

If It Keeps Happening With Different People

The most honest report you will ever get about yourself is not your opinion of yourself. It is your body, and the words that keep coming out of your mouth.

Most of us are carrying an assumption about who we are. Not a considered belief — an assumption, absorbed so early and repeated so often that it never came up for review. *I am the one who is always overlooked. I am bad with conflict. People take advantage of me. I cannot handle that kind of person.* It feels like a description. It is actually a habit, and it has been quietly writing your life.

The difficulty is that you cannot think your way out of it, because the thing doing the thinking is the same apparatus that formed the assumption. You need a source of information about yourself that is not your own commentary. There are two, and they are both cheap and always running.

The first is the body. When something touches an old wound, the body reports it before the mind has produced a single sentence. The chest tightens. The face goes hot. The shoulders come up. The heart quivers in a way you would not be able to describe to anyone. For years I only noticed those signals when the pressure was very high — real fear, real anxiety, a room with real tension in it. But once you start looking for them, the sensitivity increases, and you begin to catch smaller and smaller versions. The body keeps the score, and often it knows more than the mind does about what you are actually going through.

The second source is the words that come out of your mouth. This one is uncomfortable, and it is the most useful diagnostic I know:

“If you find yourself saying the same thing about different people, or having the same difficult experience with multiple people, then maybe it's not them.”

TIM O. DAVIS — GROUP TEACHING CALL, AUGUST 2026

Sit with that for a second before you defend yourself. Any one difficult person is a fact about them. The same difficulty, with a series of different people, across different years and different rooms, is a fact about the arrangement — and you are the one constant in every instance of it.

That is not an accusation. It is not about blame at all. It is not *I am the problem*. It is *there is something inside me that is participating, and I would like to see it, because it is currently running without my knowledge*.

Complaining is the same signal in a different register. When the mind wants to complain a lot, that is not a moral failure, it is a

readout. Something in there is stuck and is trying to discharge through language instead of through actual release. When I catch it, I try to back out — take a breath, step back from the content of the complaint, and ask what the real pattern is.

Here is a third one I have been working with lately, and it is the least obvious. **Resistance to particular tasks.** Everybody has the thing they will not do — the call, the conversation, the small piece of the job that gets pushed to next week every week. All the productivity people tell you to eat the frog, do the hard thing first. Fine. But that treats it as a discipline problem and moves right past the information.

When I slowed it down and looked at the avoidance energetically — not *why am I lazy about this* but *what is actually happening inside me when this comes up* — I found something worth finding almost every time. Usually a small fear, wearing the costume of procrastination. The task was never the size of the reluctance. The reluctance belonged to something older.

So the practice is this: become a loving observer of yourself. **Loving** is not a decoration on that sentence. If observation turns into an inventory of everything wrong with you, you will stop looking, and you should — nobody keeps looking at something that only ever produces shame. Awareness is not condemnation. You are not your patterns. You are the one who has been experiencing them all this time.

And once you see one clearly, something quietly enormous becomes available: you can imagine it being otherwise. Picture the thing that habitually knocks you off center — the tone of voice, the email, the person who does that thing they do — and picture yourself hearing it and it not sticking to you. Just imagine it. That sounds too small to matter. It is not. The moment you can genuinely picture being different is the moment the pattern stops being onboard programming and starts being a choice, and everything practical follows from there.

Watch the body. Watch the words. Notice what you keep avoiding. Then be kind about what you find.

THE PRACTICE

Pick the sentence you have said about more than one person in your life. Do not judge it. Just ask what has to be true inside you for that sentence to keep finding people to be about.