# Three ways of coping with a life pattern

Giving in, avoiding and fighting back, and how each keeps the pattern going.

When a life pattern is triggered, it hurts. As children we found ways to cope. Those same ways tend to run automatically in adulthood, and each one, in its own way, stops the pattern from changing.

**Giving in**
Acting as if the pattern were true. Choosing situations and people that confirm it. Feeling the pain directly.

**Avoiding**
Arranging life so the pattern is never triggered. Staying away from people, challenges or feelings. Numbing with work, drink, food or screens.

**Fighting back**
Doing the opposite, to prove the pattern wrong. It looks strong from outside and is fragile underneath.

| Pattern | Giving in | Avoiding | Fighting back |
|---|---|---|---|
| **"I will be abandoned"** | Choosing partners who are unavailable | Avoiding close relationships altogether | Clinging, checking, or leaving first |
| **"I am defective"** | Putting myself down. Choosing critical people | Hiding the real me. Keeping conversations shallow | Acting superior. Criticising others |
| **"I will fail"** | Not trying. Doing things half-heartedly | Putting things off. Avoiding challenges | Driving myself relentlessly |
| **"My needs do not matter"** | Doing what everyone else wants | Avoiding situations where I might have to ask | Demanding, or rebelling against every request |

## Why they keep the pattern going

Each style prevents the corrective experience. If you never let anyone close, you never find out that some people stay. If you never stop driving yourself, you never find out you are acceptable without the achievements.

## A fourth option

Noticing the pattern has been triggered, soothing the feeling, and choosing a response that fits the present, not the past. We call this the healthy adult.

**The coping style I use most**

**What it protects me from, and what it costs me**

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# Strengthening my healthy adult

The part of you that can comfort, protect and decide.

Name _____ Date _____

The healthy adult is the part of you that is wise, kind and firm. It is the part that looks after a frightened child, tells a bully to stop, and gets on with what needs doing. It may not show up often at the moment. It gets stronger with use.

**People I know, or know of, who are warm, steady and fair. What do they do and say?**

**Times I have been like that, perhaps with someone else**

| How my healthy adult sounds | How it stands and breathes | What it believes about me |
|---|---|---|
| Tone, pace, words | | |

## Putting it to work

| When this happens | My healthy adult says or does |
|---|---|
| **The critic attacks me** | |
| **I feel small, scared or ashamed** | |
| **I want to act on impulse or lash out** | |
| **I want to shut down or avoid** | |

**One situation this week where I will call on this part of me**

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