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THE REPAIR SERIES / FREE READER COMPANION

The Return Map

A Guided Companion to the Younger You

For readers of *Before You Were This*
Healing the Person You Were First

A gentle four-stage map for noticing what you learned, what followed you forward, and what care or choice is available in your life now.

THE QUESTION IT STARTS FROM

What belongs to then,
and what is true now?

NOTICE MORE. ASSUME LESS.

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BEGIN HERE

Take the page at your pace

This companion holds the four-part journey of *Before You Were This* in one place. The book has its own chapter reflections. These pages give you room to connect what you noticed, revisit a useful distinction and choose what to carry into an ordinary day.

01 Choose your starting point

Begin with whichever stage feels useful. If looking back is too much today, start with present-day care on page 10 or the support map on page 11.

02 Keep the example small

An ordinary, manageable moment is enough. No page asks you to search for missing memories, reconstruct a scene or push through distress.

03 Leave room for uncertainty

You can write “I do not know.” A possible connection is allowed to remain possible. The page does not need a neat explanation.

04 Keep your pages yours

Write in the space provided or use a separate notebook. You choose what stays private and whether any part is shared.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This is personal reflection and education, not therapy, diagnosis or a treatment plan. Pause or stop if a page feels too much. Qualified support can be part of the map; page 11 makes room for it.

THE FOUR STAGES

Your way through the map

The stages follow the book's four parts. You can move between them, repeat a page or leave a whole stage for another time.

1 The child you were

CHAPTERS 1 TO 3 / PAGES 4 TO 5

Notice early expectations and the qualities you want to keep.

2 The adult you became

CHAPTERS 4 TO 6 / PAGES 6 TO 8

Look at one present-day pattern and the context around it.

3 Going back

CHAPTERS 7 TO 9 / PAGES 9 TO 11

Bring context, practical care and appropriate support into view.

4 The person you're becoming

CHAPTERS 10 TO 12 / PAGES 12 TO 14

Make room for what matters and choose a practice that fits real life.

The pause page is on page 15. You can use it at any point, including before you write anything else.

THE CHILD YOU WERE

The person behind the role

A role can become so familiar that it fills the whole description: the helpful one, the capable one, the quiet one. Leave a little space beside the role for a quality that belongs to you.

A role people came to expect from me was

A quality in me that the role does not fully describe is

One ordinary way I recognise that quality in my life now is

YOU CAN BEGIN IN THE PRESENT

If an early example is unclear or uncomfortable, begin with who you are today. You do not need a childhood scene to use this page.

THE CHILD YOU WERE

A rule held lightly

Some expectations travel as small words: should, always, never. Choose one that sounds familiar. You can examine the wording without having to prove where it began.

An expectation I hear in the way I speak to myself is

What I know about where I learned it, and what I am only guessing, is

A more accurate version that allows for my life now might be

KEEP THE REVISION BELIEVABLE

Try a smaller sentence if that helps: “Sometimes this is useful” or “I can check what this situation needs.” It does not have to sound inspiring to be useful.

THE ADULT YOU BECAME

One ordinary moment

Choose a recent moment you can look at without feeling overwhelmed. Start with what happened. An explanation can wait until the facts have a little room.

What someone said or did, and what I did next

What I assumed that moment meant

What else was happening that day: demands, tiredness, uncertainty or another pressure

LEAVE THE EXPLANATION OPEN

A childhood connection is one possibility. Current stress, an unclear request or another person's behaviour may also matter. You do not have to turn every reaction into a story about the past.

THE ADULT YOU BECAME

The skill and the cost

A strategy may have given you a real skill. Noticing its cost does not require giving up everything it helped you learn. Look at where you want more choice about using it.

The skill I would like to keep is

The situations where it helps, and where it asks too much of me, are

A small way I could choose when to use it is

ONE DISTINCTION TO TRY

For example: noticing a change in someone's tone can be useful. Deciding that you must immediately make them feel better is an extra job. Those two things can be considered separately.

THE ADULT YOU BECAME

Then beside now

Put the contexts side by side using only what you already know. Some things may have changed; others may still need care, support or a practical response.

Then

Choices I had

Support I could reach

Now

Choices I have

Support I can reach

What is genuinely still difficult or limited today?

KEEP THE PRESENT IN VIEW

An uncomfortable situation is not automatically an old alarm. If someone is treating you badly or your circumstances are unsafe, the present deserves attention on its own terms.

GOING BACK

Context without a verdict

You can make room for a complicated history without resolving every detail or deciding how you ought to feel about the people in it. Keep this page broad. Names and scenes are optional.

What I can say with reasonable confidence is

What remains unclear, mixed or outside my knowledge is

What I do not need to settle today is

NO CONVERSATION IS REQUIRED

You do not owe anyone a confrontation, an explanation or forgiveness in order to use these pages. A blank answer is allowed here too.

GOING BACK

What I can offer now

Bring the question into this week. Choose something concrete enough to recognise when it happens, and modest enough to fit the life you actually have.

One part of the week that could use more care is

A practical adjustment within my reach is

What would help me make room for it, including help from someone else, is

SMALL ENOUGH TO USE

Care might look like moving a non-urgent task, making time to eat, asking for clearer instructions or keeping an evening quieter. It can be ordinary.

GOING BACK

The support map

Chapter 8, *Doing the Work*, discusses the limits of a book and routes to help. Use this page to work out what kind of support would be useful and what you would want to ask before choosing it.

What would help most: listening, practical help, information or qualified care?

What I would want to know before accepting that support

What I choose to share, and what I want to keep private

WHEN A PAGE IS NOT ENOUGH

For professional support, you can ask about qualifications, experience with your concern, fees, availability and privacy. If reflection is leaving you distressed or daily life is becoming hard to manage, set the pages aside and speak with a qualified mental health professional or doctor.

THE PERSON YOU'RE BECOMING

Make room for what matters

The map has room for curiosity and enjoyment too. If the book helped you notice something you want more of, look at what would let it belong in your life without becoming another thing to do well.

Something I want to give a little more room to is

What usually crowds it out is

What I could simplify, leave unfinished or decline to make that room is

LET IT STAY YOURS

No talent, productivity or audience is required. You can enjoy something privately, badly, briefly or only once.

THE PERSON YOU'RE BECOMING

A practice for a busy week

Choose one response from these pages that you would like to make easier. Give it a version that can survive a full week. You can revise it after trying it.

The moment when I would like to have a little more choice is

The smallest workable response I could try is

On a difficult week, an even smaller version could be

A PRACTICE CAN CHANGE

After you try it, notice what made it easier or harder. If it did not fit, adjust the practice or ask for support. There is no score to protect.

YOUR RETURN MAP

What I am carrying forward

Return to the pages that were useful and take one line from each. You can leave gaps. This is a snapshot of what you understand today.

1 / THE CHILD YOU WERE

Something I see with more context

2 / THE ADULT YOU BECAME

A pattern I can notice without making it my whole identity

3 / GOING BACK

Care or support I can make room for now

4 / THE PERSON YOU'RE BECOMING

One choice I want to carry into an ordinary day

KEEP A LITTLE ROOM

You may understand something differently next time. The map can change with you.

USE AT ANY POINT

Permission to pause

Stopping is a complete way to use this companion. You can close it before an answer arrives, without deciding when you will return.

What tells me that I have had enough for today?

What ordinary thing would help me settle back into the rest of the day?

What would make returning optional rather than another obligation?

THE PAGES CAN WAIT

Put the pages away if they are making things harder. You can turn towards familiar surroundings, a simple task or someone you trust. If distress continues, seek qualified support.

WHEN YOU ARE READY

A little more choice

You can understand a pattern without finishing the whole story of where it began. You can keep a strength and question the job it has been doing. You can leave a question open and still do something kind and practical for yourself today.

Take the line you want to remember. Leave the rest here until it is useful.

A LINE TO TAKE WITH ME

Continue with the book

Before You Were This

Healing the Person You Were First

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A FINAL NOTE

For personal reflection and education. This companion is not therapy, diagnosis or medical advice. It can sit alongside appropriate care; it cannot provide that care.

NOTICE MORE. ASSUME LESS.