



Embracing change with
power and purpose

Recognising and Releasing Patterns

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***Abstract:** As children we learn patterns of behaviour from our caregivers. In releasing the patterns we become free to be more fully our Selves. This article offers some examples of how to free ourselves from our own patterning.*

Psychology informs us that we inherit behaviours from our parents. We may directly learn or pick up behaviours from them. We may also develop behaviours to counteract their treatment of us as children; a reason some patterns seem to skip a generation, each generation responding in opposition to the one before. These behaviours can be so well entrenched that we are oblivious to their existence, or the thought processes they support and promote, and the filtering and distortion they create with how we perceive the world. Beneath them our true, unblemished selves exist.

Twelve years ago, while on a course, I was presented with an exercise to determine which parent was the source of my behaviours. I struggled because my father had exited my life when I was seven and I had not had contact with him since. I did not know whether he was alive or dead and I didn't care. The instructor said, "If the pattern is not from your mother, it's from your father." That was the start of getting to know my father.

Certain milestone events forced me to confront my father. In leaving my first marriage I was caught by the fact that my eldest child was the age I had been, also as the eldest child, when my father left. Was I leaving to repeat a family pattern or because it was the right thing for me to do? I eventually recognised it was the right thing for me. However I also learned of some qualities I possessed in common with my father; autonomy and spontaneity in particular, that were suppressed in my marriage and were part of my drive to leave. Subsequently, I've done a lot of work around my patterns of behaviour, particularly those that serve to protect me, which also act as a shield and barrier to expressing my true Self. Some of these include people-pleasing, pessimism, and copious quantities of shame and inadequacy. Over time the effects of these have lessened as I have addressed underlying beliefs, values and perceptions.

A couple of years ago, after 40 years absence, my father rematerialised, sending me an email wishing to reconnect. Aside from the initial waves of shock, anger, disappointment, hurt and anxiety, the process of connecting with him via email brought up years of patterned protection against being hurt. Then a gorgeous woman entered my life, a beautiful and precious soul to whom I thoroughly opened and exposed my heart. I had never felt so alive, so free, dropping many of my protections developed from years of survival. Then she surprised me by exiting my life as dramatically as she had chosen to join it. The effect was profound. I felt abandoned. I connected with hurt, rage and anger that had been buried since my father had left. I had and took opportunities to express, in safe settings, the pent up emotion that had been stored and suppressed since I was a child. She provided a fabulous opportunity to uncover and connect with buried emotions, and in the process of releasing these I also gained some incredible insight into patterns underpinning the lockdown.

A significant pattern I unearthed was how everything I have done in life has been based on surviving rather than thriving. Interestingly, a significant portion of my book still waiting for me to move to publishing is about shifting from Survive Reactions to Thrive Responses, and now I understand some of my reticence in getting published. I still had a key to turn before I could authentically speak from

that place of Thrive. Now I recognise how I have rejected opportunities that did not fit with my concept of surviving, pushed people away, and ring-fenced myself as a protection. While I have done extensive work on the individual protections and behaviours, the whole paradigm of survival was so pervasive I could not see it, like I imagine a fish cannot see water.

My father eventually arrived on a plane from England to meet. Healing took place. Of most profound significance to me was the clarity with which I have seen in him the patterns of behaviour I have been working to dismantle in myself for so many years. His return stirred up all my old patterning, and I was able to, as far as conscious awareness allowed, release rather than to re-enact them.

While few people can be blessed with a year like that one I experienced, there are things that can be done to identify and release patterns that we have:

- **Observe your own results.** What are you doing that gets in the way of success or that distorts or narrows your concept of success?
- **Seek feedback from people who know you** about behaviours that get in your way. This could be family, friends, and colleagues. Where consistency shows up in feedback from multiple people and/or across multiple settings, there is a good chance there is a real behaviour for you to work with.
- **Counselling, coaching** or other forms of guided journey into self.
- **Journaling**, drawing, dance or other unguided expressions of self.
- **Defining and affirming new concepts of self** that contradict old patterns. Work with the resistance that arises and move into a new way of being.

What gets in the way of your success, whether that be in professional, personal, relationship or other arenas? What patterns do you trip over when pursuing things that matter to you? Often our protective patterns show most influence and presence when we undertake something of significance to us, interrupting us to stop us being 'hurt' by failure or rejection or some other feared painful outcome. Moving positively into areas that matter can be supported by developing awareness of the patterns and addressing the underlying beliefs that drive our behaviours.

Working with Self is a life-long experiential journey. It is rewarding and exciting. It is worth engaging with. I hope my journey inspires others to engage more fully with theirs, and I look forward to publishing my book, *Appreciate the Fog: Embracing Change with Power and Purpose*, for publication.