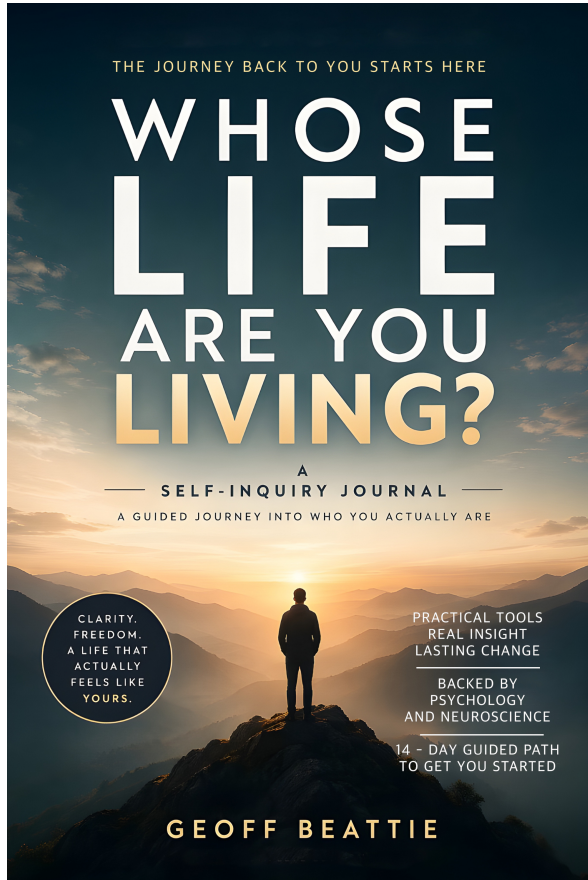


THE TOOLS

The Observer Log



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The Observer Log

Your daily tool for noticing what is running the show

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

— **Carl Jung**

What This Is

The Observer Log is the most practical tool in this book. Where the chapters give you insight, the Observer Log gives you real-time data about your own patterns: the triggers, the automatic responses, the stories you tell yourself before you have even noticed you are telling them.

It takes two to five minutes per entry. Used consistently across the 14-Day Guided Path, it becomes one of the most revealing documents you will ever read about yourself.

The Five Fields

1. **The Trigger.** What happened? Just the facts, as neutral as possible.
2. **The Automatic Response.** What did you feel, think, or do immediately, before reflection?
3. **The Story.** What narrative did your mind construct around this?
4. **What I Noticed.** Stepping back: what patterns do you observe? Whose voice? What is needed underneath?
5. **What I Choose.** Given all of the above, what do you consciously choose as your response?

Before You Begin: A Note on What Good Looks Like

The most common reason people stall with tools like The Observer Log and The Decision Filter is not that they don't understand it. It's that they sit

down to write and produce something that sounds reasonable, considered, and completely safe — and then wonder why nothing moves.

The Observer Log and the Decision Filter only work when you write the true thing. Not the version that demonstrates you have understood the concept. Not the answer that makes you look honest without actually costing you anything. The one that feels slightly exposed even though no one is reading it.

The following examples are not templates. They are not the right answers. They are just honest ones — as would be written by someone willing to name the real fear, follow the thought to where it actually leads, and resist the pull toward the tidy conclusion.

That is all that is required.

If you find this useful, please take a moment to reach out and let me know at thisisnotatree.com

Thank you - Geoff

Observer Log — Example Entry 1

Date: Tuesday morning

1. The Trigger My sister called and within three minutes mentioned that her daughter has been accepted to a good university. No direct comment about me or my choices. Just news.

2. The Automatic Response A tightening in the chest. A quick mental scan of my own life — what I have and haven't done, what I've built, what I haven't. A sudden urge to explain myself, even though nobody asked me to. Felt vaguely behind, even though I'm 47.

3. The Story *She's doing better than me. My life doesn't measure up. I should have done more by now. I wasted time.*

4. What I Noticed The "behind" feeling is familiar — it shows up with family news consistently. I wasn't comparing myself to my niece. I was comparing myself to some invisible standard that got activated by proximity to the family system. The standard isn't

mine. It sounds like my mother's voice, actually. The idea that a proper life has visible achievements that can be announced on a phone call.

5. What I Choose To feel what I actually feel about my own life, separately from what this triggered. To call my sister back properly, without the static. To write a line in my notebook later about what *my* definition of a life well-lived actually is.

Observer Log — Example Entry 2

Date: Thursday, mid-afternoon

1. The Trigger My manager sent a message saying: "*Can we have a quick chat this afternoon?*" No other context.

2. The Automatic Response Immediate stomach drop. Heart rate up. Started mentally reviewing everything I'd done in the last two weeks — any mistakes, anything that might have come across wrong. Spent 40 minutes in low-grade dread before the call.

3. The Story *I'm in trouble. Something is wrong. I've done something wrong and now I'm going to have to account for it.*

4. What I Noticed The call was completely routine. She just wanted to update me on a project timeline. The dread was entirely self-generated from four words and a question mark. This is a pattern — any ambiguous communication from authority figures triggers this response. Where does it come from? Being called into the headteacher's office at school, probably. Being called downstairs when my father was home and in a particular mood. The body learned young that an unexpected summons means consequences.

5. What I Choose Next time this happens — pause before catastrophising. Notice that I am pattern-matching to a past situation, not responding to the present one. I don't need to eliminate the response. I just need to not *act* from it for those 40 minutes.

Observer Log — Example Entry 3

Date: Saturday evening

1. The Trigger Sitting alone at home on a Saturday evening. Nothing going wrong. Nothing pressing. Just quiet.

2. The Automatic Response Reached for my phone within about three minutes. Scrolled for fifteen minutes without any clear intention. Felt faintly worse afterwards. Put the phone down. Then picked it up again.

3. The Story *I'm wasting my life. But also, what else would I be doing? Everyone else is out somewhere. I should want more. Or maybe I should be okay with this. I can't tell which.*

4. What I Noticed The reaching for the phone wasn't boredom exactly. It was discomfort with stillness. Silence felt like something that needed filling. There was a background hum of something — loneliness maybe, or low-level anxiety — and the phone was a way of not sitting with it. But the scrolling made it worse, not better. Fifteen minutes of other people's highlight reels is not a cure for

loneliness. It is a really effective way of deepening it while appearing to do something.

5. What I Choose To try to sit with the feeling next time for five minutes before reaching for the phone. Just to see what it actually is. Not to fix it — just to let it be named. And maybe to examine the belief that Saturday evenings alone mean something is wrong with my life.

Observer Log — Example Entry 4

Date: Monday, a difficult conversation at work

1. The Trigger A colleague questioned my approach to a project in a team meeting, in front of others. The criticism was reasonably fair.

2. The Automatic Response Felt my face go warm. Became very still and controlled. Defended my approach, calmly and logically, for longer than the situation warranted. Did not acknowledge that they might have a point.

3. The Story *I'm being undermined. My competence is being questioned publicly. I need to show I know what I'm doing. If I concede anything, they'll think I don't know what I'm doing.*

4. What I Noticed Looking back, the criticism was valid. And I knew it was valid while I was defending against it. But the public nature of it triggered something that overrode my actual assessment of the situation. The need to not be seen as wrong, in front of others, outweighed my ability to think clearly in that moment. This is an old pattern. Being wrong in public felt genuinely dangerous at some point in my life. It doesn't now, objectively. But the body didn't get that memo.

5. What I Choose To send my colleague a message acknowledging they had a point. That's the concrete thing. And to notice — this is the pattern I work with: the way criticism in public collapses me back into needing to defend before I can think.

Observer Log — Example Entry 5

Date: Wednesday morning

1. The Trigger Woke up at 4am with a familiar tight feeling in the chest. No specific thought. Just dread. Lay there for an hour.

2. The Automatic Response Started planning. Making mental lists of things to do, problems to solve, conversations to prepare for. As if activity, even mental activity, would neutralise the feeling.

3. The Story *Something is wrong. There's something I've forgotten to deal with. If I can just think through everything carefully enough I'll find it and then I'll feel better.*

4. What I Noticed There was nothing specific wrong. The dread had no particular object. The planning was not solving anything — it was a distraction technique the mind has been using for years. A way of converting a formless feeling into a list of problems, because problems feel more manageable than formless dread. But the planning made it worse. More things to be anxious about, not fewer.

What I didn't do was the thing that actually helps: lie still, feel the feeling in the body rather than the mind, let it be what it is without trying to solve it. I know this from experience. I just don't do it when I'm in the middle of it.

5. What I Choose To write this down. To notice that this happens most often in the days after high social exposure — weekends with family, big work weeks. The body takes time to come down and sometimes 4am is when it does that. It's not an emergency. Next time: put my hand on my chest, feel the breathing, don't reach for the phone or the planning. Just be here.

Observer Log — Template

Date: _____

1. The Trigger

2. The Automatic Response

Monthly Pattern Review template

Once a month, read back through your Observer Log entries and write responses to these questions:

1. What trigger appears most often in my entries?

2. What story does my mind reach for most repeatedly?

3. What need keeps showing up underneath my reactions?

4. Where have I noticed the gap between stimulus and response widening?

After The Observer Log

The book does not end here. The chapters and tools are designed to be returned to, they meet a different version of you each time. Come back in a month. Come back in six months. Bring the same willingness to be honest.

More free resources and templates available at

ThisIsNotaTree.com

Please feel free to share this document.

If you find this useful, please take a moment to reach out and let me know at thisisnotatree.com

Thank you - Geoff