause long enough to ask: *"What could this experience be teaching me?"* That's how growth happens, not by forcing confidence but by shifting the meaning you attach to difficult moments.

Micro-Moments of Reframe

Most growth isn't dramatic, it's built through small decisions:

- Taking a breath before reacting
- Rewriting one negative sentence a day
- Saying "I'll try" instead of "I can't"
- Asking "What else might be true?" when you assume the worst

Each small shift places a crack in the wall. Over time, those cracks turn into pathways. The truth is, it's the small, everyday decisions that really shape who you're becoming.

Language Matters

The words you choose for yourself really matter. When you swap out "I have to" for "I choose to," you'll notice you start showing up differently. It's a quiet but essential reminder that your decisions are yours, not someone else's. Same thing with "I can't" versus "I won't"; "I can't" feels powerless, like you've already given up, while "I won't" is you taking responsibility for your boundaries and choices.

This isn't just a solo thing. In a team or group, the words you pick set the whole tone. I always encourage the leaders I work with to use language that invites people in: talk about testing ideas instead of warning about pitfalls or failure. When you do that, people relax, get curious and start contributing more. Suddenly, the whole group is more focused on growing than on worrying about who might make a mistake.

So, notice your own language this week. Try those small swaps and see how it feels; they're simple but they can change how you connect with yourself and everyone around you.

When the Wall Returns

No matter how much progress you make, that wall doesn't just disappear forever. Even people who've done a lot of mindset work still slip back into old patterns, because we're all human. What really matters is noticing when it happens. When you catch yourself thinking, *"Oh, I'm falling into this again,"* it's not a setback; it's proof you're becoming more self-aware. That's growth in itself.

Mindset isn't something you change once and then you're done. Think of it like building strength, some days it feels easy, other days not so much and sometimes you need to step back and rest. But every time you spot the old wall and deal with it a little differently, you gain something new. The wall might always show up but you get better and better at climbing over it.

Practical Exercise: Mapping Your Wall

- List three areas in life where you feel stuck.
- Write down the belief behind the hesitation.
- Ask: *Is this truth or habit?*
- Reframe it using *yet* or *I'm learning to...*
- Take one action this week that challenges the old belief.

Action builds evidence. Evidence rewires belief.

Mindset Makeover Prompts

1. When did you last hold back because you didn't feel ready?
2. What story did you tell yourself at the time?
3. If that story were just a hypothesis, what would you test instead?
4. What phrase do you need to retire? What replaces it?
5. Who models a growth mindset in your life? What can you learn from them?
6. How can you remind yourself that confidence grows from experience, not the other way round?

This month, think about one small daily habit that helps you climb the wall; not leap over it, just climb.

In Closing: The Wall as a Guide

When you notice yourself hitting that internal resistance, it doesn't mean you've done something wrong or missed your opportunity. It usually just means you've reached an edge, an old belief, a familiar pattern, something you've outgrown but haven't fully replaced yet. That tension is information, not failure.

You also don't need to force your way through it. Most real change isn't loud or dramatic. It often looks like catching yourself in a familiar thought, pausing before you shut down, or choosing to do one small thing differently. It might be speaking up once in a meeting, trying something new even if you feel unsure, or simply being honest with yourself about what you want.

The goal isn't to become a different person, it's to show up as *more of yourself* - with more honesty, more self-trust and less attachment to old narratives that no longer fit. When you make small shifts in those moments of resistance, you're building that version of yourself.

And when the wall shows up again, instead of judging yourself, try getting curious:
What's coming up for me here? What might this be pointing to?

You can move at your own pace. Progress isn't measured by how fast you change, but by how willing you are to stay engaged with the process.

And while you're working through this, you're not doing it alone. I'm here to support you as you navigate those moments and make sense of what's coming up for you.

Chapter Two: Failure Isn't Final

Redefining Failure

Let's slow this down for a moment, because this bit really matters. When something doesn't go well, it can feel personal but it doesn't say anything permanent about who you are. Failure is an event, not an identity.

Most of us don't struggle with the *idea* of failure, we struggle with how it feels. One awkward presentation, one conversation that didn't land, one risk that didn't work out and our mind can replay it on a loop. Meanwhile, the things we've handled well quietly slip into the background.

Over time, that repetition can start to distort the picture. The inner critic shifts from "That didn't go well" to "You're just not good at this," or even "*You're a failure.*" If you've found yourself there, you're not the only one and it's essential to recognise that as a story your mind is telling, not a fact about you.

A more helpful way of looking at it is this: failure is information. It's feedback about a method, a strategy, a timing issue, not a verdict on your worth. It's simply saying, "*That approach didn't work in that moment.*" From there, the practical questions become:

- *What actually happened?*
- *What part of this was in my control?*
- *What could I try differently next time?*

People who grow steadily aren't the ones who never fall short, they're the ones who are willing to look at what happened without collapsing into shame. They use setbacks as data; they adjust, refine and keep moving.

That's what I want this part of the work to support you with: shifting from "*I failed, so there's something wrong with me*" to "*That didn't go how I wanted, what can I learn from it?*"

We'll keep coming back to that stance together: honest about what hurts, clear about what it means and focused on what you want to build from here.

The Shadow of Shame

Many people aren't actually afraid of failing, they're fearful of how they'll *feel* if it happens. Shame is usually at the centre of that. It has a way of turning a single event into a story about your worth: "*That went badly, so maybe there's something wrong with me.*" It can be heavy and it often leads to avoidance rather than action.

Shame isn't a sign that you're broken, it's usually your mind trying to protect you from feeling exposed or judged. The work isn't to ignore the feeling but to understand it and separate the story from the facts.

Instead of seeing a setback as proof that you're not enough, you can look at it as information:

- *What actually happened here?*
- *What part of this is helpful for me to learn from?*
- *What might I try differently next time?*

That shift doesn't erase the discomfort but it makes it easier to move through it rather than shut down.

Failure is a universal experience. People who succeed don't do so because they avoid disappointment, they keep going despite it, and they take something from each attempt that helps them grow. The moment when you're tempted to give up is often the moment that teaches you the most about yourself.

So, when you feel that discomfort, don't turn it into a conclusion about who you are. Slow down, be honest about how it feels, and let the experience inform your next step. And you don't have to figure it out alone, I'm here to walk through it with you.

The Learning Lens

When something doesn't go the way you wanted, whether that's a project at work, a personal goal, or even a conversation that felt off, it can be helpful to slow down before you react or make meaning from it. Instead of going straight into self-criticism or taking it personally, try looking at the situation through a "learning lens." It's a simple way to reflect on what happened without judgement and to take something useful from the experience.

Here's a way to approach it in practice:

Step	What to ask yourself	Why it helps
Notice what happened	<i>What actually took place, without adding a story?</i>	It keeps you grounded in facts rather than assumptions.
Look at the factors	<i>What choices, circumstances, or behaviours contributed to the outcome?</i>	Helps you understand the role you played and the context in which it occurred.
Take the message	<i>What did this teach me? What's the insight here?</i>	Turns the experience into something useful rather than defeating.
Use it going forward	<i>What will I do differently next time?</i>	This is where growth turns into action.

Instead of thinking "I failed," try shifting to "This gave me useful information." The situation might not feel good but it doesn't have to define you; it can inform you.

When you use this approach consistently, mistakes start to feel less like proof that something's wrong with you and more like part of the process of getting better at the things you care about. It's not about ignoring disappointment, it's about making meaning from it in a way that supports you.

The Story of Maya

Maya's a really creative designer, with lots of ideas, but she doesn't always speak up. There's this hesitation, almost like she's bracing for her ideas to be shut down. She'd been working on a concept for ages and eventually decided to share it with the team, hoping it would land well.

The feedback was pretty blunt. Her manager asked whether it actually made commercial sense and she walked away feeling deflated. She spent that evening replaying parts of the meeting in her head, trying to work out what she could've done differently. By the next morning she'd slid into, "Maybe I'm not cut out to lead things like this," which happens to a lot of people when something doesn't go as planned.

During our coaching session she was asked, "If they'd loved it, what would that have meant for you?" She paused and said, "I think it would've helped me trust myself to lead something properly." Later she was asked, "Given that it *didn't* land, what might you take from this instead?" She thought for a bit and said, "Maybe that I care enough about the idea to keep going."

There wasn't a big "aha" moment or tidy takeaway. It just helped her step out of that all-or-nothing thinking. After that she kept working on projects, a bit more grounded, less attached to one moment meaning everything.

The 3 Rs of Recovery

When something doesn't go the way you hoped, it can help to break it down into a few simple steps. This is not to force a lesson out of it but to make sense of what happened and what you want to do next.

1. Reflect: Look at what actually happened

Instead of going straight to self-criticism, take a moment to notice both what worked and what didn't. Ask yourself:

- What went okay here?
- What didn't land the way I expected?
- What beliefs or assumptions came up for me?

This isn't about analysing yourself to death, it's just about getting some clarity.

2. Reframe: Shift how you're interpreting the situation

Rather than defaulting to, "*I'm not good enough*," try something more specific and actionable, like:

- "*What skill do I need to build here?*"

- *"What is this showing me about how I respond under pressure?"*

You're not pretending the situation felt good, you're just looking at it from a more useful angle.

3. Recommit: Decide what you want to do next

Once you've made sense of the experience, pick one small step you can take moving forward. Not a full plan, just something concrete:

- send an email
- try again
- ask for feedback
- practise the skill that wobbled

Doing something, even small, usually shifts confidence faster than thinking about it endlessly.

The Rehearsal Effect

When things go wrong, it can feel heavy but it doesn't automatically mean you're off-track. Often, it's just part of how things unfold. You try something, you see what happens and you adjust. Sometimes that process is uncomfortable but it doesn't have to become a judgement about who you are or what you're capable of.

People we see as successful usually have a long list of things that didn't work out along the way; they just don't tend to lead with those stories. What often sets them apart isn't that they avoided mistakes, it's that they didn't let those moments stop them from trying again.

A growth mindset isn't about pretending failure is exciting or "meant to be." It's simply acknowledging that when something doesn't land, there's usually something to learn from it and that learning can shape what you do next.

So rather than turning every setback into a win or forcing a positive spin, just ask yourself, *"What did this show me?"* Sometimes that's enough.

The Bounce Curve

When something goes wrong or doesn't play out the way you hoped, there's usually a bit of a process you move through; most people do, even if they don't name it. At first, there's the moment it actually happens and you feel the hit. That can be shock, frustration, disappointment, embarrassment, whatever comes up for you. Sometimes that stage is brief, sometimes it lingers.

After that, there's often a period where emotions are front and centre. You might overthink the situation, replay moments in your mind, shut down or want to withdraw completely. Some people move quickly through that emotional response, others need

time before they're able to look at things more clearly. Neither is wrong, it's just noticing what's happening.

Eventually, once the initial reaction softens a bit, you might start making sense of things. That could involve asking yourself what actually happened, what role you played, what support you needed but didn't have or what you'd try differently next time. This isn't the "silver lining" stage, it's simply understanding the situation with a clearer mind. And then, when you feel ready, there comes a point where you start moving forward again, not necessarily with more confidence, just with a bit more awareness. Sometimes that means trying again, sometimes it means adjusting your approach and sometimes it means letting the whole thing go and focusing your energy somewhere else.

What matters isn't how fast you move through these stages or whether you feel "stronger" at the end of it. The real value is in knowing where you are right now, because that helps you respond thoughtfully instead of acting on autopilot.

So, a useful question here is: **Where do you feel you are at the moment? Are you still feeling the hit? Sitting with the emotions? Trying to make sense of it? Or starting to step forward again?**

There's no "ideal" place to be. Each stage has its purpose.

The Loop of Learning Revisited

When something goes wrong, there's usually a bit of a process we go through. First the thing happens, then there's whatever emotional reaction comes with it. At some point we make sense of what happened and then we decide what to do next. It's not always clean or linear but that's generally how it unfolds.

Where a lot of people get stuck is in the meaning-making part. The story shifts from *"that didn't go how I wanted"* to *"I'm not good at this"* or *"I shouldn't try again."* It's not the event itself that causes the shutdown, it's the conclusion we attach to it.

There's space to hold it differently. Instead of letting the moment define something about who you are, you can just acknowledge it as part of learning something new. It doesn't mean it feels good and it doesn't have to be turned into a positive takeaway. It just means you don't let that one moment become the whole story.

Sometimes it's enough to ask, *"What actually happened here?"* and *"What do I want to do with this now?"* That keeps the focus on the situation, not on your identity.

The Science of Setbacks

Our minds are built to protect us from things that feel painful, and that includes emotional discomfort—not just physical harm. That's why a setback can feel heavy or even quite personal; the brain can register it as a kind of threat, so the response is real, not imagined.

What's equally true, though, is that we often learn more from things that don't go to plan. When something turns out differently than expected, the brain has to pay closer attention and adjust its understanding. That process, while uncomfortable, is often where growth actually happens.

None of this means we have to celebrate failure or pretend it feels good. It just helps to recognise that those moments can be useful. Instead of seeing a setback as evidence of a limitation, you might see it as information: *What did this show me? What needs to shift? What support do I need?*

Growth often comes from the places that felt most challenging, not the ones that went smoothly.

Common Mindset Traps

When things don't go the way we planned, we can slip into certain thinking patterns without noticing. They're common and they make sense, given how our minds try to protect us but they can narrow our perspective if we don't catch them.

Catastrophising

One thing goes wrong and suddenly it feels like everything is falling apart. If you notice that happening, it can help to pause and ask yourself what's actually been affected rather than assuming the whole picture has changed.

Comparison

It's a quick way to feel inadequate, especially when you're comparing your reality to someone else's highlight reel—or to circumstances you don't share. Shifting your focus back to how *you* are growing can feel a lot more grounding.

Perfectionism

That can look like "I'll start when I feel ready," or endlessly refining an idea before sharing it. Often the next small step—even if it's messy—is enough to move things forward.

Personalising

A difficult situation stops being, "That didn't go well," and becomes, "There's something wrong with me." If you notice that shift, take a moment to separate the situation from your identity and look at what actually happened.

These are patterns, not flaws. You don't need to work on getting rid of them. Just recognising them gives you more room to respond differently rather than being pulled into old stories by default.

The Failure Résumé

Most of us talk about our achievements far more than the things that didn't work out. But the moments we'd rather forget often shape us just as much, sometimes more.

The idea behind a “failure résumé” is simply to put those moments on paper so you can look at them more honestly.

You can start by listing a handful of things that didn’t go the way you hoped, big or small, recent or old. Then take some time to note what each experience taught you or how it changed the way you now approach things. As you do this, you may notice themes: decisions you keep adjusting, strengths that developed because something was hard or habits you’ve carried forward.

This isn’t about glorifying failure or turning every setback into a positive story. It’s about seeing the full picture of how you’ve grown, not just the polished parts.

Tool 1: The Five Whys

When something doesn’t go to plan, it can be tempting to stop at the surface explanation: “*We missed the deadline,*” “*The idea didn’t land,*” “*I didn’t follow through.*” The Five Whys is a simple way to slow down and understand what was actually happening underneath.

It’s not about finding someone to blame, it’s about getting curious. You just keep asking “why?” until the real issue starts to show itself.

For example, say a project didn’t hit its target:

- Why? It slipped because tasks were delayed.
- Why? Tasks were delayed because roles weren’t clear.
- Why? Roles weren’t clear because expectations weren’t discussed properly.
- Why? Expectations weren’t discussed because people assumed everyone already understood.
- Why? That assumption was there because no one felt comfortable asking questions about the plan.

When you break it down like that, the issue isn’t that people didn’t work hard, it’s that communication wasn’t as open as it needed to be. That’s a very different thing to address.

The goal isn’t to reduce everything to one neat answer but to see what’s actually driving the problem so you can make adjustments that matter.

The Myth of Perfection

Perfectionism isn’t always about high standards, sometimes it’s just a way of not starting. You tell yourself you’re being thorough or aiming for the best but you’re really waiting for a moment when it feels completely safe to move and that moment doesn’t come. So, things sit on hold, not because they’re not good but because you don’t want to get it wrong.

Most of the time it's less about the work and more about how you don't want to feel. If the outcome isn't perfect, what will people think? What will *you* think? It's easier to stay in planning mode than to actually do the thing and risk the discomfort.

You don't have to push for some flawless end result. Sometimes it's enough to just pick one small step and do that, even if it's messy. You learn more from doing than from waiting until everything lines up.

Tool 2: The Rebound Plan

When something goes wrong, it can be easy to just move on and pretend it didn't happen or sit with the frustration without knowing what to do next. A rebound plan is simply a way of turning that moment into something useful rather than leaving it hanging.

It starts with naming what you actually learned from the experience, not in a tidy "silver lining" way but in a way that feels honest. Maybe it's realising you needed clearer expectations at the start, or that you took on too much alone, or that you rushed because you didn't want to ask for help.

From there, decide on one small action that reflects what you've learned. Nothing huge, just something you can realistically do next time. For example, booking a quick check-in before a project kicks off, writing down roles instead of assuming them or asking for feedback earlier.

It can help to give yourself a timeframe, otherwise it just becomes another good intention that fades. And if it feels supportive, share the plan with someone else so you're not holding it alone.

The point isn't to force a positive spin, it's simply to move from "that was hard" to "here's what I'll do differently now," so the experience has somewhere to go.

Mini Case Study 1: The Launch That Failed

A small team spent months building an app they were excited about but when they launched it, the response was flat. Not many downloads and the people who did try it didn't stay long.

Instead of rushing to fix everything or blaming the product, they spent some time looking at what actually happened. They realised most of their messaging focused on features that weren't the ones people cared about; they hadn't engaged the end users in the product design. The app itself wasn't the issue, how it was positioned was.

Rather than scrapping the whole thing, they decided to collaborate with some end users. They then stripped the next version back to the parts which user feedback had confirmed was useful and rewrote their messaging to reflect that. They took their time, made changes quietly and shared it again a couple of months later, not as a "big relaunch," just a clearer version of what they were trying to do.

The second release got more traction, partly because the product made more sense to the people it was meant for and partly because the team approached it with a bit less pressure and a bit more honesty about what they had learned from end user engagement.

It wasn't a dramatic comeback, just a different way of responding when things didn't go to plan.

Reframing Failure in Real Time

When something goes wrong and it's still fresh, the emotional hit often arrives before any clear thinking does. It can feel hard to see the bigger picture when you're in that moment and that's completely normal.

Instead of trying to "handle" it right away, you might just pause and give yourself a moment to breathe before deciding what the experience means. From there, you can start to notice what you're actually feeling - "*I feel disappointed,*" "*I feel frustrated,*" - rather than turning it into a judgement about who you are.

Once the emotion settles a little, you can look at the situation with more space and ask what it's showing you or what it's asking of you. There's usually at least one small action that feels honest and doable, rather than reactive.

It's not about turning the moment into a positive or finding meaning straight away. It's about staying connected to yourself while you navigate it and taking the next step when you're ready.

Mini Case Study 2: Personal Application

A teacher tried introducing a new online tool in class. It was something she'd put thought into and was excited to use but as soon as she launched it, the whole thing froze and eventually stopped working altogether.

Instead of pretending it wasn't a problem or trying to keep pushing through, she paused and acknowledged what had happened. Then she asked the students what the experience was like for them - what worked, what didn't and what they'd do differently next time.

The conversation turned out to be more useful than the activity itself. Students talked about staying patient, adapting when things go wrong and supporting each other rather than waiting for a perfect plan. Nothing dramatic happened, it was just a moment where things didn't work and she handled it without shutting down or getting flustered.

It wasn't the lesson she intended to teach but it still became one that mattered.

The Power of Perspective

If you think back over some moments that didn't go the way you hoped, you might notice that a few of them eventually led you somewhere different; sometimes somewhere better, though it probably didn't feel that way at the time. A job rejection might have nudged you toward developing a skill you later relied on or the end of a relationship might have given you more space to understand what you actually needed.

That doesn't mean every setback turns out to be a blessing or that things "happen for a reason." It just means that what feels like an ending in the moment can sometimes create room for something new to take shape later on.

Rather than forcing a positive meaning onto a difficult experience, you might simply hold the possibility that there could be more to the story than what you see right now.

Metrics of Resilience

If you want to get a sense of how your resilience is developing, you might want to look at a few areas over time, not as scores or targets but as signs of how you're responding to challenges differently.

You could notice how long you stay in the emotional dip after something goes wrong. Not in a "bounce back faster" way but simply observing whether you're able to find your footing with a bit more ease than before.

You might also look at what you've learned from difficult moments and whether you're actually capturing those insights rather than moving on quickly just to feel better.

Another thing to pay attention to is whether you're changing anything based on what you learned, even small adjustments can signal growth.

And then there's the emotional tone: how you treat yourself while you're recovering. Are you able to be a little less harsh, a little more compassionate, even when things don't go as planned?

There's no perfect way to measure resilience but noticing shifts in these areas can help you see the progress you might otherwise overlook.

A Story of Two Runners

Two people trained for the same marathon. Both put in months of work, both cared about it and both ended up injured halfway through the race.

One decided to step out and didn't return to long-distance running after that. It wasn't worth pushing through and at that point in his life, he'd had enough. That choice made sense for him.

The other took time off to heal and when he felt ready, used what he'd learned to train differently the following year. He eventually ran the race again and finished, not

because he “powered through,” but because he wanted another go when his body and timing allowed.

They handled the same situation in different ways and neither response was right or wrong. The only difference was how each person made sense of what happened and what felt meaningful to them afterward.

Practice Routine: The Daily Debrief

At the end of each day, it can help to pause, reflect on and take stock of what actually happened, rather than carrying everything into tomorrow on autopilot. One simple way to do that is to note down a few things:

- something that went well
- something that was difficult
- something you took from it

It doesn't need to be long, sometimes a sentence or a few words is enough. The aim isn't to analyse your whole day or force meaning out of every moment, just to stay mindful of where you're making progress and where you might want to pay more attention.

Over time, these small check-ins can make patterns easier to spot.

Practical Exercise: The Failure Loop Journal

If something recently didn't go the way you hoped, you might take a moment to write about it, not to analyse but just to see it more clearly.

Start by describing what actually happened, as plainly as you can, without adding meaning or judgement. Then note what came up for you emotionally. You might also write down the story you attached to the moment, what you told yourself it meant about you, other people or the situation.

Once that's on the page, you can sit with the question: *"Is there another way I could look at this?"* Not to find a silver lining, just to see if there's more than one interpretation available.

From there, you can explore what you might want to do differently next time, not as a fix but as an experiment.

If you do this regularly, even briefly, you may start to see themes in how you respond to setbacks, which can make it easier to choose a different response when the moment comes again.

Mindset Makeover Prompts

1. When you think about “success,” what does that actually mean for you right now? And is there any part of that definition that feels a bit restrictive or pressured?
2. Think back to a moment early in life where something didn’t go to plan. How do you think that shaped the way you handle setbacks now?
3. What feeling tends to come up for you when things go wrong - frustration, embarrassment, defensiveness, something else?
4. Can you remember a time when something not working out ended up pushing you in a direction that felt more aligned?
5. If you couldn’t use results or outcomes as a measure, how might you recognise growth in yourself?
6. What would it look like to acknowledge effort in the same way you acknowledge achievements?
7. Is there someone you’ve seen handle setbacks in a way you respect? What about their approach stands out to you?
8. Instead of seeing a setback as a “no,” how might it feel to see it as a trial run or a first draft?
9. Is there an area of your life where giving something another go would actually be helpful right now?
10. If you genuinely believed failure wasn’t a verdict, what might you be willing to try next?

Reflection & Coaching Prompts

1. Is there a particular pattern you notice in how things tend to go wrong for you, something that keeps showing up in different situations?
2. When that pattern appears, what do you usually assume about yourself or the situation? What belief sits underneath it?
3. If you were to respond differently next time, what might that look like in a small, realistic way?
4. Think about how long it usually takes you to come back to the centre after something knocks you off course. What helps you find your footing sooner and what tends to stretch it out?
5. Who or what helps you stay grounded and moving when things feel tough? How could you bring more of that support into the picture?

Closing: Failure as a Teacher and Foundation

When you face disappointment, it’s easy to make it mean something final about who you are. Most of the time, though, it’s just a moment that asks you to look again, adjust or try from a slightly different angle. Failure doesn’t have to define you, it can simply be deemed as feedback which is meant to inform you.

What you learn from these moments often develops qualities that success alone doesn’t, things like patience, self-awareness, humility and a clearer sense of what actually matters to you. They’re not comfortable lessons, but they can be meaningful ones.

Think back to the setbacks we explored earlier. The point wasn't to treat failure as something to celebrate or romanticise. It was to notice how you respond, what you tell yourself in the aftermath and what becomes possible once the initial emotion settles.

Each time you return to something after a disappointment, you're returning with more context, not starting over. The experience comes with you.

You don't need to apply every idea or tool at once. Use what feels helpful and leave the rest. What matters is that you keep noticing your responses and giving yourself space to choose how you want to move forward, rather than reacting from habit or fear.

Failure doesn't need to be a turning point or a dramatic breakthrough. Sometimes it's just a quiet nudge to shift something small.

Take your time. Use what helps. And be kind to yourself while you figure it out.

Chapter Three: Fear and Freedom

Fear as a Messenger

Fear doesn't always show up dramatically, sometimes it sounds sensible: "*Maybe wait a bit.*" "*Don't rock the boat.*" It often feels practical rather than frightening, which is why it can be hard to notice.

Most of the time, fear is there to keep you safe, not to hold you back. Where it becomes limiting is when we accept the fear's first answer without checking whether it still fits who we are now. Your mind might say, "*This isn't safe,*" when what it really means is, "*This is unfamiliar.*"

You don't need to push past fear or silence it. It can be more helpful to pause and ask, "*What exactly is this protecting me from?*" And then, "*Is that protection still needed in this moment?*"

Often the places where fear shows up most strongly are the same places where something meaningful is trying to happen. Not because fear is blocking you, but because you're stepping into territory where the outcome feels uncertain.

You get to decide how to move, not by ignoring fear but by listening to it and choosing your response with more awareness.

Understanding Fear's Role

Fear doesn't usually show up to sabotage us. Most of the time it's just your body trying to keep you safe, even if the situation isn't actually dangerous. The brain was built to spot threats quickly and that same system still reacts when we're faced with things like difficult conversations, new opportunities or situations where we feel exposed.

The physical response can feel intense, fast heartbeat, shallow breathing, tension in the chest. That doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong. It may simply mean you're stepping into something unfamiliar or important.

Instead of trying to get rid of fear or push past it, it can be useful to pause and notice what it's responding to. *What's the perceived threat here? What am I protecting myself from? Is this danger real, or just discomfort?*

Sometimes fear is pointing to a genuine boundary. Other times it's reacting to uncertainty, not harm. The more clearly you can tell the difference, the easier it becomes to decide how you want to move forward.

Fear doesn't have to stop you, it can just be information you take into account while you choose your next step.

The Story of Daniel

Daniel had been offered a promotion he'd quietly wanted for a long time which made perfect sense, on paper, but when it finally arrived, he found himself hesitating and feeling anxious. The job meant managing people older than him, presenting to senior leaders and stepping into areas he hadn't worked in before. He told himself he just needed time to think but underneath that he was nervous.

In a coaching session, we spent some time naming what the fear was actually about so it could be tamed. I asked him to finish the sentence, *"If I take this role, I'm afraid that..."*. He came up with - being out of his depth, making mistakes where people could see, disappointing others, losing credibility. None of it was dramatic, just honest.

Then we looked at the other side: *"If you don't take it, what are you afraid of?"* He sat with that for a while before saying something along the lines of, *"I'd probably stay exactly where I am."* It wasn't an insight or a punchline, just a quiet recognition that both choices came with discomfort, just in different ways.

He eventually accepted the role. The first few weeks were messy and stretching, he second-guessed himself a lot. A few months in, he felt more settled and said he wished he'd had the opportunity sooner, though he also acknowledged that he wasn't ready to see that at the start.

It wasn't about overcoming fear. he just stopped treating the fear as a signal to pull away and started seeing it as something that shows up when he's doing things that matter to him.

Naming the Faces of Fear

Fear doesn't always announce itself as fear. It often hides inside habits that look sensible or even productive on the surface.

Sometimes it looks like trying to get everything right because the idea of getting something wrong feels exposing. Sometimes it's putting things off, not because we're lazy, but because starting means there's a chance of falling short. It can show up as needing to control outcomes because uncertainty feels uncomfortable. It can mean saying 'yes' to things we don't really want to do, not out of generosity but because we're scared of disappointing someone. And sometimes it looks like keeping ourselves constantly busy so we don't have to sit with whatever might come up in the quiet moments.

These behaviours aren't problems to fix, they're signals. When you notice one, you might gently ask yourself, *"What am I trying to protect myself from here?"* The answer isn't always deep or dramatic, it might be as simple as, *"I don't want to feel judged,"* or *"I'm scared of being seen trying."*

Just noticing that can give you more choice about what you want to do next.

Reframing Fear

Fear doesn't always show up to shut things down, sometimes it's just a signal that something matters or that there's a bit more preparation needed. The aim isn't to get rid of fear altogether but to be curious about what it's reacting to.

Instead of asking how to silence fear, it can be more helpful to ask, "*What is this trying to draw my attention to?*" For example, you might feel anxious about a presentation because you haven't had enough time to practise or you might feel nervous simply because the situation matters to you and you want to show up well. Both are valid and they're not the same thing.

Fear doesn't mean "stop." It just means, "pay attention here." When you pause long enough to understand what's underneath it, you can decide how you want to move, rather than reacting automatically or avoiding the situation.

The goal isn't to be fearless. It's to build a relationship with fear where it has a voice but not the final say.

The Physics of Courage

Courage isn't the absence of fear, it's pushing through despite the fear. Often the hardest part is simply taking the first step, especially when you feel uncertain or exposed. Once you take that first step, things usually feel a little less overwhelming, but that beginning can be uncomfortable.

If you think back to changes you've made in your life e.g. taking a new role, ending or starting a relationship, making a decision that mattered, fear was probably there too. The difference was that you acted anyway, even if slowly or cautiously.

You don't have to turn fear into something inspiring or try to use it as fuel. Sometimes it's enough just to notice it, understand what it's trying to protect and choose to move with it rather than waiting for it to disappear.

Courage isn't about defeating fear, it's about letting fear be present without letting it set the direction.

The Fear-Freedom Spectrum

Instead of seeing fear and freedom as opposites you have to leap between, it can be more useful to think of them as points on a spectrum. Most of us move back and forth along that spectrum depending on the situation, our energy and what's at stake.

Sometimes fear shows up in quiet ways, minimising how we feel or pretending something doesn't bother us. Other times we can recognise it more clearly: "*This is making me anxious,*" or "*I feel exposed here.*" Simply naming it can shift things.

From there, you might start asking what the fear is trying to tell you rather than assuming it means stop. It might be signalling that you care, that there's something to prepare for or that the situation matters to your sense of identity.

And eventually, there's the part where you choose to move anyway, not by overriding fear but by letting it be part of the process. Action doesn't have to be bold or dramatic, it can be small and steady.

You don't have to "reach" freedom. Just noticing where you are on that spectrum in a given moment can be enough to help you take the next step.

The Fear-to-Freedom Cycle

Fear usually has a pattern to it, even if we don't notice it in the moment. Something happens that feels unfamiliar or exposing, and that sparks a physical response - tightness, adrenaline, racing thoughts. From there we start telling ourselves a story about what the moment means and that story often shapes what we do next.

Instead of trying to push past those reactions, it can help to slow down and notice them step by step:

- What actually triggered this feeling?
- What's happening in my body right now?
- What meaning am I attaching to this?

Once you've named those things, you have a bit more freedom to choose how you want to respond, not in a heroic way, just in a way that feels intentional rather than automatic. Sometimes that means moving forward, sometimes it means pausing and sometimes it means asking for support.

After the moment has passed, you can look back and ask what you want to carry with you for next time. Not as a lesson to "fix" yourself but as something that gives you a clearer understanding of how you operate when things feel uncomfortable.

Fear doesn't have to be an obstacle, it can be information that helps you move more deliberately.

The Science of Safety

There's a useful idea in psychology called the *window of tolerance*, it's basically the emotional space where we can think clearly, stay present and respond rather than react. When fear or stress pushes us past that point, we can shut down, lash out or feel overwhelmed. On the other end of the spectrum, when nothing stretches us, it's easy to feel flat or unmotivated.

Most growth happens somewhere in the middle. Not in complete calm and not in panic but in the space where something feels a bit uncomfortable while still feeling doable. It's the point where fear shows up but you still have enough capacity to stay engaged.

You don't have to force yourself into big leaps. Sometimes it's simply noticing, "*I'm slightly outside my comfort zone, and that's okay.*" That's often where learning happens, not because it's exciting or transformational but because you're present enough to take something from the experience.

Micro-Courage Moments

Courage doesn't always show up in big, dramatic decisions. Most of the time it's found in small moments, the ones that feel slightly uncomfortable but still manageable. It might look like speaking up in a meeting when you'd normally hold back, asking for help instead of pushing through alone, admitting you don't know something or giving something another try after it didn't go well the first time.

Individually, these moments can feel insignificant but they add up. Each one reminds you that you can do things that feel uneasy without falling apart. Over time, that builds a quiet sense of trust in yourself, not because you suddenly feel fearless but because you've given yourself a bit of evidence that you can handle discomfort.

You don't need to force anything, just notice the small moments where you have a choice and take the step that aligns with who you're becoming, not just who you've been.

The Courage Ladder

Sometimes a goal feels too big to go near all at once and that can make it easy to delay or avoid it. One way around that is to break the thing you're trying to do into much smaller pieces, almost like climbing a ladder one step at a time instead of trying to jump to the top.

Start with whatever the "big thing" is for you. Write it down without worrying about how you'll get there. Then think about the smaller actions that sit underneath it. Not five perfect steps or a neat sequence, just a handful of things that feel slightly uncomfortable but doable.

Pick one of those smaller steps and try it first. Then pause and check in with yourself afterwards; what felt okay, what felt hard, what did you learn? Don't rush to the next step until the first one feels a bit less charged.

The idea isn't to climb constantly or "work your way up." It's to move in a way that your nervous system can actually handle, rather than forcing yourself through a massive leap that leaves you overwhelmed.

Sometimes the smallest step is enough to shift how you relate to the whole thing.

Tools for Working with Fear

Here are a few approaches that can help when fear shows up, not to override it, just to work with it in a way that gives you more choice.

The 5-Second Window: A short pause before acting

If you notice yourself freezing or talking yourself out of something you actually want to do, you might try giving yourself a small countdown - five seconds or so - and then take whatever the next step is. Sometimes the delay between feeling fear and acting

gives your mind space to overthink; a short pause can interrupt that without needing a big push.

The Fear Inquiry: What is the fear really about?

It can help to write down what you think might happen if things go wrong and then look at those thoughts more calmly. What's the fear protecting you from? What would happen if that thing actually occurred? Sometimes the fear may point to something real and sometimes it's just predicting the worst without context.

The Courage Journal

You might keep a quiet list of moments where you acted even though you were nervous or unsure, not to celebrate bravery but to remind yourself later that you've handled discomfort before. It's easy to forget those moments when fear shows up again. None of these are meant to eliminate fear, they're just ways to stay in conversation with it rather than letting it make the decision for you.

The Zone of Expansion

It can be useful to think about fear in terms of how much your nervous system can handle at once. There's the space where things feel familiar and safe, where you're comfortable but not really stretching. Then there's the point where things become too much, your body goes into stress mode and it's hard to think clearly or take anything in.

Between those two places is a middle space where something feels slightly uncomfortable but still manageable. You're stretched but not flooded. That's often where learning and growth happen, simply because you're present enough to engage with what's happening.

You don't need to stay in that space all the time and it's not about pushing yourself to the edge. It's more about noticing where you are in a given moment and asking, "*Do I have capacity for this right now?*" If the answer is yes, you can move forward. If not, it might be kinder to pull back and try again later.

The point isn't to chase discomfort, it's to work at a level where you can grow without burning out.

Fear Typology Matrix

Fear shows up differently for different people. Sometimes naming the pattern helps you understand what's really going on beneath the surface. Here are a few common ways fear can operate:

Fear Pattern	Underlying Belief	What it Might Look Like	A More Helpful Approach
Fear of Failure	"If I mess this up, it says something about me."	Over-preparing, holding back until things feel perfect, avoiding risk.	Focus on small attempts rather than flawless outcomes; notice what each attempt teaches you.
Fear of Rejection	"If others don't approve, I'm not enough."	People-pleasing, playing small, over-explaining.	Practise being honest about what you need or prefer, even when it feels uncomfortable.
Fear of Uncertainty	"If I don't control it, something will go wrong."	Micromanaging, planning in excess, avoiding change.	Try small, low-stakes experiments and notice what happens when you don't have full control.
Fear of Success	"If I do well, things will get harder or I'll lose something important."	Holding back, quitting early, staying under the radar.	Explore what "success on your terms" looks like—pace, boundaries, support, balance.

You don't need to fix these straight away. The goal is simply to notice which one feels most familiar to you, so you can respond deliberately rather than getting pulled along by automatic habits.

Tool 1: The Fear Audit

Something that can be helpful is checking in with yourself at the end of the week and noticing where fear showed up and how you responded to it. Not to fix anything but to build awareness.

Here's a simple way to approach that:

1. **Start with the moment**

Think of one situation this week where you felt resistance, worry or hesitation. Just name what happened, without analysing it yet.

2. **Name the type of fear**

Ask yourself what the fear was really about, was it fear of getting it wrong, being judged, losing control, or something else?

3. **Notice the intensity**

Give it a number from 1–10, not as a score but to help you see how it changes over time.

4. **Consider how you responded**

Did you step back? Push through? Ask for help? Avoid it? There's no right answer, just notice the pattern.

5. **Reflect on what happened next**

Did the action you took help in any way? Did it escalate the fear, reduce it or simply give you more information?

This kind of reflection helps you spot patterns in how you relate to fear, so you can make more intentional choices rather than reacting on autopilot.

No perfection required, just curiosity.

Tool 2: The 90-Second Reset

Sometimes fear shows up in the body before we've even had time to make sense of what's happening. Your heart races, your shoulders tighten, your thoughts speed up. Instead of trying to talk yourself out of it straight away, it can help to just give your body a moment to settle.

One simple way to do this is to pause for about a minute and a half. That's roughly how long an emotional response tends to run through the body if we don't keep fuelling it with new thoughts.

Here's how you might try it:

1. **Pause and name what you're feeling**

Something simple like, *"I'm feeling anxious right now,"* rather than, *"Something's wrong with me."*

2. **Breathe slowly for the next 90 seconds**

Focus on the physical sensation of the breath rather than the thoughts that want to rush in.

3. **Bring your attention to something neutral around you**

A sound, a texture, your feet on the floor, anything that helps you come back to the present moment rather than the fear story.

This isn't about suppressing fear or forcing calm. It just gives your nervous system space to settle so you can respond more intentionally instead of reacting automatically.

Framework: Courage as a Process

Courage doesn't usually show up as one big moment, it's more of a cycle we move through again and again. It often looks something like this:

Phase	Mindset	Action	Reinforcement
Awareness	You notice fear or resistance creeping in.	Acknowledge it rather than pushing it away	Make a quick note of what triggered it and how it felt.
Acceptance	You remember that fear is a normal part of stretching yourself	Sit with the feeling for a moment - breathe, pause, don't rush to fix it.	Talk it through with someone you trust if that helps you stay grounded.
Action	You decide to move forward anyway, even if it's messy or small.	Take one step that feels doable, not heroic.	Afterwards, check in with yourself: What shifted?
Adaptation	You look back and recognise what the experience taught you.	Adjust how you approach similar situations next time.	Acknowledge the progress, even if it feels minor.

The point isn't to move through these phases perfectly or in order, just to notice where you are and take the next step that supports you. Over time, cycling through this process builds confidence in a way that feels grounded rather than forced.

Practical Exercise: Your Courage Map

Try this when you're working through something that feels intimidating or uncertain, not to force confidence but to understand what the fear is really asking of you.

1. **Start by naming the fear clearly**

Just one sentence is enough. The aim isn't to justify it or argue with it, simply acknowledge what feels hard.

2. **Explore a few possible outcomes**

Instead of jumping straight to worst-case thinking, look at the full range:

- What's the outcome you're afraid of?
- What's the best version of how this could go?
- What's a neutral or realistic middle ground?

Often, seeing all three laid out takes the intensity out of the fear.

3. **Notice what you'd need in each scenario**

Think about skills, support, boundaries, preparation or mindsets that would help you handle whatever comes up, not to eliminate fear but to feel steadier with it.

4. **Choose one small step to take this week**

Something that moves you forward without overwhelming you. It can be tiny, sending one email, asking a question, doing five minutes of prep.

5. **Reflect afterwards**

Compare what actually happened with what you feared might happen. The gap between the two is often where the learning sits.

This isn't about being brave on command, it's a way of gradually building trust in your ability to handle discomfort.

Reflection & Coaching Prompts

Use these questions as a way to get curious about how fear shows up for you, not to fix anything, just to understand it more honestly.

1. When can you remember fear shaping a decision you made early in life, and how does that pattern show up now?
2. In what ways has fear genuinely kept you safe or protected you? And where has it stopped you from doing something that mattered?
3. Are there behaviours - like delaying, overworking, keeping quiet, or over-preparing - that might be covering up fear rather than addressing it?
4. What does "freedom" look like for you in a real, practical sense, not an idealised version?
5. When fear shows up, what do you notice in your body first? (e.g., tight chest, racing thoughts, avoidance)
6. How might those signals serve as prompts to pause and act with intention, instead of pulling away?
7. Think of someone who handles fear or uncertainty well. What specifically do they do differently?
8. What's one small thing you could try this week that feels slightly uncomfortable but meaningful?
9. How do you want to measure progress - by feeling less fear or by taking more aligned action even when fear is present?
10. If you treated fear as information rather than a stop-sign, how might that change the way you respond to it?

Take your time with these, there's no rush. The value is in noticing your patterns, not forcing change before you're ready.

Closing: From Fear to Freedom

Fear isn't something we outgrow, it shows up in different ways as life changes. Sometimes it just means we're doing something unfamiliar, not that we're doing something wrong.

What matters is noticing when fear shows up and deciding what to do with it, rather than letting it decide for us. Some days that might mean pushing forward, other days it might mean pausing or asking for help. There isn't a single "right" response.

The more familiar we become with how fear shows up for us - how it feels, what thoughts it triggers, what we tend to do next - the easier it is to make choices that line up with what we actually want, not just what feels safe.

If fear comes up again, try to notice it without making it a verdict about yourself. You can simply say, *"I'm scared, and I still have options."* Sometimes that's enough.

Chapter Four: The Language of Growth

Language and How It Shapes Us

The way we talk about ourselves can influence how we behave, not in a dramatic, life-changing way but in subtle ways that add up over time. When you repeatedly say things like, "I'm just not good at this," it can stop you from trying, even when you actually want to. Sometimes those phrases become habits rather than reflections of what's true.

You don't need to replace them with forced positivity. It can be enough to use language that leaves room to grow, something like, "I'm still figuring this out," or "I haven't done much of this yet." It's a small change but it shifts the tone from a conclusion to a work-in-progress.

It might help to notice the phrases you default to when you're stressed or unsure. They often tell you where you're holding yourself back more than where your actual limits are. That's it; no big philosophy. Just paying attention to how you speak to yourself and choosing words that don't close the door before you start.

Your Self-talk Shapes Your Reality

Sometimes the way we speak to ourselves shapes how we show up, often without us realising. If you keep saying things like "I always mess this up" or "I'm not that type of person," those phrases start to feel like facts rather than passing thoughts. You don't suddenly believe them because they're true, you believe them because you hear them over and over.

You don't need to replace those phrases with forced positivity. It can be enough to catch yourself and say something more accurate, like, "I haven't tried this much," or "I don't know yet." That small shift can give you more room to move instead of shutting the door before you start.

There's research showing that the language we use internally can affect how we perform under pressure. For example, some studies on athletes found that when they used encouraging or constructive self-talk, they stayed more focused and performed better. It's not magic, it just changes what we pay attention to.

The point isn't to force yourself into positive language, it's more about noticing the tone of your self-talk and choosing phrasing that gives you more options rather than shutting things down before you begin.

You're not trying to rewrite your personality, just creating space for a different response when things feel difficult. Watch that self-talk!

The Story of Aisha

Aisha works in data and is good at it. Very organised, very clear; people ask her for help a lot.

Whenever conversations came up about taking on more of a people-facing role, she'd say, "I'm not a people person." She wasn't defensive about it, that was just her default go-to line.

The thing is, she actually gets on well with people but just doesn't like big groups or feeling like she has to perform socially. However, because she kept saying that line, she stopped putting herself forward for anything that involved mentoring or guiding others.

During a coaching session, I asked her, "If you didn't use that phrase, how would you describe how you relate to people?" She paused and said, "I just prefer talking to people one-to-one. I don't like big groups." That was basically the shift; no "aha moment," no big emotional thing, just a more honest description.

After that she started helping new team members individually. She didn't become more extroverted or start leading group sessions, she just stopped ruling herself out.

This change didn't stem from learning new skills but rather from a powerful change in her mindset.

The Words We Live By

Sometimes the things we say about ourselves end up deciding what we bother to attempt. Saying "I'll give it a try," keeps things open, while "That's just how I am," can shut things down before we even start.

It's not that one set of phrases is good and the other is bad, it's just worth noticing which ones you default to and whether they give you room to move or shut things down before you begin.

The helpful thing is language isn't permanent, you can adjust how you phrase things without pretending to feel differently. Even shifting to something more neutral like "I'm still learning" can change how you approach the situation.

You just need to intentionally choose language that's more accurate and less limiting.

Words That Leave Space

Changing how you talk about something isn't about being positive for the sake of it, it's about finding language that's more accurate and less harsh. Instead of saying, "I'm terrible at this," you might say, "I'm still getting the hang of it." It's the same situation but one leaves space to improve, the other shuts things down.

When you describe what's actually going on rather than judging yourself for it, it can make things feel a bit easier to handle. Saying "I'm overwhelmed" can feel like a full stop. If you say something like, "There's a lot on my plate and I'm trying to get myself organised," it gives you room to move. It doesn't remove the stress, you're just naming it in a way that doesn't box you in.

No need to speak in affirmations, just use language that gives you room rather than boxing you in.

The Listening Loop

The way we talk at work or in groups can influence how people respond, sometimes without us realising. If a manager says things like, "We never get this right," people tend to hold back or play it safe. If the language shifts to something like, "We're still working this out," there's usually more room for ideas and trial-and-error.

What we hear around us often becomes what we say to ourselves. That's not about being positive but about noticing how language can set the tone for what feels possible.

We don't shape this alone either, the way we speak to each other affects the environment we're part of. If we want a space where people try things, ask questions and take risks, the language we use needs to make that feel safe and realistic.

No slogans, no inspiration, just small shifts in how we talk to each other and that's usually enough.

Small Shifts in Language

Sometimes it's not the situation that changes, just the way we talk about it. You don't need to force positive language, just wording that gives you more room and doesn't shut things down before you start. Here are some examples:

Limiting	Expansive
"I have to"	"I'm choosing to"
"I can't do this"	"I haven't learned how to do this yet"
"I have a problem"	"I have a challenge"
"I'm busy"	"I have prioritised this"
"Should"	"Want to/intend to"

These simple changes shift our mindset from pressure to purpose!

Tool 1: Noticing Your Language

For a week, pay attention to the phrases you say to yourself, especially the ones that sound harsh, final or limiting. For instance, "I'm useless at this," or "This always happens to me.", don't correct them in the moment, just note them down somewhere.

When you have time, look back at what you wrote and see if there's a version that feels more accurate rather than self-critical. For example:

- instead of "I'm terrible at this," maybe "I haven't practised this much."
- instead of "I never have time," maybe "I haven't prioritised this yet."
- instead of "Everything goes wrong for me," maybe "This didn't go the way I wanted."

You're not trying to be positive, just more honest. At the end of the week, review the patterns, notice where your language closes things off and where small tweaks might give you more space to act, rather than shutting down before you start.

Tool 2: Reframe Journalling

Time to practise some reframing. In the evening, take a couple of minutes to write about something that felt uncomfortable or didn't go how you hoped. Keep it short and simple, two or three lines is enough.

First, write the honest, raw version of how you felt in the moment, then write a second version that gives the situation a bit more context or fairness.

Examples:

- *"That presentation was awful. I just froze."*
- *"I got flustered because I wasn't ready for the questions. Next time I'll plan for that part."*

The point isn't to sound positive, just to notice when your first reaction is harsher than it needs to be. You're simply giving yourself another way of seeing what happened.

Tool 3: Identity Declarations

A lot of people speak about themselves in extremes, either quite harshly ("*I always mess things up*") or in big statements that don't actually feel true ("*I am fearless*"). Both can be hard to work with.

Instead, try noting a few things about yourself that are already true when you're at your best. Nothing dramatic, just accurate. You could consider things like:

- "I think things through before I act."
- "I show up for people even when I'm unsure."
- "I learn by doing, not by rushing."

These aren't about convincing yourself of anything, they're more like reminders you can come back to when you're doubting yourself.

You don't need to say them every morning or turn them into a ritual, just keep them you'll actually see them - maybe in your notes app or scribbled on a Post-it near your desk. The point is to ground yourself in what's already true, not to manufacture a new identity from scratch.

Story: The Teacher and the Student

A teacher once asked each student in her class to write down a word that described themselves. One girl wrote "quiet." The teacher didn't challenge it, she just suggested adding something that gave it a bit more context. The girl changed it to "quiet observer."

It wasn't a dramatic moment but something shifted for her. Instead of seeing her quietness as something she needed to fix, she started to treat it as a way she takes in the world. Years later, she ended up working in journalism; still quiet, just using it differently.

Sometimes the language we choose doesn't need to be bigger or more positive, it just needs to be more accurate.

Language in Relationships

Pay attention to the way you speak to people in your life. You might not mean to but sometimes a comment like, "You're always late," boxes someone into a role they've maybe been trying to move away from. It turns a moment into a character judgement.

Try naming what you notice *without* turning it into who they are. For example, "Thanks for being on time today," or "I can see you've been making more of an effort lately." It still addresses the behaviour but it gives them room to grow rather than pinning them down.

This isn't about being overly positive or avoiding honesty, it's about offering feedback in a way that supports change instead of shutting down the opportunity. You're helping them relate to themselves differently, not just asking for a different action.

Practical Exercise: Renovate Your Script

1. Think of a phrase you often use about yourself, maybe something you say when you're frustrated or explaining your behaviour.
2. Ask yourself, *Where did that come from?* When did you first start saying it and does it still feel accurate now?
3. Write a few alternative ways of saying it, ones that feel honest but give you a bit more room to grow.

4. Say one of those new versions out loud each morning for a week. Not to “manifest” anything, just to notice how it feels to speak about yourself differently.
5. At the end of the week, see if anything shifted, not just how you feel but how you behave.

This isn’t about forcing positive language. It’s about making sure the words you use actually reflect who you’re becoming, not just who you used to be.

Reflection & Coaching Prompts

1. Right now, how would you describe the “feel” of your inner world, what words actually reflect where you are?
2. Are there phrases you repeat that feel heavy or limiting? Are there others that feel like they give you space to grow?
3. When you’re speaking to yourself privately, how do you describe your abilities?
4. What phrases from other people tend to stick with you, positively or negatively?
5. When do you notice yourself using language that sounds defensive or like you’re downplaying yourself?
6. If you spoke to yourself the way you speak to someone you care about, what would change?
7. Who around you uses language that lifts people up, and what do they do differently?
8. How might you encourage the people you work or live with to speak in ways that support growth rather than shut things down?
9. If your language shaped the environment you move through each day, what would you want to update or replace first?
10. What’s one sentence you want to keep coming back to this week, something that helps you show up as the person you’re working toward becoming?

Closing: Speaking Yourself Into Possibility

The way we speak to ourselves shapes how we see who we are. Our language doesn’t just describe us—it influences what we believe is possible. When you choose wording that’s more honest, less limiting, and a bit more open-ended, you give yourself space to grow rather than reinforcing old assumptions.

This doesn’t mean forcing “positive” language or pretending everything is fine. It’s more about paying attention to whether your words shut things down or make room for change. The same is true in how we speak to others—how we phrase things can either support them or unintentionally box them in.

If you want to move towards something new, start by noticing the language you use each day. Small shifts in how you speak can quietly shift how you show up.

Chapter Five: The Power of Perspective

The Window We Forget to Open

Think of perspective like a window. We all have one but sometimes we go months, or years, without realising that the blinds are still down. The view outside hasn't changed but how much of it we can actually see depends on how open that window is.

Most of the time, we assume our perspective is the full picture. In reality, it's just one angle. A narrow frame gives us a narrow view, a clearer, wider one gives us more options.

This isn't about forcing optimism or pretending a situation is better than it is. It's simply noticing when your view has become limited and asking, "If I shifted how I'm looking at this, even slightly, what would I see that I'm missing?"

Growth usually starts there, not with a big breakthrough but with a small change in how we're looking at things.

Perspective as a Window

We all look at the same world but the way we see it can be very different. Your perspective isn't the truth of a situation, it's the angle you're viewing it from. Two people can go through the same experience and walk away with completely different stories about what it meant.

Perspective doesn't change the facts but it does change what you notice and how you respond. That's often where growth starts, not by changing the situation but by adjusting how you're looking at it.

Instead of trying to force yourself to "think positively," try something simpler: notice the parts of the situation you're not seeing because an assumption or fear is taking up all the space. Sometimes widening your view just a little creates enough clarity to move forward.

The Lens That Shapes the View

Two people can have the same day and walk away feeling completely different: one drained, one satisfied. The difference usually isn't the day itself, it's the lens they're looking through.

We tend to notice what matches what we already believe; if you're expecting things to go wrong, you'll pick up on everything that confirms that. If you see the day as a chance to learn something, you'll notice opportunities you might have ignored before.

This isn't about choosing to be positive all the time, it's about paying attention to the assumptions you're bringing into a situation and noticing how those assumptions

shape what you take away from it. When you're aware of the lens you're using, you have more choice in how you interpret what's happening.

The Story of Elena

Elena works in marketing and had her eye on a promotion she genuinely felt ready for. When it went to someone else, she was understandably frustrated. She kept going over the decision in her head and the story quickly became, *"They don't see what I bring."*

In a coaching session, we didn't try to make the situation feel better than it was. Instead, we looked at the language she was using to describe it. We tried a few different ways of naming what happened, not to force positivity but to see what felt most honest and helpful. One version sounded like, *"That was disappointing and I still think I was ready."* Another sounded more like, *"Maybe this is giving me space to build a few things before I move up."*

The facts didn't change; she still didn't get the role but the new wording gave her more room to act instead of feeling stuck. Over the next month, she took on a project she'd previously avoided because she didn't think it was "senior enough" and it ended up giving her the exact experience she'd been missing.

The point isn't that the promotion was a "gift in disguise.", it's that once she shifted how she talked about it, she could move forward rather than replaying the same narrative.

When the Window Fogs Up

There are times when your perspective just feels tight or narrowed, usually when you're tired, stressed or feeling under pressure. In those moments, it's easy to slip into a defensive way of thinking where everything feels personal or heavy. You're not seeing "what's possible," you're just trying to get through the moment.

A few things that can signal this are:

- small setbacks feeling bigger than they are
- losing interest in asking questions or exploring options
- sticking to what feels familiar because it feels safer than trying something new

You don't need to force yourself to think positively when you're in that place. Just notice what's happening and take a moment to slow down. A simple question like, *"What else could be going on here?"* can soften things enough to see a bit more clearly.

You're not trying to change the situation, you're just clearing the lens so you can make a choice from a calmer place.

The Physics of Perspective

What you see and what *happened* aren't always the same thing. The brain doesn't just record events like a camera, it interprets them. It fills in gaps, relies on past experiences and matches what's happening now with things it already believes to be true. That's why two people can sit through the same meeting and walk away with completely different takeaways.

This isn't a flaw, it's just how our minds work.

Where it becomes useful is noticing that your perspective isn't the whole story, it's *one* story. When you remember that, it becomes easier to pause and ask, "*What else might be true here?*" or "*How might someone else have seen this?*"

The goal isn't to doubt yourself, it's to create a bit more space so your interpretation doesn't become the only one you're willing to work with.

Changing Altitude

There's a reason things feel different when you step back from them. When you're right in the middle of something, everything can feel large and urgent. When you get a bit more distance - time, space, perspective - the same situation often feels more manageable.

You don't need to force a positive spin, just try asking yourself, "*If I took a step back from this, what might I notice that I can't see right now?*" Sometimes that's enough to soften the intensity.

As a small exercise, pick one part of the situation that's useful or informative and see what action you'd take if you were responding from that wider view rather than from the heat of the moment.

Not everything needs altitude but when things feel overwhelming, a bit of distance can give you more room to think and choose your next move.

The 10-Minute Altitude Shift

When something feels intense or overwhelming, try giving yourself a bit of distance, not to disconnect from the situation but to see it more clearly.

Here's a simple way to do that:

- Step away for a few minutes (a short walk, a different room or just closing your laptop).
- Ask yourself, "*If I look back on this in five years, what will actually matter here?*"
- Notice at least one part of the situation that could be useful, even if it's uncomfortable.

- Then choose a small action based on that wider view, not the initial emotional reaction.

The aim isn't to be detached or overly logical, it's just to create enough space to think rather than react.

Three Ways to Widen Your Perspective

When you're stuck in your own head, sometimes the goal isn't to feel better, it's just to see more of the picture. Here are a few ways you can do that in real life:

1. Take a Pause Before You Decide What It Means

When something triggers you, instead of jumping straight to interpretation, take a breath and ask yourself things like:

- *What am I assuming here?*
- *Is there another way to look at this?*
- *What might I be missing?*

You're not trying to talk yourself out of how you feel, you're just giving yourself room to see what else might be going on.

2. Try Writing It From the Other Person's Point of View

If someone's behaviour is bothering you, write a short paragraph as if you were them. For example: "I'm waiting for feedback and I'm not sure where I stand."

You don't have to agree with their perspective, sometimes just imagining another angle softens the intensity and makes problem-solving easier.

3. Zoom Out a Little

Once a week, take something that's stressing you and write about it as if you're looking back on it from a few years in the future, not in a "everything works out perfectly" way, just with the benefit of hindsight. For example: "Looking back, this was the point where I learned to speak up sooner."

Sometimes distance gives you clarity that isn't available in the moment.

Micro-Shifts That Change the View

Sometimes it's not the situation that needs to change, just the way we talk about it. Here are a few examples you can play with, not as affirmations but as alternative ways of describing the same experience:

Narrow Frame

"This is happening to me."

Expanded Frame

"This is hard and I'm figuring out how to respond."

Narrow Frame

Expanded Frame

"I failed."

"That didn't work, and now I know more than I did before."

"I have no choice."

"I might not like my options but I do have some."

"They're wrong."

"They might be seeing something I'm not."

"It's too late."

"If I start now, what could still be possible?"

The point isn't to sound positive, just more accurate and less boxed in. Small shifts like these can give you a bit of breathing space when a situation feels tight.

Story: The Mountain and the Mirror

Two friends once went walking in the mountains and stopped by a lake. The weather had turned grey by the time they got there. One of them looked at the water and felt a bit deflated, saying *"It looked so much better in the photos, I thought the view would be brighter."* The other noticed the same scene but commented on how the mountain looked clearer without the glare of the sun.

Same place, same moment, just two different interpretations. There wasn't a "right" one, they were just coming at it from different headspaces that day.

Sometimes the situation isn't the issue, it's the frame we're looking through and that frame can shift depending on mood, context, energy levels or what we hoped would happen.

Tool: The Reframing Cycle

When something feels off or emotionally heavy, don't rush to fix it, just start by noticing what's happening. Here's a gentler way to work with it:

1. **Notice the reaction:** Pay attention to the thought or tension that shows up rather than pushing past it.
2. **Name what you're feeling:** Something simple like, *"Right now I feel overlooked,"* or *"This feels unfair."* Naming it helps separate the feeling from the whole situation.
3. **Look for another angle:** Ask yourself, *"How might someone outside this situation describe what's going on?"* Not to invalidate how you feel—just to widen the frame.
4. **Choose wording that gives you room to move:** For example, shifting from *"I've failed,"* to *"This didn't work the way I hoped—so what now?"*
5. **Take a small action based on the wider view:** One step is enough; the goal is movement, not resolution.

This isn't about turning everything into a positive spin, it's about giving yourself more options than the first, most emotional interpretation.

Reflection & Coaching Prompts

1. Think of a recent situation where your first interpretation wasn't the full picture. What shifted once you learned more?
2. What kinds of situations tend to narrow your view or make you jump to conclusions?
3. When that happens, what's usually going on for you emotionally - are you tired, stressed, anxious or under pressure?
4. Who in your life helps you step back and see things differently? What do they do that helps you widen the lens?
5. Is there a story you've been repeating about yourself or a situation that might not be serving you anymore?
6. If you could see this moment from ten years in the future, what might look different about it?
7. If someone you care about were stuck in the same situation, how would you help them see it from another angle?
8. Is there a phrase or mindset you want to keep coming back to this month, something that helps you stay open rather than shut down?
9. Where do you feel most stuck right now?
10. And finally, what if that 'stuckness' is pointing to the next area of growth rather than a dead end?

Closing: Seeing with New Eyes - From Window to Vision

Perspective doesn't change what's happening but it often changes how we relate to it. When you step back and look at something from a slightly different angle, you usually find more options than you realised were there. The challenge might stay the same but your sense of choice can shift.

This isn't about forcing yourself to be positive or convincing yourself everything "happens for a reason." It's more about noticing when your view has become narrow and asking, "*What else might be going on here?*" or "*How else could I look at this?*" Sometimes that small shift is enough to move you from feeling stuck to feeling able to respond.

You'll still have walls, limits and moments where things feel closed off, that's part of being human. However, being aware of your perspective gives you the chance to step back, clear the noise, and choose how you want to move forward rather than reacting on autopilot.

If there's one thing to take away from this chapter, it's this:

You don't have to change the situation first. Start by noticing how you're seeing it. Often that's where movement begins.

Chapter Six: Becoming the Architect

From Blueprint to Builder

A lot of how we think and behave comes from ideas we absorbed early on, from family, school, past roles or things that happened to us. Sometimes we keep living by those old ideas without noticing we've outgrown them.

Growth includes pausing and asking, *"Is this still true for me now?"* and *"If I were choosing for myself today, what would I do differently?"*. That's where you move from simply inheriting a mindset, to shaping one that actually fits who you are and where you're going.

You don't need a full redesign, just start by intentionally adjusting one belief, one habit, one assumption that no longer serves you. Bit by bit, you start building a life that reflects your choices, not just your history.

The Blueprint You Live In

A lot of the beliefs you operate from weren't consciously chosen. They came from how you grew up, what you were praised or criticised for, past roles or even old coping strategies that made sense at the time. You can end up living by those assumptions long after they've stopped being useful.

Part of developing a more intentional mindset is noticing when you're following patterns you didn't actually choose. You might ask yourself things like:

- *Where did this belief come from?*
- *Does it still fit who I am now?*
- *If I were starting fresh, would I make the same choice?*

You don't need a full overhaul. The point is simply recognising that you're not stuck in a mental structure someone else built; you can adjust it as you grow.

It's less about "designing your life" in a dramatic way and more about quietly taking ownership of the parts that no longer feel like they're yours.

From Occupant to Designer

A lot of the ways you think and respond day-to-day didn't come from conscious choices, you picked them up over time. Old fears, expectations from family, past experiences, things that helped you cope at one point, they all settle in and start shaping how you behave without you even noticing.

At some point, it's worth asking, *"Do these beliefs still fit who I am now?"*, not in a dramatic "reinvent yourself" way, just in a quiet, honest way.

You don't have to tear everything down. Most of the time it's more about small adjustments: questioning one assumption, changing one habit or letting go of something that doesn't support you anymore. Over time, those small changes start to shift how you show up. You move from just living inside patterns you inherited to actually shaping new ones that make sense for where you're going.

You're allowed to do that, you don't have to keep running a script that came from someone else.

The Foundation of Intention

Before you start trying to change things or add new habits, it can help to pause and get clear on *why* you're doing it in the first place. Otherwise, you end up busy but not necessarily moving in a direction that actually matters to you.

To determine the strength of your 'why', try asking yourself:

- How do I want my day-to-day life to feel?
- What actually matters to me right now, not in theory but in practice?
- What small routines or choices would support that?

This isn't about designing a perfect plan, it's about making sure your effort lines up with what you genuinely care about, rather than old expectations or habits running in the background.

When you're clear on intention, it's easier to notice when you're drifting and course-correct without beating yourself up.

The Framework of Habit

When you look at how your days actually unfold, it's usually the small, repeated things that shape how you feel, not the big decisions. We like to think change comes from dramatic moments but most of it comes from what you do over and over without thinking about it.

For example, if you sit down with your thoughts each morning, whether you write or just pause before diving into work, that can help you stay grounded during the day. If you catch yourself before snapping at someone, that's not about controlling anger, it's you practising choosing a different response.

None of this needs to be perfect, daily or aesthetic. It's more about noticing which behaviours you're reinforcing. Some habits got built during seasons where they made sense and you might have outgrown them.

So, a useful question could be: *What am I repeating that I don't actually want to keep reinforcing?* And on the other side: *What small thing, if I repeated it often, would actually support me?*

Start there. Not with a habit plan, just with honesty.

The Renovation of Fear, Language and Perspective

Up to this point, we've explored three themes that shape how you move through the world: fear, the way you speak to yourself and the lens you use to interpret what's happening. They don't sit in separate boxes, these things work together.

- Fear tries to keep you safe, even when it ends up keeping you small.
- Your language can either shut things down or give you room to grow.
- And your perspective shapes what you notice, what you ignore and how much choice you feel you have.

When these three work with instead of against you, things start to feel easier. You take more risks, not recklessly but with awareness, speak to yourself in ways that help you move forward rather than freeze and begin to see situations with a little more distance, instead of assuming the first interpretation is the only one.

This isn't about becoming a different person, it's more like adjusting how you relate to yourself internally so there's space to grow rather than feeling boxed in.

Story: The Rebuild

David runs a school and by the time we started working together, he was exhausted. Not just tired, running on fumes. He wasn't sleeping well, constantly felt on edge and had this sense that if he stopped paying attention for a second, everything would fall apart.

What stood out in our sessions wasn't that he *couldn't* handle the workload, it was that he felt he *should*. He kept saying things like, "If I don't step in, no one will," and he'd been operating that way for years. It made sense, he cares deeply about the school but it came at a cost to his mental wellbeing.

Instead of trying to overhaul everything, we played with small changes, things he could test rather than commit to forever. For example:

- He stopped being the first person to put his hand up when a problem came in.
- He let his leadership team run with decisions without asking for updates.
- He blocked time in his day where he wasn't *available*, which was new for him.

None of this felt comfortable at first. He said it felt like he was "dropping the ball," even when things were still getting done. However, after a few weeks he noticed something simple: people were actually stepping up when he didn't rush to fill the gap.

The interesting part wasn't that the school suddenly ran better, it was that *he* stopped feeling like he had to fix everything before he could rest.

It wasn't a dramatic transformation, it was just him realising, slowly, that he didn't need to carry the whole place on his back to be effective.

Tool 1: Five-Minute Morning Check-In

Instead of letting the day just happen to you, you can give it a bit of direction in a few minutes:

1. **Pick a word for the day:** Choose one word that describes how you'd *like* to move through today. Something like "steady", "present", "focused", "light", "kind".
2. **Jot down three small actions:** Note three things you can do that would support that feeling. For example, if your word is "steady", your actions might be:
 - take a proper lunch break
 - finish one thing before starting another
 - go for a short walk between meetings
3. **Name one likely snag:** Think of one thing that might throw you off - running late, difficult meeting, tiredness - and write a more helpful way to meet it. For instance: "If I'm feeling rushed, I'll slow down for 60 seconds and reset before reacting."
4. **Write a simple anchor sentence:** One line you can come back to during the day, like:
 - "Today I respond, I don't rush."
 - "Today I give myself permission to go one step at a time."

That's it; five minutes, a pen and a bit more direction for how you want to show up, without needing the day to be perfect. This simple routine empowers you to thrive.

Tool 2: Weekly Check-in

At the end of the week, take a few minutes to look at how things went, not to judge yourself but just to notice what's going on. You might ask yourself:

- What felt heavy or messy this week?
- What did I avoid that probably needs attention?
- Where did I say yes when I wanted to say no?
- What actually went well or felt easier than before?

Write down one or two small changes you want to try next week. Keep it practical, something you'll actually do, not a big overhaul.

Tool 3: The Blueprint Vision Board

Instead of creating a vision board full of pictures that look good on Pinterest, try building one that actually reflects how you want to *live*, not just what you want to achieve.

Grab a page and break it into a few areas that matter to you. It doesn't have to be perfect, just headings that help you think clearly. For example:

- **What matters to you at a deeper level:** Things you want to keep in mind when you make decisions, not just goals.
- **What keeps you grounded day-to-day:** The small actions you know help you stay well rather than run on autopilot.
- **What helps you see things differently:** People, experiences, books, conversations, anything that expands your thinking.
- **Where your time and energy are going right now:** Work, friendships, family, creative projects, whatever is taking space.
- **What helps you recover when you're stretched:** Rest, space, connection, routines, anything that helps you reset.

Create it in a way that feels usable, not "perfect." It's something you'll look at and adjust every so often, not a masterpiece for your wall.

The point isn't to create an aesthetic board, it's to give yourself a clearer sense of what matters and how you want to show up. Be sure to update this every quarter, it's an excellent way to watch your growth unfold.

The Law of Alignment

Life usually feels smoother when what you believe, what you say and what you do are broadly pointing in the same direction. When they're not, you often feel it. You might say you value rest but never stop, or say honesty matters but avoid difficult conversations. That gap between intention and behaviour is where a lot of tension and burnout live.

Rather than beating yourself up for that, you can use it as data. A simple question to come back to is: "Is how I'm acting right now in line with what actually matters to me?" If the answer is "not really," don't try to overhaul everything. Just look for one small adjustment - a boundary, a choice, a conversation - that brings you a little closer to alignment.

It's not about being perfect, it's about reducing the gap, bit by bit, so your life feels more like something you're consciously living, not just reacting to.

Integration: Building from the Inside Out

Becoming the architect of your life isn't about looking put-together on the outside. The real work is letting who you are on the inside actually show up in how you move through your life, the way you behave, make decisions and relate to people. Ask yourself:

- *What do I actually believe matters right now?*

- *Do my habits and decisions reflect that?*
- *Where's the mismatch?*

If there's a disconnect, for example you value honesty but avoid speaking up or you care about growth but stay in the same patterns, it's worth exploring why. Not to judge yourself but to understand what needs strengthening or what might need to change.

External polish fades. What lasts is when your behaviour and choices genuinely reflect who you're becoming on the inside.

No need for perfection, just honesty. The outside will take care of itself when the inside is real.

Story: The Quiet Room

I once heard architect Maya Lin say that silence was part of her design process, not an afterthought. She builds space *on purpose*, not just walls but gaps, pauses and places where nothing is happening.

It made me think about how rarely we give ourselves that kind of space mentally. We tend to fill every moment, noise, notifications, planning and pressure. Then we wonder why we feel overwhelmed or disconnected from ourselves.

Sometimes the most helpful thing you can do isn't to push harder but to step back and sit with your own thoughts for a moment. Not to solve anything, just to notice.

You don't have to earn stillness, it's part of how you rebuild clarity and resilience. A short walk, closing the laptop for five minutes, sitting quietly before reacting, those pauses create space for better decisions.

You're allowed rooms in your mind where nothing is happening. Make some space for that this week.

Tool 4: The Quiet Room Practice

Before you end your day, give yourself a bit of quiet, nothing structured or dramatic. Just five minutes without distractions. Find a spot where you won't be interrupted, take a breath and ask yourself a few simple questions:

- *What actually went well today?*
- *What didn't feel great, and why?*
- *Is there something I want to carry into tomorrow?*

No journaling template and no pressure to be wise, just paying attention. The point isn't to analyse yourself, it's to give your mind space to slow down and make sense of the day instead of rolling straight into the next one.

Even a short pause can help you end the day with a clearer head instead of carrying everything to bed with you.

Reflection & Coaching Prompts

Here are a few questions to sit with as you think about how you're shaping your life and habits right now:

1. What beliefs have influenced how you make decisions or set expectations for yourself?
2. What part of your life feels solid and well-supported at the moment?
3. Is there a habit, routine or way of thinking you've outgrown?
4. What perspective might give you a bit more space or clarity right now?
5. Where does fear show up for you, subtly or directly?
6. What small daily practice actually helps you feel grounded?
7. If your actions and values were more aligned, what might look different?
8. Who do you admire for how they carry themselves and what can you learn from them?
9. How could you build in more quiet moments during your day?
10. Looking ahead five years, what would you want to feel proud of?

Take your time, pick one or two rather than trying to answer everything at once. These are for reflection, not performance.

Closing: From Blueprint to Legacy

Let me say this plainly, your life is yours to shape. People can support, challenge and inspire you but at the end of the day, you're the one who chooses what stays, what goes and what changes next.

As you keep growing, you'll notice certain parts of your life start to feel more aligned - your choices, habits and how you speak to yourself. When that happens, take a moment to acknowledge it. Those small shifts matter.

And when things feel off, that doesn't mean you've failed or gone backwards. It just means something needs attention. You can adjust; you're allowed to rebuild because nothing is fixed.

There's no final version you have to get to; you're not trying to "finish" yourself. You're learning, responding and refining as you go.

So, the real questions are:

- *Does this feel like me?*

- *Is this how I want to show up?*
- *What's one small change that moves things in the direction I care about?*

Keep choosing what supports you and keep changing what doesn't. Don't rush it, this is long-term work and you're doing it in real time, as the person you're becoming, not the person you used to be.

I'm rooting for you while you do it.

Epilogue: The Ongoing Build

You're not expected to have everything figured out all at once. How you think, how you respond and what you believe about yourself, these things shift over time and that's part of the work.

What you've started here isn't a one-off exercise. It's an ongoing process of noticing what's working, what isn't and making small adjustments as you grow. Some days you'll feel clear and confident, other days you'll realise you've slipped back into old patterns. That's normal, it just means there's something to pay attention to.

When fear shows up, pause long enough to ask what it's trying to protect. When you feel stuck or frustrated, look for the lesson rather than assuming something has gone wrong. When your language gets harsh or critical, shift it to something more honest and less limiting. These small choices add up.

What matters most is that you stay involved in shaping the way you think and act, instead of letting old beliefs run things by default. You get to make adjustments as you go. Nothing about your mindset is fixed unless you decide to stop working with it.

Take a moment to notice how far you've already come. Then keep going at your pace, with what you've learned and in a way that feels true to you.

A Note About What Comes Next

If this book has helped you see your beliefs and patterns more clearly, the next step is learning how to build a life that actually supports the version of you you're becoming. That's what the next book in this mini-series, *Book Two: Rebuild*, is all about.

While this book – *Book One: Reframe* - helps you challenge old narratives, *Book Two: Rebuild* focuses on what comes after the shift, habits, boundaries, systems, routine, self-trust and the practical parts of change that help growth stick. It's not about reinventing yourself overnight, it's about putting foundations in place so your new mindset has something to stand on.

If you're ready to move from insight to action, you can find out about the next book and join the Mindset Makeover Mission email circle by scanning the QR code below.

I'd love to walk that next chapter with you.

Add QR code