

Setback Plan (For When It Goes Backwards)

The dangerous moment in attachment work is not the difficult beginning. It is the first bad week after a good month — the evening you do the exact thing you had stopped doing, and conclude from it that none of the progress was real.

Who this is for: You have made real progress before and lost it, and the losing is what stops you starting again.

The exercises

1. The evidence file

Written now, believed later.

Thing one, with a rough date:

Thing two:

Thing three:

Thing four — ideally the one you are proudest of:

2. What a setback actually is

A definition, written by you, in advance.

My threshold — this counts as a setback when:

What does not count, even though it feels like it does:

What I typically tell myself in the first hour of a bad evening:

The more accurate sentence:

3. The three usual causes

It is almost always one of these.

Cause one — what a real destabilising event looks like for me:

Cause two — which basic goes first when I am struggling?

Cause three — how long since I last actually did the practice?

Which one is it this time?

4. The return route

One thing, today, small enough to be certain.

My one small thing, named exactly:

When today I will do it:

What I will not attempt this week:

Who I will tell that I am back to it, if anyone:

5. The after-action review

Once it has passed, and not before.

How long it lasted:

Which cause it was:

What shortened it:

Compared with the last setback — shorter or longer?

This worksheet is free to print, photocopy and share, including with clients. It is self-reflection material, not a diagnosis, an assessment or a substitute for professional support. If a relationship involves fear, control or coercion, or if working through this raises more than feels manageable, please speak to a doctor, a therapist or a domestic abuse service.