

Family of Origin Worksheet

Attachment patterns are learned somewhere, and the somewhere is usually a set of very ordinary repeated experiences rather than a single identifiable event. That is why the question "what happened to me?" so often produces nothing useful — most people are searching for a cause dramatic enough to justify the effect, and the actual mechanism is duller and more repetitive than that.

Who this is for: You recognise your pattern and want to understand where it came from without turning it into a case against your parents.

The exercises

1. The timeline

Ages down the left, events across.

Ages 0–5, what I know (including what I was told rather than remember):

Ages 6–11:

Ages 12–18:

Which stretch was steadiest, and which was least predictable?

2. What each caregiver taught about closeness

One line each, about behaviour rather than character.

Caregiver 1 — upset, needing, angry, what got attention:

Caregiver 2 — the same four:

Anyone else who mattered (grandparent, sibling, teacher):

Where do the lessons contradict each other?

3. The rules you learned

Write them as rules, in the second person.

Rule one:

Rule two:

Rule three:

For each: what did it get me at the time?

4. Which rules are still running

Match each rule to something you did this month.

Rule one — where it showed up in the last month:

Rule two — same:

Rule three — same:

Which rule is currently costing me most?

5. What you would keep

The question that stops this becoming an indictment.

What I would genuinely keep:

The same capacity at a lower setting would look like:

One thing I want to say to the child on this timeline:

One thing I am prepared to update, starting this month:

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.