

H A D A S S A H

The Five Loops

A pattern guide

WHY YOUR LIFE KEEPS REPEATING
AND THE STORIES BEHIND IT

THE REALITY BLUEPRINT LIBRARY · VOL. 02

H A D A S S A H

The Five Loops

Why your life keeps repeating itself, and the five
stories that keep the loop running.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Five Loops is the second volume of The Reality Blueprint Library, a set of three free guides by Hadassah. It is about repetition: why the same experience can follow you through different jobs, partners and cities, and the five stories that most often keep it going.

If you took the free quiz “Which loop keeps repeating in your life?”, you already know which chapter is yours. If you didn’t, chapter 08 has a short self-check that mirrors it.

IMPORTANT

This guide is educational. It is not therapy, and it does not diagnose, treat or cure anything. It cannot replace care from a qualified professional. The people in the examples are illustrations written to help you recognize patterns. They are not real clients.

If you are living with grief, trauma, abuse, depression, an eating disorder, or thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to a qualified professional. If you are in crisis, contact your local emergency number or a crisis line right away. You deserve real support, and this book is not a substitute for it.

Nothing in these pages promises a specific result or timeline. What changes, and how fast, is different for every person.

RIGHTS

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How to use this guide

You probably picked up this guide because something in your life keeps coming back. Different setting, same ending.

If you took the quiz on my website, you already have a name for it: one of five loops. This book is about those five. Where they come from, how they run, what they cost, what they quietly protect you from, and how to interrupt them on an ordinary day.

READ IN THIS ORDER

Start with chapters 01 and 02. They explain the mechanism, and every loop chapter builds on them. Then read your loop. Chapters 03 to 07 cover one loop each, all with the same structure, so you can compare them side by side. Then read the other four at least once: most people recognize more than one, and chapter 08 explains why. Finish with chapter 09 and the three worksheets at the back.

KEEP A PEN CLOSE

Every chapter ends with an exercise. Write by hand if you can. It slows the mind down enough for you to see what it's doing.

GO GENTLY

Some pages may touch something old. If you feel some discomfort, that's normal. Take breaks. Be curious rather than harsh. You are not here to judge the person who built these loops. You are here to understand her.

One last thing: the people in the examples (Ana, Maya, Lena, Sara, Jess and Nina) are illustrations, not real clients, and none of their stories is a diagnosis of yours.

CHAPTER

01

Same experience, new faces

"Your life keeps repeating itself for a reason. And it might not be the reason you think."

INSIDE · THE REPEAT · NOT LUCK, NOT DESTINY · THE ONE
CONSTANT · WHAT A LOOP IS · FIVE EXPENSIVE STORIES

The job changes. The partner changes. The city changes. And somewhere around the third month, the experience is the same.

You start somewhere new with real hope. The new manager seems kind, the new person texts back fast, the new city feels like a clean page.

Then, slowly, the old shape appears. You're staying late again, doing work someone else presents. You're checking your phone again, wondering why the reply is taking so long. You're eating dinner alone again on a Friday, a year into a place where you still have no one you'd call at midnight.

Different faces. Same scene.

It isn't bad luck

When something keeps happening, the mind reaches for the nearest explanations: luck and destiny. Both put the cause somewhere you can't reach. That's why they comfort you for a moment and exhaust you over the years.

But luck doesn't pick the same plot five times in a row, with the same ending, at the same point in every story. And destiny doesn't need your participation to play out.

A loop does.

Your life keeps repeating itself for a reason.
And it might not be the reason you think.

HADASSAH

The one thing present in every scene

Let me say this part gently. If the job changed, and the partner changed, and the city changed, then one element was present in every version of the story.

You.

This is not blame. Many things that happened to you were not your doing, and some were genuinely unfair or painful. Nothing in this book asks you to believe you caused your own suffering.

It asks something smaller and more useful: to notice that while the setting changed, the way you *responded* to it may not have. The same fear arrived on cue. The same conclusion formed before you had time to think. The same choice felt like the only safe one.

READ THIS SLOWLY

You say you want something different. But when a new opportunity appears, you react with the same fear, make the same excuses, and choose what feels familiar. Then you call it bad luck. Bad timing. Or proof that things never work out for you.

The good news hiding in this: if you are the one constant, you are also the one element you can work with.

What a loop is

In this book, a loop is a pattern with a particular shape. It starts with a meaning you made once, usually long ago. That meaning shapes what you notice and what you choose. What you choose shapes

what happens next. And what happens next looks like proof that the meaning was right.

The story produces the evidence that keeps it alive. That's why a loop feels like reality, not like a habit: the world keeps agreeing with you.

Sometimes, you're not experiencing the same reality again. You're responding to a new situation with the same old beliefs.

Not everything that repeats is a loop

Some things repeat because the circumstances repeat: a chronic illness, an industry that underpays everyone in your role, a person who keeps hurting you. Those are facts, and they deserve practical answers: a doctor, a lawyer, a new job, a boundary, a door you walk out of.

A loop is the part that travels with you: the meaning that was already waiting in the next room before the new people arrived.

Five stories, five loops

When people describe what keeps repeating in their lives, the same few sentences tend to sit at the center. I call them expensive stories, and five of them run their own loops:

- **The Proof Loop:** "I'll believe it when I see it."
- **The Abandonment Loop:** "In the end, everyone leaves."
- **The Not-Yet Loop:** "I'll start when I'm ready."
- **The Unfair Loop:** "It's always harder for me."
- **The Invisible Loop:** "Nobody really sees me."

You might recognize one right away, or three. Both are normal. This book won't ask you to pretend or to think positive. It will give you a map, because awareness is where the cycle breaks.

EXERCISE 1.1

15 MINUTES

The repeat list

1. Write down three experiences that have repeated in different settings.

2. For each, note what changed and what stayed the same.

3. Finish the sentence “At the end, I told myself...” for each, then circle any word that repeats.

WHAT CHANGED	WHAT STAYED THE SAME	WHAT I TOLD MYSELF

WHAT TO KEEP

•

The setting changes, the response stays. A loop is the part that travels with you.

•

It isn't luck or destiny, and it isn't blame. A loop needs your participation, which means you can change your part.

•

Not everything that repeats is a loop. Some problems need practical action.

CHAPTER

02

How a story becomes a loop

"What you repeatedly do creates evidence, that evidence reinforces your identity, and your identity shapes the reality you keep experiencing."

INSIDE · THE 9 CYCLE METHOD · ONE MOMENT, WALKED ALL THE WAY
AROUND · WHY THE WORLD SEEMS TO AGREE · EXPENSIVE STORIES ·
THE FIVE LOOPS AT A GLANCE

A loop doesn't start as a loop. It starts as a moment. Something happens, and you need it to mean something.

Not knowing why something happened is uncomfortable, so the mind fills the gap fast. I call this the automatic translator: the meaning arrives so quickly that it feels like perception, not opinion. You don't feel that you *decided* she was ignoring you. You just *saw* it. And when a meaning repeats often enough, it starts to organize everything else.

The 9 Cycle Method

I teach this as nine stations:

STATION	WHAT HAPPENS	IT SOUNDS LIKE
01 Experience	Something happens.	"He read my message and didn't reply."
02 Interpretation	You give it a meaning.	"He's losing interest."
03 Belief	The meaning becomes a rule.	"People always lose interest in me."
04 Attention	The rule filters what you notice.	"See? Shorter replies again."
05 Decision	You choose from what seems possible.	"I won't be the one who cares more."
06 Action	You act on the choice.	Replying late, on purpose.
07 Evidence	Results that look like proof.	"He pulled away. I knew it."
08 Identity	The proof becomes who you are.	"I'm the one people get bored of."
09 Reality	Identity shapes the life you live.	The next relationship starts braced.

Then the reality you live in hands you the next experience, and the cycle starts again. Not from zero, though. From wherever the last one ended.

One moment, walked all the way around

Imagine a woman, let's call her Ana. She's 24, in her first real job, presenting a project to her team for the first time.

01 Experience. Four minutes in, her manager interrupts: "Let's skip ahead to the numbers." Two people are looking at their laptops.

02 Interpretation. Before she sits down, the translator has finished: *I was boring. They didn't want to hear me.* The camera recorded none of that. Her manager may simply have had another meeting.

03 Belief. Ana has felt this before, at family dinners where her older brother did most of the talking. The moment fits an old shape and hardens into a rule: *I'm not someone people want to listen to.*

04 Attention. Now she notices every glance at a phone while she speaks. She misses the colleague who asked for her slides, and the week her idea made it into the final plan.

05 Decision. When a client presentation comes up, she doesn't volunteer. From inside the belief, that's common sense.

06 Action. When she has to speak, she rushes, opens with "This will be quick," and skips her best points.

07 Evidence. People do tune out when someone rushes and apologizes. The client work goes to someone else, because Ana has never presented. All of it is real, and all of it looks like proof.

08 Identity. *I'm not a presenter. I'm more of a behind-the-scenes person.*

09 Reality. Five years later, at another company, she still builds the slides while someone else presents them. In her first month there, a new manager says, “Can you keep it short?” The loop starts again, with a new face.

Nobody here is a villain. Every step made sense from the inside, and at no point did Ana choose a smaller life. She kept meeting new situations with the same old belief. (You may have spotted one of the five loops in her story. Hold that thought until chapter 07.)

Why the world seems to agree with you

The hardest thing about a loop is that the evidence is real. Ana didn't imagine being passed over. Her story helped produce it. Psychology has been describing this for a long time.

The self-fulfilling prophecy. In 1948, the sociologist Robert Merton described a belief that is false at first, but changes people's behavior in a way that makes it come true. His classic example was a run on a bank: a rumor says a healthy bank will fail, customers rush to withdraw their money, and the bank, unable to pay everyone at once, fails.

Behavioral confirmation. In a 1977 study by Mark Snyder, Elizabeth Tanke and Ellen Berscheid, men talked with women on the phone after seeing a photo they believed was of their partner, either attractive or less attractive. The photos weren't of the women on the line. Yet listeners who heard only the women's side rated the women whose partners believed they were attractive as friendlier, more likable and more sociable. The men's expectations seemed to shape how they spoke, and the women responded in kind.

Bring that into your own life. If you expect people to leave, you may treat them like people who are about to leave. If you expect not to be heard, you may speak like someone who won't be.

Attention is a filter. In 1999, Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris asked people to count basketball passes in a short video. Partway through, a person in a gorilla suit walked across the scene. Roughly half of the viewers didn't see it. They were looking for something else. A belief works the same way: it tells your attention what counts, and everything else can walk right through the room unseen.

REMEMBER

A loop doesn't need you to be wrong about the facts. It only needs you to keep meeting new facts with the same old meaning. The evidence it produces will be real, which is exactly why it's so convincing.

Expensive stories

Every loop has a short, quiet sentence at its center, one that sounds less like a thought and more like the weather. I call these expensive stories.

A story isn't expensive because it's negative. "This stove is hot" is negative and very cheap: it costs nothing and saves you a burn. A story becomes expensive when what it makes you do costs more than what it protects. The job you didn't apply for. The relationship you tested until it broke. The five years spent preparing for something you never started. An expensive story is a meaning that costs you years.

Some are built on painful facts. Your father may really have left. The cost doesn't come from the fact. It comes from the meaning you carried forward, the rule about what will happen next time, in rooms you haven't entered yet.

To find where the story lives, ask what a camera could record. A camera can record that someone left. It can't record "everyone," "always," "never" or "in the end." Those words are conclusions, and that's where the expense hides.

The five loops at a glance

Read across the rows. In every case, the evidence at the end is produced by the story at the start.

LOOP	THE STORY	WHAT ATTENTION COLLECTS	EVIDENCE IT MANUFACTURES
Proof	"I'll believe it when I see it."	Everything that hasn't happened yet	You never see it, because you would only act after seeing it
Abandonment	"In the end, everyone leaves."	Signs of distance	You test, tighten and pull away, and the person goes
Not-Yet	"I'll start when I'm ready."	What still needs preparing	Years of preparation without one real data point from the world
Unfair	"It's always harder for me."	Every advantage other people have	You act with resentment and meet resistance
Invisible	"Nobody really sees me."	Times you weren't noticed	You don't ask, don't show up, and stay unseen

Walk one moment around

1. Choose a recent moment that left a strong feeling. Keep it small and specific.
2. Write what a camera would have recorded. Only images, sounds and actions.
3. Finish the sentence "This means that..." and ask: is this conclusion familiar? Where have I felt it before?
4. Follow it forward: what you noticed, decided and did next, and what happened as a result.
5. Write what this round taught you about who you are. (The Loop Map at the back is a full-page version of this exercise.)

WHAT TO KEEP

- **A loop starts as a moment.** One meaning, made fast, before you noticed you were making it.
- **The evidence is real.** Expectations shape behavior, yours and other people's, and attention sees what it was told to look for.
- **Expensive stories cost more than they protect.** The expense hides in "always," "never," "everyone" and "in the end."

CHAPTER

03

The Proof Loop

"I'll believe it when I see it." The loop that waits for proof before it moves, and so never gets to see any.

INSIDE · THE STORY IT TELLS · WHERE IT BEGINS · WHAT IT
COLLECTS · THE EVIDENCE IT MAKES · WHAT IT PROTECTS · THE
FULL-EFFORT TRIAL

Of the five loops, this one sounds the most reasonable. It doesn't sound like fear. It sounds like being sensible.

"I'll believe it when I see it" is the sentence of someone who was disappointed before and decided not to be fooled again. That's why it's so hard to catch. Nobody wants to argue with common sense.

The story it tells

Show me first. Then I'll commit. I'm not putting my whole heart into something that hasn't proven it deserves it.

THE PROOF LOOP, IN ITS OWN WORDS

The catch is that many things only produce proof after you commit. A business shows whether it works after you offer something for sale. A relationship shows its depth after you let someone close. The Proof Loop asks for the result before it will give the effort, and the result is often made of the effort.

How it sounds

- "I'll believe it when it actually happens."
- "Let's see if it lasts."
- "I'm not getting my hopes up."
- "I tried that once. It didn't work."
- "I'll go all in once I know it's worth it."
- "I'm just being realistic."
- "I've been manifesting this for months. Where is it?"

Where it often begins

Maybe you grew up around promises that didn't happen: the trip that was always next summer, the money that was coming and never came. A child in that situation learns something smart. Hope is risky, so wait until the thing appears before you let yourself want it.

Maybe you once believed all the way, in a business, a relationship, a program that promised everything, and it fell apart in front of people. Or maybe your family prized being sensible, and the safest thing to be was unimpressed.

Waiting for proof made sense once. It kept you from being hurt by things that weren't going to happen. The trouble is that it still runs in rooms where the result depends on you going first.

What your attention collects

The gap: everything that hasn't happened yet. You check the bank account, the inbox, the follower count, the mirror after two weeks of the new routine. You aren't looking for progress. You're looking for the finished result, which by definition isn't there yet.

The small signs of movement go unrecorded: the one person who asked about your prices, the week you slept better. In manifestation terms, this is the woman who affirms in the morning and checks for evidence by noon. The checking usually wins, because it feels more realistic.

The decisions it makes

Hedge. Start the project but tell no one. Date someone but keep the apps "just in case." Buy the course and skip the exercises. Launch without a price, a link or a clear way to say yes. Each choice protects

you. Each one also guarantees a smaller result.

The evidence it manufactures

Imagine Maya. She draws beautifully and has wanted to sell her illustrations for years.

Experience. Two years ago she posted a drawing captioned “commissions open!” Three likes. Nobody asked for a price.

Interpretation. *Nobody wants to pay for this.*

Belief. *I’ll believe people will buy my work when I see someone buy it.*

Attention. She sees other illustrators’ sold-out shops and decides they’re different. She counts the weeks without an inquiry.

Decision. No point making a price list until there’s demand.

Action. She posts now and then, with no link, no prices, and “DM if interested” in small letters.

Evidence. Nobody writes. People rarely buy what they can’t see how to buy.

Identity. *I’m a realist. Things just don’t take off for me.*

Reality. Two more years pass. She still hasn’t seen it, so she still doesn’t believe it.

Maya never tested whether people would buy her work. She tested whether they would chase her to buy it.

THE HIDDEN RULE

The Proof Loop confuses a test of half effort with a test of the idea. When the half effort fails, it concludes that the idea was wrong.

What it costs

Mostly time: years of trying things at half strength and reading the half results as a verdict. It also costs the experience of believing in something and being right, so your hope never builds a track record. And the people close to you can feel the hedge. It's hard to fully show up for someone who is still deciding whether you're worth it.

What it protects you from

Every loop protects something, or you would have dropped it long ago. This one protects you from the particular disappointment of having hoped. If you never fully believed, you never fully lose. It also spares you from looking foolish in front of people who watched it not work. Those are real protections. The question is whether they're still worth the price.

Signs you are in it

- ☐ You check for results before the process has had time to work.
- ☐ You start things quietly, so nobody will know if they fail.
- ☐ You say "we'll see" more often than "I will."
- ☐ When something fails, part of you is relieved you didn't hope.
- ☐ You ask for guarantees nobody could honestly give.

- ☐ “I tried that once” is one of your most-used sentences.
- ☐ You give things just enough effort to say you tried.
- ☐ Your affirmations sound certain, but your actions are still waiting.

The first interruption

Change the experiment. Instead of waiting for proof before you act, act fully for a short, defined period, then look at the result. I call this the full-effort trial.

Pick one thing you’ve been hedging on. Decide what full effort looks like, in actions a camera could record, for a period you can sustain: one week, maybe two. Write down a verdict date. Until then, you don’t check whether it’s working. You only check whether you did it. If it didn’t work, you’ll know something real, because the idea finally got a fair test.

“For fourteen days, I’ll post one finished piece every other day, with prices and a link. I won’t check sales until day fifteen.”

A full-effort trial, the way Maya might write it.

OTHER TRIALS, OTHER ROOMS

- “For three weeks, I’ll write 300 words every morning. I won’t reread them until day twenty-two.”
- “For ten weekdays, I’ll walk for thirty minutes at lunch. I’ll judge how I feel on day eleven, not on day two.”

Design your full-effort trial

1. Name one thing you've been waiting for proof on.
2. What have you actually done so far? Was it a full test or a half test?
3. Describe full effort in actions a camera could record.
4. Choose your trial period and your verdict date.
5. Write what the loop will say halfway through, and your answer.

WHAT TO KEEP

- **The story:** "I'll believe it when I see it." It sounds like common sense, which is why it hides so well.
- **The trap:** many results only appear after commitment, and the loop asks for the result first.
- **The evidence:** a half-effort test fails, and the loop reads it as proof the idea was wrong.
- **The interruption:** a full-effort trial. Do it fully for a set time, then judge.

CHAPTER

04

The Abandonment Loop

"In the end, everyone leaves." The loop that braces for goodbye, and in bracing, makes staying harder.

INSIDE · THE STORY IT TELLS · WHERE IT BEGINS · WHAT IT
COLLECTS · THE EVIDENCE IT MAKES · WHAT IT PROTECTS · ASK,
DON'T TEST

You know this one from the inside of a phone screen.

You sent a message at 6:14. It's 8:40 now. The checkmarks say it was read. No reply. You've opened the conversation eleven times and reread your own message to find what was wrong with it. Some part of you already knows how this ends.

That part of you has seen this before.

A WORD BEFORE WE BEGIN

People do leave. Parents leave, partners leave, friends drift away, people die. Being abandoned by someone who was supposed to care for you is a real wound, not a story you made up. This chapter is not about whether that happened. It's about the meaning you carried forward, and what it does in relationships that haven't ended.

The story it tells

Everyone leaves eventually. It's only a matter of when. So I'd better see it coming, and I'd rather not be the one who gets left.

THE ABANDONMENT LOOP, IN ITS OWN WORDS

In this story, closeness is temporary. So you live in relationships the way someone lives near a volcano: even on the good days, part of you is listening for the rumble.

How it sounds

- “Are we okay?”
- “I knew this was too good to last.”
- “It’s fine.” (When it isn’t.)
- “I’m not going to wait around to be dumped.”
- “I don’t really do relationships.”
- “Why do the people I love always leave?”

Where it often begins

This is the loop most likely to grow from a real loss. Maybe a parent left, or was there in body but never quite in reach. Maybe someone you loved died when you were young. Maybe your best friend at thirteen dropped you overnight, and nobody told you why.

None of that was your fault, and none of it was a story. It happened.

A child who has been left often learns to watch faces and tones of voice for the first sign it’s happening again. That made sense: she couldn’t stop anyone from leaving, but she could try not to be blindsided. The watching just doesn’t retire. It moves into adult relationships and reads ordinary moments as warnings.

Schema therapy, developed by the psychologist Jeffrey Young, calls a version of this pattern abandonment: a deep expectation that the people you depend on will leave. There are therapists trained to work with exactly this.

What your attention collects

Signs of distance. The slower reply. The message with no emoji when the last one had three. The plans that weren't confirmed. Each gets filed under the same heading: *it's starting*.

What doesn't get filed: the seven nights in a row they called. Presence is hard to see when you're scanning for absence.

The decisions it makes

- **Test.** Go quiet to see if they notice. Cancel plans to see if they fight for you.
- **Tighten.** Ask for reassurance, then ask again.
- **Pull away first.** Get cold and busy, so that if it ends, you were the one who left.
- **Avoid altogether.** Keep everyone at a pleasant distance, so there's nothing to lose.

Each move makes sense if the ending is coming anyway, and none of them if it isn't.

The evidence it manufactures

Imagine Lena, three weeks into dating someone she really likes.

Experience. On Thursday he replies more slowly than on Monday. On Friday he says he's tired and wants a quiet night alone.

Interpretation. *He's losing interest. It's starting.*

Belief. *In the end, everyone leaves.*

Attention. She notices shorter texts. She misses that he asked about her sister's surgery and sent her a song on Wednesday.

Decision. She won't be the one who cares more.

Action. She replies hours late, on purpose. "It's fine." Then, after another slow reply: "If you're not into this, just tell me."

Evidence. From his side, he had a tiring week and now feels like he's on trial. Things stop feeling easy. Two weeks later, he says it isn't working.

Identity. *I'm the one people leave.*

Reality. She starts the next relationship already braced.

This does not mean Lena caused him to leave, or deserved it. People leave for their own reasons, and sometimes they should. What the loop did was add weight to the scale. It turned a tired Thursday into a test, and the test into a strain.

REMEMBER

The Abandonment Loop doesn't decide whether people leave. It changes how hard it is to stay. Nobody can relax for long in a relationship where they are always, quietly, being tested.

What it costs

The relationships that end under the weight of testing. The good days, too: even when nothing is wrong, part of you stays on watch, so you rarely get to rest in being loved. And for anyone who avoids closeness altogether, the relationships that never began.

What it protects you from

Being blindsided. If you're always watching, you will never again be the child who didn't see it coming. And helplessness: if you leave first, at least the ending happened on your terms. That armor was built by someone who had no other tools. Honor it, then ask whether you still need it.

Signs you are in it

- ☐ You reread your messages after sending them.
- ☐ You check when someone was last online.
- ☐ A slow reply can ruin your whole evening.
- ☐ You ask "Are we okay?" more often than you'd like to admit.
- ☐ You've ended things first so you wouldn't be the one who got left.
- ☐ You test people, then feel hurt when they don't pass.
- ☐ You rehearse goodbye conversations while things are still fine.

The first interruption

A simple rule: ask, don't test.

A test is an indirect question. The other person rarely knows they're taking one, so they fail without knowing, and you collect the failure as evidence. Asking is more vulnerable, but it gives them something real to respond to.

Next time the drop hits, wait twenty minutes. Write what the camera recorded and what you concluded. Then, if you still need something, ask for it in one clear, kind sentence.

“I noticed I got anxious when we didn’t talk today. Could we plan a call this weekend?”

EXERCISE 4.1

15 MINUTES

Test or ask?

1. Think of the last time you felt someone pulling away. Write what the camera recorded, what you concluded, and what you did next.
2. Was it a test or a question? Rewrite it as one direct, kind sentence.
3. List three recent pieces of evidence that someone in your life is still here.

WHAT TO KEEP

- **The story:** “In the end, everyone leaves.” Closeness is temporary; the only question is when.
- **The origin is often real.** The loop is the meaning carried forward, never the loss itself.
- **The interruption:** ask, don’t test. One clear sentence gives the other person a real chance to respond.

CHAPTER

05

The Not-Yet Loop

"I'll start when I'm ready." The loop that prepares for years, and never collects a single answer from the world.

INSIDE · THE STORY IT TELLS · WHERE IT BEGINS · OVERTHINKING
· THE EVIDENCE IT MAKES · WHAT IT PROTECTS · THE SEND BUTTON

There's a folder on your computer called something like "Business ideas," or "Book," or "Someday."

Inside are notes, outlines, a logo you never used, three versions of the same plan. There's also a job application, filled out to the very end, sitting in a browser tab for two weeks. You just need to fix one more line in the cover letter.

You're not lazy. People in this loop are often the hardest-working people in the room. That's what makes it convincing. It doesn't feel like avoiding. It feels like preparing.

The story it tells

I'll start when I'm ready. When I know a little more, when the plan is solid, when I've fixed this one thing. I don't want to do it badly.

THE NOT-YET LOOP, IN ITS OWN WORDS

The flaw is that "ready" isn't a place you reach by preparing. The psychologist Albert Bandura called the feeling of *I can do this* self-efficacy, and in his 1977 work he described direct experience, actually doing the thing, as an especially powerful source of it. You can't think your way into it. You collect it. So the Not-Yet Loop waits for a feeling that only action can produce.

How it sounds

- "I just need to finish this course first."
- "Once I've saved a bit more, then."
- "It's not the right time."

- “Let me research a little more.”
- “I don’t want to put out something half-baked.”
- “I’ll do it properly next month.”
- “What if I start and it’s not good?”

Where it often begins

Often in homes where mistakes were expensive, where getting it wrong meant criticism or a disappointment that lasted for days. If being wrong was dangerous, being prepared was safety.

Sometimes it grows from praise. If you were “the smart one,” your worth may have become tied to being impressive, and the surest way never to look unimpressive is never to show anything unfinished. Sometimes it starts with one public failure, or with a childhood so unpredictable that planning was the only thing you could control.

Preparation is a real skill, and it kept you safe. The loop begins when preparation stops being the road to the thing and becomes the place you live.

What your attention collects

Gaps. Another skill to learn, another certificate, a cleaner plan, someone online doing it better, which proves you need more time. Something is always missing, for everyone, including the people already doing what you want to do. What it skips: how much you already know, which is almost always enough for a first small step.

Overthinking, the loop's favorite room

You run the conversation forty times. You lie awake planning the version of the plan that will finally be good enough. It feels like thinking. Often it's rumination, which the psychologist Susan Nolen-Hoeksema studied for much of her career: going over and over your distress, its causes and its consequences, without moving toward doing anything about it. Her research linked it to longer and deeper low moods.

A simple test: in the last twenty minutes, has this thinking produced a decision? Not an insight. A decision. If not, you're circling.

And when circling gets uncomfortable, there's busyness: the kitchen, the files, forty emails that could have waited. Sometimes, staying busy is just another form of self-sabotage. You keep moving so you never have to sit with what you're avoiding.

TRY THIS WHEN YOU'RE CIRCLING

Talk to yourself by name, as you would to a friend. "Okay, Sara. What's the smallest next step?" Research by the psychologist Ethan Kross and his colleagues suggests that this kind of self-distancing can help people think about stressful situations more calmly.

The decisions it makes

Postpone the launch until the website is perfect. Take one more course before applying. Wait until after the holidays, the move, the busy season. Do the safe, invisible part of the work and skip the exposed part: publishing, asking, sending. Each decision sounds responsible. Together, they add up to years.

The evidence it manufactures

Imagine Sara. She has been a nurse for six years and wants to move into health education.

Experience. She finds a posting that fits her almost perfectly. One line says: “Experience creating educational content preferred.”

Interpretation. *I don’t have that. I’m not ready yet.*

Belief. *I’ll apply when I’m ready.*

Attention. She finds four more things she isn’t sure she can do. She misses that she has trained dozens of new nurses, which is educational work.

Decision. A course in instructional design first. Then she’ll apply.

Action. She fills out the application “just to have it ready,” tweaks the cover letter for nine days, and doesn’t press send.

Evidence. The posting closes. The course takes four months. Then she feels she needs a portfolio.

Identity. *I need to be really prepared. I’m not a risk-taker.*

Reality. Two years later she is more qualified than ever and still hasn’t sent a single application.

That is the true cost of this loop: years of preparation, and not one real data point from the world.

REMEMBER

After a point, only contact with reality can teach you more: a real reply, a real customer, a real “no.” The Not-Yet Loop makes sure you never collect it.

What it costs

Time, first. The idea you had at 26 that someone else launched at 29. The application window that closed. Then the money and energy spent on preparation that never meets the world. And slowly, your trust in yourself. Every “I’ll start Monday” that doesn’t happen gets noted, until your own promises sound like the Proof Loop’s favorite phrase: *we’ll see*.

What it protects you from

Judgment. As long as you’re preparing, nobody can criticize the finished thing, because there isn’t one. And something more tender: the dream itself. As long as you haven’t tried, you can still be the person who could have been brilliant at this. Not trying keeps the dream perfect, and keeps it in a folder.

Signs you are in it

- ☐ You have a folder or notebook of things you’ll start “when it’s time.”
- ☐ You’ve finished an application, a post or a proposal and never sent it.
- ☐ You buy courses faster than you finish them.
- ☐ You often say “I just need to...” before the real thing.
- ☐ You’ve rewritten the same plan more than three times.
- ☐ You feel busy all day and still haven’t touched the one thing that matters.
- ☐ You compare your first draft to someone else’s tenth year.
- ☐ You have far more information about your goal than experience of it.

The first interruption

Collect one real data point from the world. Just one.

A real data point is any action that gets a response from outside your own head: sending the application, asking one person if they'd pay for what you're planning, publishing the imperfect post. Choose the smallest version that still counts as real contact. Not the course, not the plan. The send button. Do it this week, ideally within a day, before the loop has time to explain why it should wait. Whatever comes back, a yes, a no or silence, write it down.

“I’ll send the application as it is today, by Friday at noon. One read-through, then send.”

A deadline, and a limit on polishing.

THE SMALLEST REAL VERSION

- Instead of redesigning the website: email your offer to three people who might want it.
- Instead of another course: apply to one job with the CV you have today.
- Instead of planning the podcast: record one episode on your phone and publish it.
- Instead of researching the market: ask five people what they would pay, and write down their answers.

The send button

1. List everything you're currently preparing for.
2. For one of them: how long have you been preparing, and what real response from the world have you had?
3. Write the smallest action that would get a real response, and when you'll do it.
4. Afterward, write what happened, and what the loop said right before you pressed send.

WHAT TO KEEP

- **The story:** "I'll start when I'm ready." But readiness mostly comes from doing, not from preparing.
- **It feels like work.** Research, planning, courses and busyness can all be ways of not starting.
- **Overthinking is not planning.** If twenty minutes of thinking hasn't produced a decision, you're circling.
- **The interruption:** the send button. One small, real action that gets an answer from outside your head.

CHAPTER

06

The Unfair Loop

"It's always harder for me." The loop that counts every advantage other people have, and carries that count into every new room.

INSIDE · REAL UNFAIRNESS FIRST · THE STORY IT TELLS · WHERE
IT BEGINS · THE EVIDENCE IT MAKES · WHAT IT PROTECTS · THE
TWO LEDGERS

Your coworker gets the promotion. Later you find out her uncle plays golf with the director.

Your friend buys an apartment at 29 and mentions that her parents helped with the down payment. Someone you follow launches a business that takes off, and you notice she had a year of savings to live on while she built it. Each time, your chest tightens. *Of course it was easy for her.*

Maybe it was easier. That's often true. The loop isn't in noticing it. The loop is in what happens next.

READ THIS FIRST

Unfairness is real. Some people do have it harder, for reasons that have nothing to do with their mindset: poverty, racism, sexism, disability, illness, where they were born, who gets believed when they speak. Discrimination is not a story you are telling yourself, and no amount of reframing makes it disappear. This chapter will never ask you to pretend otherwise.

It is about something narrower: what a meaning does to your next choice. A fact can be true, and the way you carry it can still close doors that were open. Both can be true at once.

The story it tells

It's always harder for me. Other people get help, connections, second chances. I have to fight for everything, and even then it doesn't work out.

THE UNFAIR LOOP, IN ITS OWN WORDS

A camera can record a specific advantage: the uncle, the down payment. It can record that a company has never promoted a woman to director, or that you are paid less than a colleague for the same work. It can't record "always."

Aaron Beck, the psychiatrist who founded cognitive therapy, called this kind of leap overgeneralization: a sweeping conclusion drawn from one event or a few. It helps to separate two things that both get called unfair. A **precise grievance** names a specific barrier in a specific place. It can be documented, challenged, organized against or walked away from. A **global story**, *it's always harder for me*, arrives in every new room before you do. The first is useful. The second is the loop.

How it sounds

- "Must be nice."
- "Of course she got it. Look who her dad is."
- "People like me don't get those chances."
- "Why would I even apply? They already know who they want."
- "Nobody ever helped me."
- "It's rigged, so what's the point?"
- "Easy for you to say."

Where it often begins

Very often, with something that really was unfair. You were blamed while a sibling got a pass. There was a favorite, and it wasn't you. Your family struggled with money while your classmates didn't. You met discrimination, the kind that is hard to prove and impossible to forget. Or you heard "people like us don't get that" until it sounded like a law.

Noticing that unfairness was accurate, and protective. It taught you that your struggles weren't simply your fault. The loop begins only when the seeing becomes a prediction about every future room, and the prediction starts making your choices for you.

What your attention collects

Every advantage other people have. It reads success stories hunting for the hidden head start, and usually finds one, because almost everyone has some. What it skips: the help you did receive, the doors that opened, the people who took a chance on you. Over time, the world looks like a race you entered last, in heavier shoes. Some days that may be partly accurate. But a picture that only includes evidence for one conclusion is not the whole picture.

The decisions it makes

It tends to choose one of two directions. **Withdrawal:** why bother? You don't apply, don't ask for the raise, don't pitch the idea, because the outcome is decided. The system may be unfair, but the door that stays closed is one you didn't knock on.

Or **armor:** you go in braced for a fight. You start the negotiation already angry, read neutral comments as slights, turn down help because accepting it feels like admitting something. Both make sense if the outcome is decided. Both also change the outcome.

The evidence it manufactures

Imagine Jess. She's good at her job and has already been passed over once.

Experience. A team lead role opens. Her manager says, “Anyone interested, let me know by Friday.”

Interpretation. *He already knows who he wants. It’ll be Tom.*

Belief. *It’s always harder for me.*

Attention. She notices that Tom had lunch with the manager. She misses that the manager forwarded her report to the director with a note: “great work.”

Decision. She’ll apply, but she isn’t going to beg.

Action. A two-line email on Friday at 4:55. In the interview she is guarded and sharp, as if every question were a trap.

Evidence. The panel finds her hard to read. Tom, relaxed and full of plans for the team, gets the role.

Identity. *I knew it. Things are always harder for me.*

Reality. She starts looking for another job, and takes the same expectation with her.

Maybe the process was biased. If so, it deserves to be named and acted on. But the loop didn’t help Jess find out. It made sure that, whatever the truth was, she showed up as the version of herself least able to change it.

REMEMBER

You can be right that something is unfair and still be paying for how you carry it. Keep seeing the unfairness. Just stop letting it make your choices for you.

What it costs

Opportunities that were within reach: the application not sent, the help not accepted, the mentor you assumed wouldn't care. Energy, because keeping score is a full-time job with no pay. And, most painfully, your sense of agency. A story that says the outcome is always decided elsewhere wears down the feeling that what you do matters, and that feeling is exactly what you need to push back against real unfairness.

What it protects you from

Self-blame. If the game is rigged, losing isn't your fault, and for someone who was blamed unfairly as a child, that protection matters deeply. Sometimes it is simply correct. It also protects you from wanting something openly. If you go in braced, or don't go in, nobody sees your hope, and if it fails, you knew all along. The loop offers a kind of certainty. The price is that it keeps ending the same way.

Signs you are in it

- ☐ When someone succeeds, your first thought is about what helped them.
- ☐ You don't apply for things when the outcome feels decided.
- ☐ Accepting help, or feeling grateful for it, is hard.
- ☐ Neutral comments often land as slights.
- ☐ You walk into interviews or hard conversations already angry.
- ☐ Celebrating a friend's good news takes effort.
- ☐ You use "always" and "never" a lot when you describe your life.
- ☐ You're tired of fighting, but can't imagine walking in any other way.

The first interruption

Split the grievance into two columns. I call them the two ledgers. In the first, write the unfairness as precisely as a camera would record it, and don't shrink it. In the second, write what is still yours to move in this situation: whom you can ask, what you can document, where else you could go, how you want to walk into the room.

The first ledger keeps you honest about the world. The second keeps you in your own life. The loop only lets you see the first.

THE UNFAIR PART (CAMERA)	STILL MINE TO MOVE
My manager has promoted two people from his old team and nobody else.	Ask for the criteria in writing. Document my results. Apply anyway, with a clear plan. Talk to HR if the criteria don't hold up. Look at other teams.
My friend's parents paid her rent through her twenties. Mine couldn't.	Stop using her timeline as my measuring stick. Look at what I built with what I had. Plan my next step on my own numbers.

The two ledgers

- 1. Choose one situation where things feel harder for you.
- 2. On the left, write the unfair part as precisely as a camera would record it.
- 3. On the right, list what is still yours to move. Aim for five. Circle one to do this week.

THE UNFAIR PART (CAMERA)	STILL MINE TO MOVE

Last, name one piece of help you have had in this area of your life. It doesn't cancel the unfairness. It completes the picture.

WHAT TO KEEP

- **Unfairness is real.** Discrimination and disadvantage are facts, not stories, and they deserve to be named.
- **The loop is the global version.** A precise grievance can be acted on. "Always" arrives in every room before you do.
- **It chooses withdrawal or armor,** and both change the outcome.
- **The interruption:** the two ledgers. Name the unfair part precisely, then list what is still yours to move.

CHAPTER

07

The Invisible Loop

"Nobody really sees me." The loop that waits to be noticed, and stays out of view while it waits.

INSIDE · THE STORY IT TELLS · WHERE IT BEGINS · WHAT IT
COLLECTS · THE EVIDENCE IT MAKES · WHAT IT PROTECTS · SAY IT
PLAINLY

The meeting is going well. Then Mark says, “What if we bundled the two launches together?” and the room lights up.

The director loves it. Someone writes it on the whiteboard, with Mark’s name next to it.

It was your idea. You said it twenty minutes earlier, almost word for word, quietly, at the tail end of someone else’s sentence. Nobody reacted. You don’t say anything now either. What would you even say? *Of course. Nobody really sees me.*

The story it tells

I could disappear and nobody would notice. If they really cared, they would see what I need without my having to say anything.

THE INVISIBLE LOOP, IN ITS OWN WORDS

The engine of this loop is that last sentence. It turns asking into proof that they don’t care. So you don’t ask, so they don’t notice, which proves they don’t care.

People in this loop are often deeply perceptive. They know everyone’s birthday and how each person takes their coffee. They give others exactly the attention they wish they received, and then they wait, silently, for it to come back.

How it sounds

- “No worries!”
- “It’s fine, I don’t mind.”
- “I didn’t want to bother anyone.”
- “I’m more of a behind-the-scenes person.”
- “I shouldn’t have to ask.”
- “Whatever works for everyone else.”
- “Nobody even noticed I was gone.”

Where it often begins

Often in a home where attention was scarce. Not necessarily a home without love. A busy one: parents working long hours, or a sibling who needed more, because they were ill, or struggling, or simply louder. In a home like that, the child who needs little is a relief. And children notice what earns relief.

Maybe you were praised for being “so easy.” Maybe, in your family or culture, drawing attention to yourself was considered rude or unsafe. Maybe you were the only one like you in the room.

Becoming quiet and self-sufficient made sense once. It kept the peace and earned approval. The loop begins when the quiet hardens into a rule, carried into rooms where speaking up would be welcome.

What your attention collects

The times you weren’t noticed. The group-chat message that got no reply while the next person’s got ten. The friend who talked for an hour and never asked how you were. Each moment is real, and each one is filed as proof.

What gets waved away: the colleague who thanked you, the friend who remembered your sister's name. *She was just being polite.* And the loop never files the moments you made yourself hard to see.

The decisions it makes

- **Hint instead of ask.** "It would be nice if someone..." instead of "Could you...?"
- **Wait to be discovered.** Do excellent work quietly and hope someone notices.
- **Shrink the request.** "Only if you have time, no pressure at all."
- **Say "it's fine."** Then feel hurt that people believed you.

The evidence it manufactures

Imagine Nina, the one in her friend group who plans everything.

Experience. Nina organized the last three birthday dinners in her group. Her own birthday is in two weeks, and nobody has mentioned it.

Interpretation. *Nobody cares enough to remember.*

Belief. *Nobody really sees me.*

Attention. She counts the days without a message. She forgets that a friend asked last month, "When's your birthday again?" and she answered, "Oh, don't worry about it."

Decision. She won't bring it up. If they cared, they'd remember.

Action. Asked about weekend plans, she says she'll probably have a quiet one.

Evidence. A few messages arrive on the day. Nobody organizes anything, because nobody knew she wanted something, and Nina is always the one who organizes.

Identity. *I show up for everyone, and nobody shows up for me.*

Reality. She keeps organizing for others, a little more resentful each time.

Her friends may have been thoughtless, and it's fair to be hurt. But the loop made sure they had almost no chance to get it right. (If you recognized Ana from chapter 02, this is her loop too, at work.)

REMEMBER

People aren't mind readers, even the ones who love you. Being seen usually starts with letting yourself be seen. That isn't a punishment. It's simply how attention works: it goes where there is something to see.

What it costs

Recognition: the credit for your ideas, the promotion that went to someone more visible. Intimacy, because relationships deepen when both people let themselves be known, needs included. And resentment, which builds quietly and can turn generosity into bitterness.

What it protects you from

Rejection. If you never ask, you're never told no. A hint can always be taken back. A direct request can't. It also protects you from exposure: in the background, you're safe from criticism, from envy, from being

“too much.” For someone who learned that taking up space was risky, small can feel like the safest size to be.

Signs you are in it

- ☐ You say “no worries” when there are, in fact, worries.
- ☐ You remember everyone’s birthday and hope they’ll remember yours.
- ☐ You hint at what you want instead of asking.
- ☐ You’ve watched someone else get credit for your work and said nothing.
- ☐ You keep your camera off, your hand down, your name off the slide.
- ☐ You often think, “If they cared, they’d notice.”
- ☐ When someone asks what you want, you say “I don’t mind.”
- ☐ You feel both invisible and afraid of being looked at.

The first interruption

Say it plainly, once a day. One direct sentence that makes something about you visible: a want, a preference, a contribution or a need. Not a speech. A sentence.

- “I’d like to present the part I built.”
- “My birthday is on the 12th. I’d love to do a dinner.”
- “I could use some help with this.”

Each one will feel bigger than it is. That’s the loop pushing back. Say it anyway, kindly. Even a no is evidence: you survived it.

“That’s the idea I mentioned earlier. I’m happy to walk you through how I’d do it.”

For the meeting where someone repeats your idea. No accusation, just your name back on your work.

EXERCISE 7.1

15 MINUTES

Make one thing visible

1. Write three things you want that nobody knows about.
2. Write the hint you’ve been using, then one direct sentence.
3. Choose one to say this week: to whom, and when.
4. Afterward, write what happened at the camera level.

WHAT TO KEEP

- **The story:** “Nobody really sees me.” Its engine: “If they cared, they’d notice.”
- **It protects you from rejection and exposure**, at the cost of recognition and closeness.
- **The interruption:** say it plainly, once a day.

CHAPTER

08

When you see more than one

"Sometimes, the biggest thing standing between you and the life you want is a pattern you haven't learned to recognize yet."

INSIDE · WHY LOOPS TRAVEL IN PAIRS · FIVE COMMON PAIRINGS ·
FINDING YOUR PRIMARY LOOP · A SHORT SELF-CHECK

If you've read all five loop chapters, you probably saw yourself in more than one. Maybe a little in each.

That doesn't mean you're a mess. It means you're a person. Loops aren't personality types. They are patterns of meaning, and they tend to live in different rooms: one at work, another in love, a third around money. You can be fearless at work and run the Abandonment Loop at home.

Loops travel in pairs

Often two loops feed each other: one produces the feeling, and the other explains it. These pairings show up often.

Not-Yet and Proof. The two waiting loops. You won't act until you're sure, and you can't be sure until you act. Together they build a waiting room with no door.

Invisible and Unfair. You do the work quietly, someone more visible gets the reward, and the unfairness feels like more proof. One loop keeps you out of view. The other explains why that didn't pay.

Abandonment and Invisible. You want to be noticed, but attention can be withdrawn, so you stay quiet. The quiet feels like distance, and distance feels like the start of goodbye.

Abandonment and Not-Yet. "I'll let people close once I'm healed." Preparation becomes a way of never risking the ending, because nothing begins.

Proof and Unfair. You wait for proof, and when it seems to arrive only for other people, you take that as confirmation it will never arrive for you.

Finding your primary loop

Even when several loops are active, one usually runs first. It switches on at the first sign of pressure, and the others build on it. That's your primary loop, and the best place to start. Four questions help:

1. **Which one shows up in the most rooms?** Work, love, friendship, family, money, your body.
2. **Which one is oldest?** Which sentence can you remember feeling earliest?
3. **Which one do you defend?** If someone gently questioned all five sentences, which would you argue for hardest? We tend to defend the stories that protect us most.
4. **Which one runs first?** When something goes wrong, what is your very first conclusion?

A short self-check

This mirrors the quiz on my website. It isn't a diagnosis or a scientific test. It's a mirror. Circle how true each sentence has felt lately: **0** not really, **1** sometimes, **2** very much.

If you already took the quiz, compare its result with your score here. If they differ, that is useful too: the quiz catches you in one moment, and this check asks about the last few weeks. Answer for your life as it is, not as you wish it were.

#	STATEMENT	SCORE
1	Before I commit to something, I want to see that it works.	0 · 1 · 2
2	When someone takes longer than usual to reply, I worry about where we stand.	0 · 1 · 2
3	I have a list of things I'll start once I'm more prepared.	0 · 1 · 2
4	When someone succeeds, I notice what made it easier for them.	0 · 1 · 2
5	In groups, I often feel like the background person.	0 · 1 · 2
6	I keep my expectations low so I won't be disappointed.	0 · 1 · 2
7	I've pulled away first so I wouldn't be the one who got left.	0 · 1 · 2
8	I've finished something (an application, a post, a plan) and never sent it.	0 · 1 · 2
9	I don't apply for things when the outcome feels already decided.	0 · 1 · 2
10	I hint at what I want instead of asking for it directly.	0 · 1 · 2
11	I give new things just enough effort to say I tried.	0 · 1 · 2
12	Part of me is always preparing for people to leave.	0 · 1 · 2
13	I stay busy with small tasks to avoid the big one.	0 · 1 · 2
14	I often feel I have to fight harder than others for the same result.	0 · 1 · 2
15	If people really cared, they would notice what I need without my saying it.	0 · 1 · 2

Now add up your scores in groups of three. Each total runs from 0 to 6.

- **The Proof Loop:** 1 + 6 + 11 = _____
- **The Abandonment Loop:** 2 + 7 + 12 = _____
- **The Not-Yet Loop:** 3 + 8 + 13 = _____
- **The Unfair Loop:** 4 + 9 + 14 = _____
- **The Invisible Loop:** 5 + 10 + 15 = _____

Your highest total is likely your primary loop, at least for now. A second total close behind is probably its partner. If two are tied, go back to the four questions, especially “Which one do you defend?”

A score of 4 or more suggests a loop is active in your life right now. That’s all. It says nothing about who you are or who you can become, and scores can change, so take this again in a few months.

EXERCISE 8.1

10 MINUTES

Your loop pair

1. Write your primary loop and its sentence, then your second loop, if you have one.
2. Describe one moment from the last month when both were running. What did each one say, and which spoke first?

WHAT TO KEEP

- **Most people carry more than one loop.** Loops are patterns of meaning, not personality types.
- **Loops travel in pairs.** One produces the feeling, the other explains it.
- **Your primary loop runs first,** shows up in the most rooms, and is the one you defend.
- **The self-check is a mirror,** not a diagnosis.

CHAPTER

09

Interrupting a loop

"Awareness is where the cycle breaks."

INSIDE · NAMING IT · THE FIVE STATIONS YOU CAN OPERATE · IF-
THEN PLANS · SMALL EVIDENCE OVER TIME · THE DAY THE LOOP
COMES BACK

You can't change a loop by deciding to stop having it. If you've ever tried to talk yourself out of a feeling, you know this.

The sentence at the center of a loop doesn't respond to orders. But a loop has nine stations, and you don't have to change all of them. You only have to respond differently at one or two, consistently enough, for the cycle to start to bend.

Awareness first

Everything starts with seeing the loop while it's happening: when the reply is slow, when the job posting is open in a tab, when the meeting is moving on without you. The simplest way to do this is to name it.

"This is the Abandonment Loop talking."

Or: "My Not-Yet Loop is telling me I need one more course." It's the same move as catching the automatic translator. Instead of "She ignored me," you say, "I'm interpreting that she ignored me."

It sounds small. It isn't. Naming the loop creates a little space, sometimes only half a second, between the old meaning and your next move. That half second is where your choice lives.

Where you can actually step in

Four of the nine stations don't take direct orders: experience, belief, identity and reality. You can't choose a different past, believe something new by force, or become someone else by announcement. Those stations are outputs. They change downstream, as a result of everything else.

The other five you can operate, today, on purpose:

STATION	WHAT YOU CAN DO THERE	A QUESTION TO ASK
02 Interpretation	Separate the camera from the story. Find another honest meaning.	What else could this mean?
04 Attention	Deliberately collect what the loop skips.	What has my attention been leaving out?
05 Decision	Choose from somewhere other than the story.	What would I choose if this sentence were only half true?
06 Action	Take the smallest real step.	What could a camera record me doing today?
07 Evidence	Notice and record what the new action produced.	What did this show me about who I'm becoming?

Interpretation. Look for another interpretation that is equally honest. This isn't lying to yourself, and it isn't forced positivity. If he didn't reply for five hours, you don't pretend he did. You notice that "he's losing interest" is one possible meaning, and "he's busy" is another. You don't know which is true. Neither did the loop. Psychologists call this cognitive reappraisal, and James Gross's research has made it one of the most studied ways people regulate emotion.

Attention. Go looking for what your loop trained you to miss: evidence of presence, the help you received, the moments you were seen, small signs of progress. Let your attention take in the whole room, gorilla included.

Decision. You don't have to believe the opposite of your story. You only have to stop letting it make one specific decision.

Action. Direction matters more than size. One sent email, one direct sentence, one question instead of a test, repeated, beats a dramatic gesture you spend a month recovering from.

Evidence. Notice what the new action produced, and write it down. The psychologist Daryl Bem proposed, in his self-perception theory (1972), that we often learn our own attitudes partly by watching our own behavior, the way an outsider would. Act differently and record it, and you hand your identity new material.

ON AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations aren't useless. Words point a direction, and pointing matters. But a new sentence about yourself becomes believable when there is evidence behind it. Say the sentence, then go and collect one small piece of proof that it's true. That's how a sentence stops being a wish and starts being a description.

If-then plans

Loops are fast. By the time you remember what you meant to do, the old response has already happened. So bring a plan made in advance.

The psychologist Peter Gollwitzer called these implementation intentions. Most people know them as if-then plans: "If [this happens], then I will [this response]." In 2006, Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran published a review that pooled the results of many studies and found that people who made if-then plans were noticeably more likely to follow through on their goals than people who only set the goal. The plan links a moment to a response before the moment arrives, so you don't have to win an argument with the loop in real time.

A good plan has an "if" you'll recognize, a "then" small enough for a bad day, and it's written where you'll see it. Borrow these, then write your own on the planner at the back.

THE PROOF LOOP

IF...	THEN I WILL...
If I catch myself checking for results before my verdict date,	then I'll close the app and write down one thing I did today instead.
If I hear myself say "we'll see,"	then I'll replace it with one specific thing I'll do by Friday.
If something I tried halfway fails,	then I'll ask "Was that a full test?" before I draw any conclusion.

THE ABANDONMENT LOOP

IF...	THEN I WILL...
If someone takes longer than usual to reply,	then I'll put my phone down for twenty minutes and write camera and story before I respond.
If I feel the urge to test someone,	then I'll turn the test into one direct question.
If I start rehearsing a goodbye conversation,	then I'll write down three recent pieces of evidence that this person is still here.

THE NOT-YET LOOP

IF...	THEN I WILL...
If I open my plan to "improve it" one more time,	then I'll set a timer for twenty-five minutes and finish the smallest piece that can be sent.
If I think "I just need to learn one more thing,"	then I'll ask what real step I can take with what I already know, and take it.
If I've been circling the same decision for twenty minutes,	then I'll write the decision I'd make right now and put it in my calendar.

THE UNFAIR LOOP

IF...	THEN I WILL...
If I see someone succeed and feel the familiar tightening,	then I'll name their advantage once, and write one thing that is still mine to move.
If an outcome feels already decided,	then I'll apply or ask anyway, and let the answer come from them, not from me.
If I walk into an interview or negotiation feeling braced,	then I'll take three slow breaths and open with what I want, not with what I expect to be denied.

THE INVISIBLE LOOP

IF...	THEN I WILL...
If I hear myself say "no worries" when there are worries,	then I'll add one honest sentence about what I'd actually prefer.
If someone repeats my idea and gets the credit,	then I'll say, "Yes, that builds on what I suggested earlier. Here's how I'd take it further."
If someone asks what I want,	then I'll name a real preference before I let myself say "I don't mind."

Small evidence over time

A loop was rehearsed for years, often decades. One good week won't undo it, and that's okay. You don't need a breakthrough. You need a slow, steady stack of small evidence pointing somewhere new. One direct sentence a day for a month gives your identity more to work with than one brave confrontation followed by weeks of hiding.

Research on habits suggests the same patience. In a 2010 study, Phillippa Lally and her colleagues followed people building a new daily habit. The time it took to feel automatic varied widely, with a

median of about 66 days, and missing an occasional day didn't derail the process. Becoming a different version of yourself starts long before anyone else can see the results.

Relapse is part of the design

The loop will come back. When you're tired, stressed or sick. Around anniversaries, in a new relationship, in a new job. Sometimes after weeks of doing well, which is when it feels most discouraging. That isn't failure. An old path through a forest doesn't disappear the first time you walk a new one. When you're tired, your feet still know the old way.

The real danger is the conclusion you draw, because every loop will use its own return as evidence. *See? Nothing works. You weren't ready after all.* Don't let the relapse become evidence. It's a day, not a verdict.

WHAT TO DO THE DAY IT COMES BACK

1. **Name it.** "The Unfair Loop is here." No judgment. Just recognition.
2. **Run the camera.** Two lines: what the camera recorded today, and what you concluded.
3. **Pick one station.** Interpretation, attention, decision, action or evidence.
4. **Do one small thing.** Use an if-then plan. Send one sentence. Take one step.
5. **Log it.** A day the loop came back and you responded even a little differently is some of the strongest evidence you can collect.

REMEMBER

You are not trying to never meet the loop again. You are trying to meet it sooner, recognize it faster, and respond a little differently each time. That is what change looks like from the inside.

EXERCISE 9.1

20 MINUTES

Your interruption plan

1. Write your primary loop and the one station you'll focus on first.
2. Write three if-then plans for your loop.
3. Write the small daily action you'll take this week.
4. Write what you'll say to yourself on the day the loop comes back.

Where to go from here

This guide is one of three free volumes in The Reality Blueprint Library. Volume 01, *Fact vs. Story*, goes deeper into the interpretation station: how to separate what happened from what you concluded about it. Volume 03, *The Evidence Log*, is a 30-day workbook for the evidence

station: collecting, one small entry a day, proof of the person you are becoming. Each can be read on its own, and together they cover the whole cycle.

If you haven't yet, take the free quiz "Which loop keeps repeating in your life?" at <https://iamhadassah.pages.dev#quiz>, and watch the free lesson "Fact vs. Story" at <https://iamhadassah.pages.dev#lesson>, a good companion to the camera test you've been using in these pages.

And if you'd like to work on your loop with me directly, I also mentor people one to one. There are a few words about that on the last page.

WHAT TO KEEP

- **Name it.** Awareness is where the cycle breaks. Naming the loop opens the half second where your choice lives.
- **Work where you can.** Interpretation, attention, decision, action and evidence are the stations you can operate on purpose.
- **Plan ahead.** An if-then plan decides your response before the moment arrives.
- **Relapse is part of the design.** Name it, run the camera, pick one station, do one small thing, log it.

APPENDIX

The practice

Three worksheets to use again and again: the Loop Map, the weekly Loop Check and the if-then planner. Print them, copy them into a notebook, or write right on these pages. The more often you fill them in, the sooner you'll recognize your loop when it starts.

Loop Map

WORKSHEET 1 · ANY TIME

Choose one recent moment that left a strong feeling.
Walk it all the way around the nine stations.

STATION	STATION
01 Experience · the camera 	02 Interpretation · "This means..."
03 Belief · the rule it fits 	04 Attention · noticed and missed
05 Decision · what I chose 	06 Action · what I did
07 Evidence · what happened 	08 Identity · "So I am..."
09 Reality · where it repeats 	My loop · where I'll step in

Loop Check

WORKSHEET 2 · WEEK ____

Where did my loop show up this week, and how did I respond?

THE MOMENT · WHAT THE CAMERA RECORDED

THE STORY I HEARD · AND THE LOOP IT BELONGS TO

HOW SOON I NOTICED · CIRCLE ONE

In the moment · Same day · Days later · Only now

WHAT I DID DIFFERENTLY, EVEN A LITTLE

EVIDENCE I COLLECTED

WHERE THE LOOP WON THIS WEEK (NO JUDGMENT)

MY IF-THEN FOR NEXT WEEK

If-then plans

Name the moments when your loop usually starts.
Decide your response now, while you're calm.

MY LOOP AND ITS SENTENCE

IF... (THE MOMENT)	THEN I WILL... (THE RESPONSE)

- ☐ My "if" is a moment I'll recognize when it happens.
- ☐ My "then" is small enough to do on a bad day.
- ☐ I wrote it where I'll see it.

When this is not the right tool

This book works on meanings and responses. Some of what you carry needs more than that, and needs it from a person, not a page.

If you are grieving, please don't use this book to hurry it. Grief is not a loop. It needs time, company and sometimes a grief counselor.

If you were abandoned, neglected or abused by someone who was supposed to care for you, that was real, and it was not your fault. A child cannot cause an adult to leave or to hurt them. When this book talks about the Abandonment Loop, it means only the meaning carried forward into today, never the original loss. The wound itself often deserves the care of a trauma-informed therapist, and working on the meaning does not replace that care.

If you are being hurt, controlled or threatened in a relationship, the problem is not your interpretation. Please reach out to someone you trust or a domestic violence service in your area. This is about safety, not mindset.

If you face discrimination, reframing is not a substitute for justice. HR, legal advice, a union or an advocacy organization may be exactly the right next step.

If you are living with depression, anxiety, trauma, an eating disorder, or thoughts of harming yourself, please see a qualified professional: a doctor, a psychologist, a licensed counselor. If you are in danger or thinking about ending your life, contact your local emergency number or a crisis line now. You don't have to carry it alone.

Asking for help is not the opposite of this work. Sometimes it is the most important choice you could make at the decision station.

Further reading

You don't need any of these to use this guide. They are here for the curious, and as an honest record of where some of its ideas come from.

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NEXT STEP

Work on your loop with me, 1:1

Seeing your loop on paper is a real beginning. Working on it with someone who can see it from the outside is a different kind of help: someone to notice the station you keep skipping, to catch the story while it still sounds like a fact, and to stay with you on the day the loop comes back.

My mentorship is 1:1 with me, online and in English, and it is by application only. You apply, and I read every application myself. If it looks like a good fit, we have a short call to make sure. Then we map your loop together and work on it, session by session.

APPLY FOR MENTORSHIP