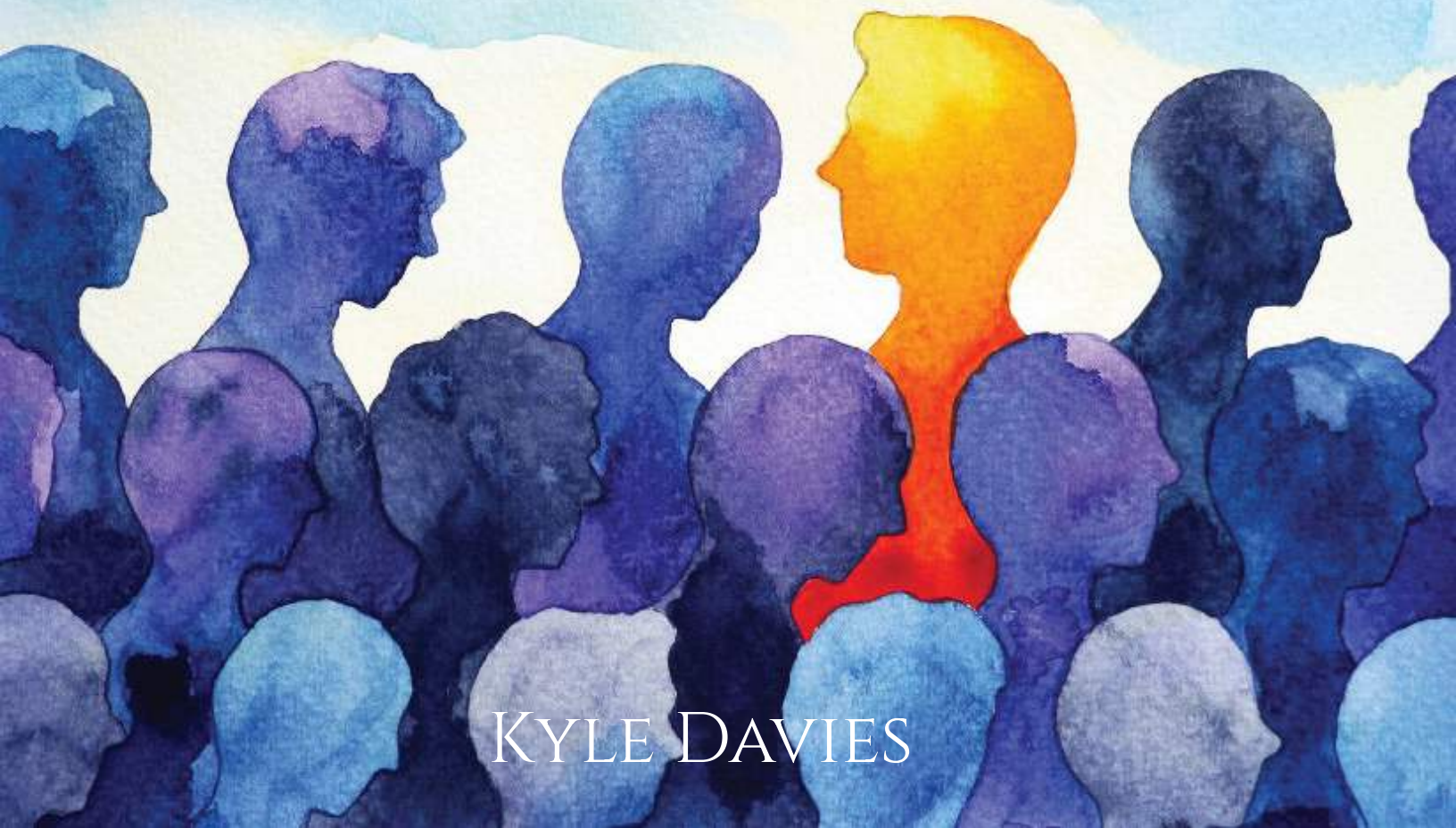


THE REALITY LOOP

How Your Brain, Body, and Stories Keep
You Stuck—and How to Break Free



KYLE DAVIES

CHAPTER 1: JACK'S WORLD — LIVING IN A PREDICTED REALITY

Jack is always on edge — though he wouldn't describe it that way. He says he's busy. Focused. Not great with people. His shoulders are tight, his breath is short, and his mind rarely stops. But to Jack, this isn't stress. This is just how life is.

What Jack doesn't realise is that his nervous system is in a state of chronic hypervigilance. It's learned, through years of patterning, to expect something to go wrong. Not consciously. It's not that Jack wakes up thinking the world is dangerous. But his body is already braced for impact before his mind even gets involved.

He meets life with tension, guardedness, and subtle anticipation of disruption. And because of that, life meets him back in the same way. His experiences confirm his expectations, and his expectations shape his experiences. Round and round the loop goes.

Jack isn't broken. He's patterned.

And like any pattern, once you see it, you can begin to shift it.

There's a saying: *Fish don't know they're in water.* In the same way, most of us don't realise we're living inside a version of reality created by our brain-body system. In Energy-Flow Coaching, we call this a **state of consciousness**.

This isn't just a mood or a mindset. It's the foundational lens through which we experience the world. It determines:

- What you notice
- What you ignore
- What you expect
- What you interpret

In other words: your inner state shapes your external experience.

That's not philosophy. That's neuroscience.

When your nervous system has learned to brace for impact, you will unconsciously interpret events, interactions, and sensations through a defensive filter. And you'll assume that's just reality. Just life. Just how you are.

But what if it isn't?

What if how you feel is not a reflection of the world, but a reflection of what your system has learned to expect from the world?

That's the foundational idea of this book. You are not experiencing the world as it is. You are experiencing the world through a prediction made by your body-brain system.

And that system can change.

CHAPTER 2: THE PREDICTIVE BRAIN & THE DEFAULT MODE NETWORK

Your brain doesn't passively record your life like a camera. It's more like a prediction engine, always anticipating what's next before it happens. It fills in gaps, makes guesses, and assumes patterns based on what's happened before.

This process is called **predictive processing**. And it runs the show.

Let's say you walk into a room and someone glances at you, then looks away. You don't just see the action — your brain *interprets* it. "They're annoyed with me." "I must have done something wrong." But those thoughts aren't direct observations — they're predictions, based on emotional memories.

You are not just perceiving. You are predicting — and your predictions are shaped by your past.

THE PREDICTIVE BRAIN

The predictive brain builds a model of the world based on your previous experiences. It uses this model to:

- Anticipate sensory input
- Prepare the body for action
- Generate emotional and behavioural responses

This is efficient. It saves energy. It reduces surprise. But it also means you are rarely seeing the world *as it is*. You are seeing the world as your brain *expects* it to be.

You don't react to reality. You react to your brain's best guess about reality.

THE DEFAULT MODE NETWORK (DMN)

Now enter the **Default Mode Network** — a set of brain regions (like the medial prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex) that activates when your mind is not focused externally.

This network:

- Constructs your autobiographical self
- Maintains your identity narrative ("I'm this kind of person.")
- replays the past and rehearses the future
- Evaluates how you're seen by others

The DMN is your internal storyteller. It fills in gaps with assumptions, replays old stories, and filters new experience through a well-worn lens.

So what happens when your predictive brain and DMN work together?

You begin to live inside a loop — a constantly generated version of reality based on what you've already lived.

Let's say your system learned early on that social spaces were unsafe. Your predictive brain now expects rejection or conflict in those situations. The DMN steps in to keep the story consistent: "People never really like me."

So even when someone is kind, your system might not register safety. It might interpret neutrality as threat. And that becomes your lived reality.

CASE EXAMPLE: EMMA AND THE EMAIL

Emma had a history of being criticised by authority figures. One day, she gets a short, vague email from her manager: "Can we chat tomorrow?" Her system floods. Tight chest. Racing thoughts. "I'm in trouble."

Objectively? There's no threat. But Emma's system isn't reacting to the email. It's reacting to an *internal model* of what that kind of message has meant before.

Her brain predicts danger. Her DMN tells a story. Her body prepares for pain.

And none of it has anything to do with the actual email.

CHAPTER 3: THE PATTERN LOOP — HOW PREDICTIONS BECOME REALITY

Here's the kicker: the more often you're in a particular state — like hypervigilance, shutdown, or stress — the more likely your system is to go there again.

Why? Because your brain is always trying to be efficient. It says: "Oh, we've been here before. Let's just run that programme again."

The nervous system learns to expect what it's most used to surviving.

ANALOGY: THE WELL-WORN FIELD

Imagine a field. You walk the same trail every day. The grass wears down. A path forms. Eventually, your body takes that path automatically — even when you're trying to go a new way.

This is how emotional and physiological states get reinforced. Not because they're true. But because they're practiced.

We get better at what we practice — even if what we're practicing is anxiety, shutdown, or overthinking.

CASE EXAMPLE: ADAM AND THE MONDAY DREAD

Adam had a pattern. Every Sunday night, his chest would tighten, his thoughts would spiral, and he'd brace for the week ahead. Even when work was fine, his system still responded like danger was imminent. He wasn't responding to *this* Monday. He was responding to years of Mondays where he felt unsafe, overwhelmed, or unseen.

His system was looping — and each loop made the next one more likely.

THE 6-STEP LOOP

Here's how a predictive pattern becomes your lived reality:

1. A trigger — internal or external — activates a physiological state.
2. The brain interprets that state using past experiences.
3. A meaning-laden story forms.
4. That story affects emotion and behaviour.
5. The behaviour impacts the outcome.
6. The outcome reinforces the pattern — and the prediction strengthens.

This loop becomes self-reinforcing.

- The more often you expect rejection, the more your system prepares for it.
- The more your body braces, the more your thoughts reflect threat.
- The more threat you perceive, the more your body learns to stay on alert.

And the loop continues — until it's interrupted.

That's where we go next.

CHAPTER 4: HOW PATTERNS ARE REINFORCED

REWARD PREDICTION ERROR, SUBJECTIVE VALUE OF INFORMATION, AND THE EMOTIONAL BRAIN

By now, you've seen how the brain doesn't passively record experience—it predicts it. But how does it *update* those predictions? And why do some experiences break the pattern while others entrench it?

To answer that, we turn to two key concepts from neuroscience: **Reward Prediction Error (RPE)** and **Subjective Value of Information (SVOI)**.

REWARD PREDICTION ERROR: THE GAP THAT DRIVES CHANGE

The brain is constantly running a mental ledger of predictions: "If I do X, Y will happen." When Y *does* happen, the prediction is confirmed. The pattern strengthens. But when something *unexpected* occurs, the brain pays attention.

That discrepancy between what was expected and what actually happened is called the **Reward Prediction Error**.

In short, $RPE = \text{What I thought would happen} - \text{What actually happened}$

When there's a **positive RPE**, the result is better than expected—like receiving praise when you feared criticism.

When there's a **negative RPE**, the result is worse than expected—like being ignored when you hoped to connect.

Both types of RPE create a moment of plasticity. The brain pauses, recalculates, and asks: *Should I update the model I've been using?*

But not every error leads to change. That's where SVOI comes in.

SUBJECTIVE VALUE OF INFORMATION: WHY SOME MOMENTS MATTER MORE

The brain doesn't treat all information equally. It assigns *value* to experiences based on their emotional salience, personal relevance, and context. This is known as the **Subjective Value of Information (SVOI)**.

An unexpected smile from a stranger might not shift anything. But a moment of safety with someone you trust *can* rewire a lifetime of defensiveness.

It's not just about what happens. It's about what the system *feels* and *registers* as meaningful.

This is why insight alone often doesn't change patterns. Intellectual understanding has low SVOI.

But *embodied*, emotionally-relevant experiences—where something *feels* different—carry high SVOI. They are the seeds of real transformation.

CASE STUDY: LUCY AND THE UNEXPECTED HUG

Lucy had always been wary of physical affection. Raised in a home where hugs felt performative or conditional, her nervous system flinched at touch.

One day, after sharing a vulnerable moment with a friend, that friend reached out and hugged her. Something in Lucy melted. It wasn't a big gesture, but in that context—feeling seen, accepted, and safe—it landed deeply.

Her brain registered: *This was unexpected. This was safe. This felt good.*

That moment had high RPE *and* high SVOI. And it subtly shifted the way Lucy's system related to closeness.

WHY EFC WORKS: REAL-TIME PREDICTIVE UPDATING

Energy-Flow Coaching leverages both of these mechanisms.

When you engage in the **Basic Practice**—slowing the breath, softening the body, allowing feelings—you're creating an environment where new information can land. You're disrupting the old loop *just enough* to create a moment of surprise. You're increasing the chances of both RPE and high-SVOI experiences.

You're no longer reacting out of an old pattern. You're witnessing the pattern in real time—and creating space for something new to occur.

You can't think your way into safety.

But you can *practice* your way into a new prediction.

SUMMARY:

- Reward Prediction Error (RPE) is the brain's update signal when something unexpected happens.
- Subjective Value of Information (SVOI) determines whether that moment *matters enough* to create change.
- Together, they explain why some moments leave no mark—and others change us forever.
- EFC practices help you create more of the moments that matter.

CHAPTER 5: THE EMOTIONAL LOOP – HOW REACTIONS BECOME REALITY

You don't live in the world as it is.

You live in the world *as your system predicts it to be*.

This isn't philosophical—it's physiological. Once a certain emotional-physiological state becomes familiar, your nervous system begins to expect it. And what's expected... becomes easier to experience again.

THE LOOP BEGINS IN THE BODY

Let's say your heart races before a presentation. Maybe it's always done that. The moment your body starts to feel the flutter of nerves, your mind interprets it: "I'm going to mess this up."

Now the story feeds back into the body—tightening the chest, sharpening the breath, increasing the fear. The physiological state intensifies, and the brain scans for more evidence that something's wrong.

Your system isn't malfunctioning—it's following instructions.

The emotional brain (especially the amygdala) reacts faster than the rational mind. It primes your system for danger before logic kicks in. And once that state is in motion, everything you perceive gets filtered through it.

CASE VIGNETTE: RAJ AND THE MEETING PANIC

Raj had worked at his company for years. Objectively, he was respected. But every time he had to present in a meeting, the panic returned. Dry mouth. Racing thoughts. Tight chest.

He believed he was afraid of *presenting*. But in coaching, we discovered it wasn't the presentation. It was the *internal experience* that terrified him. The feeling of being judged, the shame of not performing—those had roots in school, where he'd been humiliated in front of classmates.

His body remembered. His nervous system *predicted* those same feelings. And so they returned.

THE BODY BECOMES THE CUE

Here's a key piece: the more you feel something, the more your system learns to expect it.

And the more it expects it, the more easily it reactivates it.

The feeling *becomes* the trigger.

That's the emotional loop.

1. A familiar sensation arises (e.g. tight chest)
2. The brain *predicts* what that means (“I’m in danger”)
3. The story feeds emotion and physiological arousal
4. The emotion confirms the story
5. The loop strengthens

This isn't just metaphor. The brain literally becomes more efficient at running these loops. Neural circuits reinforce. Habits of attention solidify. The body starts reacting *before* anything happens—just in case.

METAPHOR: EMOTIONAL ECHO CHAMBERS

Imagine walking into a room where the walls echo everything you say.

If you shout, the room shouts back.

Now imagine that the initial “shout” isn't a word—it's a feeling. A flicker of fear. A hint of shame.

The room (your system) reflects it back—amplified.

You mistake the echo for proof: *“See? It really is dangerous.”*

This is the emotional echo chamber we all live in. It feels real. But it's patterned.

WHY BREAKING THE LOOP TAKES MORE THAN INSIGHT

You can't just tell yourself, “I'm safe.”

Not if your body's screaming otherwise.

That's why EFC doesn't start with thoughts. It starts with *state*.

Softening. Slowing. Allowing.

Not to *get rid* of the loop—but to interrupt it gently, without judgment.

Every time you respond to a triggered state with presence rather than panic, you *devalue* the old loop.

You show your system: "This doesn't mean what we thought it meant."

And gradually, the prediction updates.

SUMMARY

- Emotional states are self-reinforcing loops: body → brain → meaning → body.
- These loops form from past experiences and become "normal" without us realising.
- The body often becomes the trigger itself.
- To interrupt the loop, we don't force new thoughts—we shift the state with softness and attention.
- New loops are built through practice, not willpower.

CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCING THE EFC PRACTICE – REWRITING THE PATTERN FROM WITHIN

If your system is wired through prediction, then presence is the most radical disruption.

Energy-Flow Coaching (EFC) offers something deceptively simple: An invitation to stay with your experience—without fixing it, fearing it, or fleeing it.

Because the moment you stay, the loop weakens.

The prediction is interrupted.

The body is met, not managed.

And something new becomes possible.

THE PRINCIPLE: STATE COMES FIRST

Most people try to change how they feel by changing how they think.

But in EFC, we reverse the order.

Your *physiological state* is the biggest predictor of your thoughts, not the other way around.

If you try to reframe your thoughts while your nervous system is in shutdown, hyperarousal, or panic, you're swimming upstream.

But if you *shift the state*, the thoughts that arise from that state are naturally different—without effort.

THE BASIC EFC PRACTICE

This is the foundational EFC intervention, used across sessions, self-practice, and in-the-moment re-patterning.

1. Place your attention on your breath.

Just notice it. No effort.

2. Invite slightly slower, deeper breathing.

Let the breath drop lower into the belly. No force.

3. Soften the body.

Drop the shoulders. Unclench the jaw. Loosen the face. Feel your weight.

4. Say to yourself

"I can allow what I feel. I am not the feeling. I am the space within which this feeling exists."

5. Stay. Breathe. Observe. Let it move.

You're not here to fix. You're here to *feel*.

This is not a relaxation exercise. It's a re-patterning process.

You are staying *with* the nervous system, not abandoning it. You're showing it: "This can be felt. This is safe to stay with."

METAPHOR: THE BROKEN ALARM

Imagine a fire alarm that goes off every time you boil the kettle.

It's not broken—it's just overly sensitive.

Ripping it off the wall doesn't help. But staying calm while it sounds? That teaches it something new.

EFC teaches the body that it no longer needs to overreact to old cues.

WHY IT WORKS (NEUROSCIENCE PERSPECTIVE)

The ventral vagal system (rest & relaxation) is activated through breath, facial softening, and safety signals. This downregulates sympathetic arousal.

Interoceptive awareness—feeling sensations without judgement—activates the insula and promotes emotional integration.

Prediction error: When you respond to a familiar cue with a new response (e.g., calm instead of fear), the brain updates its model.

This *embodied contradiction*—familiar trigger, unfamiliar response—is the foundation of neural rewiring.

CASE VIGNETTE: ALEX AND THE FEELING OF RAGE

Alex often felt rage bubbling under the surface. He tried breathing techniques before—but always to *get rid of* the anger. It never worked.

In EFC, we flipped the script.

He softened. Breathed. And repeated: "I can allow what I feel."

The rage stayed—but it moved. It didn't consume him. He didn't collapse into or become entangled in it.

For the first time, he realised: "I am not my anger. I'm the one witnessing it."

That insight didn't come from thinking. It came from *presence*.

DAILY PRACTICE VS IN-THE-MOMENT APPLICATION

- **Daily practice** is like training the muscle. A few minutes every morning creates capacity and familiarity.
- **In-the-moment** practice interrupts the loop *as it happens*. Even 20 seconds can redirect the nervous system.

Repetition is the currency of neuroplasticity.

KEY REMINDERS:

- We're not trying to "fix" the feelings.
- We're not using the practice to get calm.
- We're letting experience *flow*. Allowing feelings without collapsing into them, becoming entangled in them, or getting caught in mind-loops. Simply allowing

This is how you stop fighting your experience—and start relating to it.

The system updates through felt safety, not forced positivity.

CHAPTER 7: PRACTISING FROM THE TRUE SELF – TRUSTING WHAT YOU CAN'T YET PREDICT

At the core of Energy-Flow Coaching is a radical premise:

You are not your thoughts. You are not your feelings. You are not even your body's conditioned state. You are the awareness behind it all—the True Self.

This chapter is about learning to live from that place.

Because if your system is always trying to predict safety based on the past, it will never show you who you really are. It will only show you who you learned to be.

BEYOND THE LOOP: THE INNER COMPASS

When you're stuck in the prediction loop, life becomes an echo chamber.

You don't just feel fear—you *expect* it. You don't just experience disconnection—you *predict* it.

The True Self doesn't operate that way. It doesn't need prediction to feel safe.

It moves from *knowing*, not from guessing. From *presence*, not protection.

And most importantly—it doesn't need you to get rid of anything. It just needs you to *be with* what's here, now.

THE INVITATION OF EFC

Every time you soften into your experience instead of running from it...

Every time you breathe into discomfort instead of solving it...

Every time you *allow* your state instead of resisting it...

You're saying: "I trust that something deeper in me knows how to move through this."

That trust is the muscle of the True Self.

METAPHOR: THE INNER LIGHTHOUSE

Imagine a ship caught in a storm. The predictive brain is scanning every wave for danger. The nervous system is trying to steer the ship manually—white knuckled, exhausted.

But deeper down, on the shore, there's a lighthouse.

It doesn't fight the storm. It doesn't predict the waves. It just shines.

The True Self is that lighthouse.

It doesn't panic. It doesn't analyse. It guides by presence, not protection.

EFC is how we bring the ship back into alignment with the light.

PRACTISING FROM THE TRUE SELF

- When a familiar emotional pattern arises, pause.
- Breathe. Soften. Come into the body.
- Ask: *What if this is just energy moving? What if I don't need to fix it?*
- Place attention not on the story, but on the space *around* the story.
- Repeat:

"I am not the fear. I am the field within which fear arises."

"I don't need to trust my thoughts. I can trust my knowing."

"Let the True Self lead."

This is not bypassing. It's *re-sourcing*. You're sourcing safety and identity not from your conditioning, but from the unconditioned space of being.

CLIENT EXAMPLE: SOPHIE AND THE SAFETY SHE COULDN'T THINK HER WAY INTO

Sophie had tried everything—affirmations, logic, exposure. Nothing gave her a consistent sense of safety. Her mind just kept finding new threats to chase.

In EFC, we practised not finding safety, but *being* safety. She softened into her body. She allowed the fear without solving it. And slowly, her system learned:

"I don't need to know what's coming next to be okay."

That's the True Self in action. Calm, unprovable, quietly powerful.

THIS IS THE PATH

We do not become free by fixing the nervous system.

We become free by creating a new relationship to it.

From fear to curiosity.

From control to compassion.

From reaction to real-time presence.

This is the EFC shift—from a life driven by prediction to one led by presence.

CHAPTER 8: REWIRING REALITY – DAILY PRACTICE AND THE FUTURE YOU'RE CREATING

The most important truth in this entire book is simple:

Your reality is not fixed. It's constructed. And you are participating in that construction—moment by moment, state by state, breath by breath.

What you experience is not just what is. It's what your system is *expecting*, *filtering*, *interpreting*, and *projecting*.

Which means the future you're moving toward is not inevitable—it's *trainable*.

Let's talk about how you begin to shift from unconscious prediction to conscious creation.

PREDICTION BECOMES PATTERN

Think of your nervous system like a river.

Over time, certain emotional currents have carved deep grooves—anxiety, shutdown, overthinking, people-pleasing.

The more the water flows those paths, the deeper they get.

The easier it is to go that way next time.

This isn't a flaw. It's efficiency. But it's also changeable. Every new moment of awareness is a drop of water in a new direction.

THE PRACTICE OF REPATTERNING

Here's the pattern we're disrupting:

1. **Trigger** (internal or external)
2. **Physiological state** (body shifts—tension, breath, arousal)
3. **Story-making** (DMN creates meaning)
4. **Emotional tone** (anxiety, guilt, shame, etc.)
5. **Behavioural response**
6. **Outcome** (usually confirms original belief)
7. **Prediction reinforced**

This loop strengthens the longer it goes unexamined. But the moment you interrupt it—with breath, softness, presence—you create a tiny *prediction error*. And that's where change begins.

METAPHOR: UPDATING THE SOFTWARE

Imagine your nervous system as an operating system running on old software—programmed for threat, scarcity, disconnection.

You can't just *delete* the software. But you can *run new inputs* long enough that the system starts to update.

The Basic EFC Practice is your code injection.

Each time you soften instead of brace...

Each time you allow instead of analyse...

You rewrite the script.

THE ROLE OF DAILY PRACTICE

Change isn't just what happens *in the moment*. It's what you build *before* the moment.

What you practice when it's easy becomes what you rely on when it's hard.

Suggested Daily EFC Practice: (5–10 mins)

- Sit or lie somewhere safe.
- Place attention on the breath.
- Breathe slightly slower and deeper.
- Soften the body: face, shoulders, belly.
- Say internally:

"I can allow what I feel."

"I am not the thought or emotion—I am the awareness holding it."

"My system can learn something new today."

That's it.

No fixing. No forcing. Just pattern interruption through presence.

REAL CHANGE COMES FROM REPETITION

Neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to rewire—is driven by **salience** and **repetition**. That means:

- The more **emotionally alive** a new experience is, the more impact it has.
- The more **often** you offer that experience, the deeper the wiring goes.

This is why small, consistent practices outperform big, infrequent breakthroughs.

CLIENT STORY: TOM'S FUTURE SELF

Tom had lived for years with background dread. Always expecting something to go wrong. Always waiting for the shoe to drop.

He started a daily EFC practice—not to get rid of the fear, but to *relate differently* to it.

After a few weeks, he noticed something strange. The dread didn't vanish, but it didn't hook him. He could see it, feel it, and stay soft.

Eventually, he realised: *I don't have to live this way anymore.*

His body was learning a new default—one breath at a time.

THE FUTURE YOU'RE CREATING

Your nervous system is a prediction engine.

But you're not at its mercy. You're its teacher.

Each moment you:

The Reality Loop:
How Your Brain, Body, and Stories Keep You Stuck—and How to Break Free

- Breathe instead of brace...
- Allow instead of avoid...
- Witness instead of identify...

...you're showing your system what else is possible.

Not through force. Through flow.

Not by fixing yourself. By *meeting* yourself.

And over time, those new predictions become your new normal.

You are not here to manage your experience. You are here to wake up within it.

And now, you have the tools to do exactly that.

One breath. One moment. One pattern at a time.

THE REALITY LOOP

In "The Reality Loop," Kyle Davies explores the intricate workings of the brain's Default Mode Network and its role in shaping our perceptions and emotional responses. Through engaging narratives and practical insights, he reveals how our predictive patterns can trap us in cycles of fear and misunderstanding, urging readers to practice new ways of relating to their feelings. This transformative guide offers hope and practical tools to break free from automatic reactions and cultivate a more conscious, empowered reality.