



WHEN CHEMISTRY IS CHILDHOOD

How to Stop
Loving Potential and
Start Loving in Reality

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When Chemistry Is Childhood: How to Stop Loving Potential and Start Loving in Reality

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The Pattern

The Pattern, a term we use to describe a recurring dynamic in relationships, refers to a situation where one person is drawn to another based on their potential rather than their reality. This pattern often stems from childhood experiences and can lead to unhealthy relationship dynamics.

If you find yourself repeatedly attracted to people who are brilliant and beautiful yet quietly chaotic, that “chemistry” you feel is often your nervous system recognising a familiar feeling. Early on, many of us learned that love equals sacrifice; connection meant managing someone else’s mood. This imprint turns the body into a radar for familiar intensity, not healthy intimacy.

What seems like fate is often a remembered role: the caretaker, the little therapist, the peacemaker. You don’t just see who a partner is; you know who they could be, and then try to love them into becoming. These roles are how potential seduces us into repeating a childhood contract.

But recognising this pattern is not a sign of weakness; it’s the first step to breaking it, empowering you to take control of your relationships and steer them towards healthier dynamics.

The core pattern (in plain words)

Many of us learned young that love = sacrifice. We became the little therapists at home: soothing, rescuing, and earning closeness by restoring order from chaos. As adults, that body-memory can feel like “chemistry” with talented, charming people who are also wounded, addicted, or unstable. We don’t just see who they are; we fall for who they could be.

Breaking the loop of loving potential and tolerating dysfunction starts with you. The person most desperate for your love isn’t your partner — it’s you. Setting healthy boundaries can bring a profound sense of relief and security, knowing that you are taking care of yourself.

Two truths that hold at once

1. No one heals another person. Rescue keeps the old story alive.
2. In healthy relationships, mutual effort and honesty are the cornerstones. These qualities inspire a more profound connection, as you both strive to relate to each other without causing repeated harm.

Remember, you don't need to be "fully healed" to love. Healing is a life path, but what you need is enough stability, honesty, and skill to relate without repeated harm.

Translation: Mutual healing is real when both people are willing, resourced, and accountable.

Why “chemistry” can be a trap

Familiarity draws the nervous system, rather than what is beneficial. Early stress can wire us to seek high-intensity, low-safety dynamics (the trauma-bond rollercoaster). Real compatibility often feels quieter at first: steady, kind, a slow burn. Learn to recognise the distinction between adrenaline (the chase) and attunement (home).

Quick litmus

- Familiar pull: urgent, foggy, lots of promises, inconsistent follow-through.
- Healthy pull: clear, unhurried, honest, consistent behaviours over time.

Identifying and breaking the pattern of loving potential

Identifying and breaking the pattern of loving potential instead of reality involves a combination of self-awareness, practical strategies, and healthy relationship practices.

1. Reflect on past relationships: look for charisma + chaos pairings and where you prioritised potential over reality.
2. Recognise the role you play: caretaker, therapist, peacemaker — name it so it doesn't run you.
3. Check your feelings: is this attraction intensity-driven or safety-driven?
4. Set healthy boundaries: practise saying “no” to what does not serve your now-self.
5. Focus on current reality: ask, “What are they doing now, consistently, without me prompting?”
6. Engage in somatic practices: keep your body in the present so you don't time-travel back to childhood.
7. Communicate openly: clearly state your expectations and the level of mutual growth you desire.
8. Seek support: therapist, circle, or peer community to reality-check what you're seeing.
9. Practise gratitude for stability: train your nervous system to like calm, not just drama.
10. Commit to personal growth: celebrate micro-wins when you choose reality over potential.

By integrating these steps, you begin to shift from rescuing to relating, from fantasy to present-time love.

Attachment science, simply (clarity)

- **Anxious:** “Please don’t leave.” Scans for threat, clings or protests, feels responsible for the other’s emotions.
- **Avoidant:** “Please don’t need me.” Downplays needs, overvalues self-reliance, and disconnects when things get intense.
- **Disorganised:** “Come close / go away.” Wants closeness but associates it with danger; swings between anxious and avoidant moves.

You do not face a life sentence with your style — it reflects an old safety strategy. The work isn’t to delete it, but to give yourself new options in real time.

Somatic repatterning (practice)

Chemistry calms when your body learns safety. These practices retrain the nervous system so love can feel steady, not performative:

- **Orienting:** Turn your head. Name five things you see, three sounds, and one scent. Tell your body, “Now is now.”
- **Ground and breath:** Feet heavy. Exhale longer than inhale (for example, four in, six out) for 90 seconds. Let the wave pass.
- **Handshake the trigger:** “Ah, there’s the old urge to rescue.” Put a hand on your sternum. Slow it down 10%.
- **Bilateral reset:** Alternating taps on thighs for 60–120 seconds to re-engage integration.
- **Body boundary:** Palms out, 30 cm from chest. Whisper, “I am intact.” Notice the micro-relief.

Script for inner re-parenting: “I see your longing. I’ve got you now. We choose reciprocity. We do not rescue.”

Real-world relationship craft (doing)

Healing while relating is not a trap — it's a craft. We practise in reality, not in fantasy. Use these containers.

Heal-together requirements (Minimum Viable Readiness)

If you want to grow in a relationship, both people commit to: - Safety first: no violence, no intimidation, no weaponised threats. Non-negotiable. - Sobriety with the truth: honest about substances, mental health, finances, and past patterns. - Ownership: “My reactions are my responsibility.” No blame loops. - Repair habit: when a rupture happens, we repair promptly and specifically. - Reciprocity: care, effort, and initiative flow both ways. - Boundaries honoured: “No” is respected without punishment. - Support structure: therapy/coaching, community, or group support as needed.

If these aren't present, it's not a heal-together relationship; it's a rescue loop. A heal-together relationship is one where both partners commit to personal growth and healing. At the same time, a rescue loop is a relationship where one partner is constantly trying to “rescue” the other, often at the expense of their own well-being.

The No-Rescue Pact

The No-Rescue Pact is a commitment to healthy boundaries and mutual respect. It's a promise that says, “I don't manage your inner world; I meet you in it. I won't parent you, fix you, or be the price you pay to avoid your work.” This pact encourages both partners to take responsibility for their own healing and growth, rather than relying on the other to “rescue” them.

Communicating boundaries without triggering conflict

- Choose the right moment: not mid-rupture. Calm time, private space.
- Use “I” language: “I feel overwhelmed when...” instead of “You always...”.
- Be specific: name the behaviour, the impact, and the request.
- Stay compassionate: acknowledge their experience; validation lowers defence.
- Reassure: boundaries are how we make this relationship safer, not smaller.
- Invite dialogue: “How does that land for you? What do you need?”
- Active listening: reflect what you heard; it signals, “We're on the same team.”
- Expect wobble: a new boundary can bump old wounds — stay steady.
- Revisit: boundaries evolve as the relationship matures; schedule check-ins.

Communicating boundaries is how we hold love and truth together — firmly, kindly, and as adults.

The C.A.R.E. Plan (simple, repeatable)

- **C — Clarify your pattern.** Write one sentence: “When I feel unseen, I over-give to earn closeness.” Name 2–3 triggers. Name the body signal (tight chest, racing thoughts).
- **A — Agreements.** Draft 5–7 explicit relationship agreements. These could include commitments to open communication, respect for each other’s boundaries, and a shared responsibility for maintaining the relationship. Add a No-Rescue Pact: “We support; we don’t fix.”
- **R — Regulation.** Use a 90-second Reset when triggered:
 - Name it: “I’m activated.”
 - Ground: feet, breath, room scan (five things you see).
 - Move: slow walk, shake out hands, sip water.
 - Return: choose a skilful following line (see scripts below).
- **E — Engagement.** Weekly State-of-Us (30–45 min, phones away): appreciations → what needs attention → one repair or one plan → a small shared win.

Potential vs Pattern: three tests

- **Calendar test:** Are we seeing different behaviour for eight consecutive weeks, not just different promises?
- **Stress test:** Under stress, do they default to care and repair, or chaos and attack?
- **Community test:** Do trusted friends see the change, or hear the talk?

If the pattern fails these tests, believe the data. Choose your well-being.

Dating in reality (signals and red flags)

Red flags (leave now)

- Chronic lying or secrecy, stonewalling, contempt.
- Active addiction with no treatment or accountability.
- Love bombing followed by devaluation: cycles of hot/cold.
- Isolation from friends, finances controlled, or any threat to safety.

Green flags (build here)

- Consistent actions over time. Plans kept or renegotiated early.
- Curiosity during conflict: “Help me understand.”
- Owning impact without the word “but.”
- Shared agreements are written down and revisited.

The 6–12 month shift

When you raise your standards and maintain them, your circle often changes within 6–12 months: some people drift away, while new, aligned individuals appear. Don't yank the emergency brake. Keep walking. Who stays and who arrives is data.

Already in deep? (options)

If there's safety and goodwill, consider inviting a reset: pause the intensity, add structure, and bring in a third-party professional.

If there's harm and refusal to repair, create distance and resource yourself. Love without self-respect is not love; it's an old story.

Exit with dignity if needed. You are not abandoning the other — you are choosing reality.

If you're in a relationship now — 30-Day Stabilise Protocol

- Daily 10/10: 10 minutes eye-level check-in; 10 minutes of shared movement or stillness.
- One micro-repair a day: catch a small rupture early; practise repair before the big ones.
- One hard truth a week: each person brings a truth they've been avoiding; speak it kindly, make one next step.
- Third-space support: therapist/circle/mentor you both respect.

If you're single (and pattern-shifting) — 45-Day Reset

- Attention diet: no late-night DM loops; no “breadcrumb” flirts.
- Body first: sleep, food, sunlight, movement, before dating apps.
- Relating reps: practise bids for connection with friends/family; learn secure micro-skills (asking, receiving, saying no).
- Standards on paper: three non-negotiables, three nice-to-haves. Keep them visible.

Scripts you can use

Boundary + care:

“I care about you, and I don’t do secrets or rescues. I’m available for honest partnership and shared effort.”

Pause + return:

“I’m activated and don’t want to say something unkind. I’m taking 30 minutes, and I will be back at 6:15.”

Repair:

“I spoke sharply. Impact matters more than intent. I’m sorry. What do you need now, and what agreement can prevent a repeat?”

Standards:

“Clarity, consistency, and repair are required for me. If that’s not a match, I release this with care.”

Self-love, practically (re-parenting)

- Morning 90 seconds: hand to heart, breathe, say: “We are the sign. We create the evidence. Done.”
- Daily nourishment: move the body, eat to regulate, sleep as medicine.
- Belonging: two people who can hear you honestly — no performance required.

30-Day micro-practice plan

Small, repeatable moves beat grand vows. Try this: - Days 1–7: Notice your top two triggers. Practise orienting + long exhale daily. - Days 8–14: Write your No-Rescue Pact, and share it with a trusted friend. - Days 15–21: Draft 5–7 relationship agreements. Test one in a low-stakes convo. - Days 22–30: Weekly State-of-Us ritual; measure progress by calendar, not promises.

Mantra for the path: I do not rescue. I relate. I love the person in front of me — not their potential.

On “healing together” vs “heal first”

- **Trap:** “I’ll fix you so I can finally feel loved.”
- **Truth:** “We each do our work, and we co-create safety.”

You are never “finished,” but you are responsible for your side of the street. Two willing adults, with genuine support and mutual agreements, can grow astonishingly.

A short self-inquiry

- What did I have to do to feel valued as a child?
- How does my body know “love” today (rush, fear, ease, warmth)?
- Which tiny behaviour proves to me that love is real: care, consistency, or chaos?
- What boundary protects the part of me that once had to parent everyone?

Answer in writing. Read aloud. Let your nervous system hear the new terms of engagement.

Declaration (in your voice)

We declare: Love equals truth, safety, and mutual devotion.

We command reality by how we show up daily — with boundaries, repair, and care.

We are the sign. We create the evidence. Done.

We are exploding into remembrance: I am worthy of the love I give.

Keep this hand-card (copy/paste)

I do not rescue. I relate.

I choose reciprocity over rollercoasters.

I measure change by calendars, not promises.

I love the person in front of me, not their potential.

I protect the child in me with adult boundaries.

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