

Chasing Why

JULIAN FABER POST-INCIDENT REPORT

CHELSEA PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, LONDON

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I find her request completely absurd. The concept that writing will “help me overcome my grievances” is incomprehensible; yet it is “the only way” my psychologist Sage says I can continue in my chosen practice. “Reflect on your understanding of the following three concepts: the human condition, trauma and understanding” - my task for the next few months. Although I wish to ask “why”, I shall make my thoughts clear - as follows.

First thought: the human condition - the journey of life. Trauma - subjective individual hardships felt along the journey. Understanding - the ability for a person to observe their journey and comprehend the effect. The unity of these three concepts leads to self-knowledge - what we know about ourselves. I often wonder what would happen if a person’s ability to process reality was severed by a life-altering event. Something so terrible that the human brain becomes overwhelmed, and in order to cope, unconsciously erases it. The human race has always fascinated me, the way we are all unique. Our genetics, personalities, thoughts and feelings, where did these originate? But there is more than this; individual responses. Why one kid would cry after falling in the playground while another wouldn’t. Of course this response could be put down to differences in strength or tolerance, but it could also be fear; high numbers of people surrounding the fallen could induce a fear of confrontation, potentially prompting shortness of breath, shaking hands and heart-rate increase, understood symptoms of anxiety attacks. Of course, anxiety attacks are terrible, especially because the exponentially rising sense of panic cannot end unless you’re in control

or someone else is there to help you get in control. But that's not the point I'm trying to make. The point is I was always chasing "why?"

Second thought: life promises trauma, trauma prompts the response, the response evokes understanding causing an advanced experience of the human condition; all inextricably linked. Trauma is inevitable as no one can lead an unharmed life, but I digress. I was discussing my early fascinations with the human race.

It takes years to even slightly understand the complexity of the brain and its responses to specific triggers; as a psychologist, I explore these triggers and their origins. Our triggers are dependent on individual experiences of the human condition, so it's essential that you understand how a person's past has impacted everyday general behaviors, including fidgeting, shiftiness, and appearing uncomfortable in a comfortable space; triggers can be simple or difficult to detect.

Throughout my career I have helped fix many clients, some more than others, some less, one very little. But one must focus on the positives. Undoubtedly, as a well respected psychologist, I have helped more clients than not.

FEBRUARY 2021

Sage raised a previous statement of mine: "Over the decades I have helped fix many clients, some more than others, some less, one very little." The two "issues" included the word "fix" and the "one-very-little" client. "Fix" because "Julian, we do not fix clients, rather we help them develop and learn about themselves," she said in her aristocratic voice. I am equally experienced as Sage, yet she always walks into the room with a stiff posture, broad strides, nose in the air with a hint of superiority; why, I'm not sure.

She inquired into my "one-very-little" client as it was specific to a singular individual. Although I am, and always have been, a highly efficient professional, I must confess that my early understanding of how to adequately help clients was misled, either through previous

research or assumptions. As a young graduate, inexperienced in the professional realm, I knew little of response but a lot about experience; I suppose this is a contradiction because experience evokes a response. When I recall previous clients, of whom there are many, I can clearly pin-point their effect on me, how they impacted my life and influenced my dealings with future clients. Some would get too close, others dependent on my professional thoughts (I admit I also had a tendency to fixate on the lives of clients, but not obsessed). Although I am aware of a client's impact on myself, there's one who continues to intrigue me and fill my thoughts every day: Bridget Evans. Although we met decades ago I remember her clearly. Seventeen years old, long blonde hair parted on the right, slender and thin, soft, heart-shaped face and warm, piercing brown eyes. Bridget had a realist's smile; often adolescents have a smile that's fun-loving and full of life, but her smile's emotion did not coincide with that of her eyes. She was dressed quite darkly (normally an indication of dark, suppressed emotions, although I, in my habitual navy suit, am an exception), and although her cheery persona illuminated the room you could sense something deeper. During our sessions, there was always a hesitancy in her manner. Simple questions such as "how was your day?" or "any plans for the weekend?" would not be answered, or if they were, with monosyllabic replies. It always takes time and a development of trust to answer generalised, let alone personal questions; it took months for Bridget (among other reasons were my own miscalculations). It is often beneficial for psychologists to reveal censored personal details of themselves to establish a rapport; I believed I had, but Bridget would often say "I feel like I can't understand you. For me to trust you, I *need* to know you. If you don't know a bridge is over water, why take the step? You could fall." Naturally, I understood her meaning, I need time to trust people too. During my adolescence, I lived only with my mother, and trusted no-one else, having previously placed faith in the wrong person. But how was I to know? As a child, you're supposed to trust him. I had never been incredibly close with him, mostly his own

preference, but there is always a childhood voice begging to be heard; a yearning for love and affection, to be held in the arms of someone warm and comforting. I understood he was incapable of providing that love, yet when I look back on it, and even when I don't, there is a dark, dull, heavy feeling over my heart; an emptiness as though something was supposed to be there. But that's not important.

Bridget's eyes constantly darted from side to side, investigating everything and everyone around her including me as she inspected my figure. I used to inspect everyone who approached me. Trust was difficult. Walking down the deserted streets of an isolated English town, hearing the sounds of a creature you couldn't see; where was it? What was it? Or even possibly, *who* was it? When I moved to London with my Mother it was much easier. People were nicer, no one knew me so there were no suspicious or side-eye glances my way. Everyone was too busy to care. Bliss overcame me, but that sense of anxiety and jumpiness lurked, often overtaking my comfort. That's not important though, I was recalling my first interpretations of Bridget.

At our first meeting, After inspecting me, she slowly rose from her position, eyes holding mine as I gestured towards *my* therapy-room. Such a serene place; often after a stressful day I would walk into my room and be welcomed by four Egyptian-blue walls and mellow natural light pouring through the wide corner window. Often clients would follow me and automatically approach the soft, blue-velvet armchair and curl up within the cushions and soft, black fuzzy blanket I found so comforting. This was the case with Bridget, snuggled up among the softness, head resting on the armchair's arm, a look of bliss overcame her once-emotionless face. Although she must have realised her actions seconds later as I recall her jerking into her stiff, uptight position: knees together, hands clasped in lap, straight posture; vulnerability suppressed once more. Bridget examined the space with an investigative gaze. I remember wondering why.

For ten minutes (although it seemed like thirty) we sat in complete silence. Just glancing around the room, sometimes at each other but then glancing away again to continue the silence.

Another five minutes passed in this manner before the silence became deafening. I asked “what are your favourite colours?” What was the response I got? The classic irritated side-eye. Small talk was evidently not going to work. “Well, mine are blue because of its calming undertones and black because although it appears to be one colour, it requires many to create it.” Colours are like people. So many unique characteristics, no two colours are the same. Surprisingly Bridget replied: “I can see that, they are the only colours in this place.” I must say, I didn’t appreciate the contempt with which she uttered “place,” but I overlooked that. “Colours usually highlight particular characteristics. Did you know that? In colour-psychology black often symbolises suppression,” she continued. As Bridget was not a professional, I couldn’t expect her to comprehend how particular likes and dislikes parallel brain functions, so naturally I dismissed her ignorant comment.

Bridget continued investigating her surroundings, not saying anything further but noticing three triangular-prism mirrors on the wall. Two triangles on top, points facing down, one triangle between them, point facing up; four perspectives in total. Attempting conversation again, I said: “my Mother gave me those after I left our home. She told me if I ever doubted myself or felt incapable, I was to look into the mirrors and remember who I was.” Expression unchanging, Bridget stood before them, aligned with the middle mirror (the sweet spot I call it) gazing at the different facets reflecting multiple angles of her face. One -looking up at her left side. Two - looking up at her right. Three - looking down on her right side. Four - looking down on her left. Although each side reflected the same girl, each reflection had unique features. For example, the top-right side reflected an interesting circular birthmark beside her eye, and the bottom-left depicted a thin line of scar tissue across her jawline. Bridget

continued investigating the mirrors before lowering herself into the armchair, softly stroking her scar as she nestled between the cushions and pillows. Instantaneously my fingers went to my eye, gliding over every bump and crevice. But it's not important.

MARCH 2021

Sage wants me to talk about my scar, apparently I mentioned it "too abruptly." I think she's lucky I'm even willing to write this, but I suppose if I want to continue my practice, I must. It was simply a childhood mishap. It didn't change anything, most childhood memories fade away. Evidently, this means the mishap was unimportant in my development, otherwise it would remain in my short-term memory. Anyway, as I said it's unimportant.

While out today, just for some air, I passed a highschool and it reminded me of Bridget's descriptions of her school environment. On this particular day, Bridget entered my Room with a cautious yet confident stride, immediately relaxing her posture in the armchair. A sense of pride overcame me as I watched a monumental progression in our therapy. However, as I mentioned school, her smile faded and her eyes disconnected from mine, the spark replaced by a hopeless blankness. The buzzing in my chest evaporated, replaced with the usual heaviness. Initially hesitant, I had to push the conversation by asking questions and prying into her answers. Eventually she revealed the rumours, teasing and occasional physical abuse she endured at school, while the teachers did nothing. Their excuse was: "Bridget is reading the situation incorrectly and her overimagination (acquired from fairy-tales and other such stories) is getting out of hand." Sometimes it feels as though teachers believe kids are so stupid that they would bully another child before their eyes. Bullies are smarter than this, much smarter. I moved schools because of my teachers' inability to act on their words. "We'll talk to them," they'd say. The next day I would expect the worst because the culprits would know exactly who snitched. I would often walk into class with fresh grazes across my face or deep purple bruises blotching my arms. When the teachers asked what had happened, they

were always unimpressed with the response; so I invented mediocre excuses while the true culprits sat opposite me, sneering at their victory. Why?

It's difficult to think about those years, how everything was allowed to happen. But that was years ago, it doesn't matter now. Bridget continued to answer my questions, eyes downcast, lips pursed as she held back tears, unable to look at me. A lump formed in the back of my throat as her words poured into my soul, filling every sense with sympathy and torment. I could feel the rigid gravel scraping my skin as she described the fall, hear the jeers and cackles of classmates revelling in her helpless state, smell the iron blood dripping from her jawline as she jerked away from jagged glass fragments hidden in the gravel. Why? Why would they do this?

I couldn't sleep that night. Beads of sweat plastered the sheets to my face as I lay against my pillow. Just that image in my head. Scars, blood, dust, broken glass, alcohol. That experience won't ever leave Bridget. Mother's compassionate words filled my mind, saying "have kindness and understand yourself. If you don't then you cannot know yourself. Therefore you know nothing." She always thought your past moulds you; and I suppose it does for *most* people.

APRIL 2021

Sage warned me today about remembering memories accurately and centering my life around clients; "it creates an innate sense of stress which can often interfere with normal bodily function," she said in her aristocratic voice. I confess I have struggled with sleeping for several weeks and I haven't eaten as much but it means nothing. As an adolescent, I often found my appetite waned due to endurances at home and school, (at that point not living solely with my Mother). Sage said "it's incredibly easy for psychologists to become fixated on the duty of helping a client but you must, must understand, we are not here to fix the problems of others. Instead, we suggest ways in which they themselves can fix their

problems. You need to look after yourself Julian. You need to understand your past and how it has shaped you before you can adequately help others.” My knuckles clenched and I glared at her as she said this. I do understand my past. What happened, happened. It doesn’t change anything, it doesn’t matter anymore. If it did, which it doesn’t, I would still be distressed to this day, but I can still clearly remember everything, absolutely everything. Still a child, crouching behind the soft grey (I believe) couch next to the window overlooking the nightfallen street outside. The single street light flickered spasmodically as it always did, while sirens *finally* deafened the crashes and screams in the opposite room, flashing red and blue lights reflecting off broken glass fragments strewn across the floor. The relief as the breath previously stuck in my throat made its way down to my traumatised lungs, fueling my driving heart; even then, my feet could not move from their position as the big burly men lumbered towards my hiding-place. I knew they were here to help me but how could I be sure. Besides, *he* was still in the house. After it was all over, my Mother held me in a tight, warming embrace; she had finally decided to leave. The pressure against my arms and chest from her hold was so lovely as we stayed like that for what felt like hours, rather than the realistic seconds. Silent tears cascaded down my swollen face, droplets falling on her pullover, blood flowing from a gash beside my eye; I couldn’t even feel it. Through tears I exclaimed “Mummy it will stain your jumper.” She didn’t care; she held me tighter and said those three beautiful words: “I love you.” That was the last night we spent in that house; I haven’t seen it since. Mother insisted we leave the small community to avoid association. I agreed. She was so good to me. She comforted me throughout everything although I couldn’t speak for months. The scar is still there. Even now as I approach the prism-mirrors I can see all the bumps and feel the smooth velveteen surface of scar tissue, the scar beside the deep-blue eye; reminding me of who I once was. But those memories don’t matter. What happened in my childhood no longer influences me, who I am or how I act. I need not dwell

any further and I confess it has grown quite late; I must eat, although I cannot say I am hungry.

MAY 2021

I regret writing about my past. Now, Sage won't stop pestering me. She came to check on me, and I thought I was fine until she pointed out my bloodshot eyes. I suppose I have slept poorly these past few nights. I never usually dream, but recently my mind has been filled with images, more often than not recounting childhood grievances. I cannot imagine why. Last night's was disturbing; Bridget sat crying, shaking, curled in the corner of the armchair, tears rolling over the velvet, but she couldn't explain why. My perspective shifted to see the person sitting opposite her. Hard to make out, but I believe it was a boy. Miniscule against my white swivel-chair. Until the lens focused I was unable to recognise myself. I jolted upright as a crashing sound occurred in my dream and in reality; my heart beating so fast it felt as though it would break through my taut skin and hit the wall. Why had that been on my mind?

To recover, I took a walk this morning. Just a short one to Battersea Park, stopping to rest at the Peace Pagoda. It was the most glorious day. Sun shining, luscious summer-green leaves casting cool spots of shade along the gravel path. Birds twittering, dogs barking, the occasional fluffy tail darting behind a tree as a scurry of squirrels scavenge for nuts. The Peace Pagoda is my favourite place, an elegant temple on the bank of the Thames, overlooking Chelsea Embankment. If you look up the river you can see the houses of Parliament, if you look down, the London Eye. I close my eyes and take in the world. Wind licks my face as rustling leaves sway to and fro, the scent of many flowers fills my nostrils as I breathe in the cool air, warm sunlight covering my eyelids. Such bliss I have never known. From far away I could hear the joyful, contagious laughter of a child. I see a daughter holding on to her father's back, chuckling as he jumps every few seconds. I know I should be happy

for the child but I cannot quite define what I feel. A heaviness weighs over my heart, but again I cannot think of why.

I recall a similar memory at this place. Before my second-last session with Bridget I stopped here to drink my morning coffee. I was already in a testy mood, having not slept well that night; my mind flooded with thoughts on how to help her (but not fixating of course). I sat on a bench watching the squirrels and listening to robins and green-breasted ducks when down the path came a father and mother, with a child between them. Every couple of steps, the parents would swing the child in the air, all three wearing joy-filled, cackling smiles. The child looked at its parents, silently saying “I trust you,” “I love you,” and “I know that no matter what, you’ll be there for me.” I only ever looked at my Mother like that, and even then, it took time. I continued to watch this family until I remembered Bridget. I was late.

Bridget’s trust in me decreased significantly that day. On one hand I understand: in our first session, to establish a reliable foundation, I promised that I would always be on time ready to greet her, a constant. I would struggle to trust someone who broke such a powerful promise too. Mother made a promise on our first night in London. She said “Julian, I promise to always be here physically and mentally to support you through everything life offers or throws at you. What happened the other week was not meant to, it’s not what family does. We love each other. I promise to always, always be here for you.” Whether she actually repeated “always” I’m not exactly sure, it was a while ago. The point is, that promise meant so much to me. She kept it too. She was so determined to prove that family can be reliable and loving, not cruel and damaging. But I have drifted again.

On the one hand I understand Bridget’s immediate distrust in my absence, but on the other hand, I was only a few minutes late. Yet again, sometimes that’s all it takes, but it was only once. Nevertheless trust is such a complicated mental state to reach; it takes time, and the constant reliability of the benefactor. I had pushed aside the thoughts that this miniscule

occurrence had even remotely impacted the established connection between Bridget and I, but I see now that I greatly misinterpreted its influence. Bridget didn't arrive for our next session, which I felt, at the time, was extremely childish. Was this a consequence of my lateness for our previous session while on an absent-minded trip down memory lane? As the hour progressed with no arrival my heart began to pound, but not with fear; annoyance. I recall storming out of the room, past Sage, out to my car and driving home (even though she tried to stop me). I just wanted to get out of there. Naturally there were repercussions. Sage found me, but instead of hearing me out and empathising with my obviously difficult situation, she defended Bridget and implored me to see her point of view. "Bridget is counting on you to be reliable. She's had a tough upbringing with not many adults she can trust or even talk to. You cannot let this happen again." "Well sometimes people can't always be there," I yelled, my voice rising, standing up to face her fully. "I have thoughts, feelings, my own problems and other elements of life to deal with." I may not have said those words precisely, but I'm positive I would have said something along those lines. Sage stared at me, concerned by my rising irritation. "Julian," she began in an annoyingly calm voice, "Psychologists all have some form of past that shaped their present selves and pushed them towards this career. But there is a difference between having a career and doing it well. To live well, psychologist or not, you must understand your past and its impact on you." Throughout her speech she firmly glared into my eyes as though trying to read my resistant mind, ensuring I understood. I don't know if I did. Do I now?

She believed the conversation was over but oh no, this continued in my mind. That night I deliberated the conversation, recalling Sage's insistence. She thinks she knows everything but she doesn't know me, she doesn't know anything about me. It continues to frustrate me to this day. Why are my muscles tensing? Is my heart rate increasing? No. I won't allow this. My past has no influence over me. This is where it ends.

JUNE 2021

I cannot sleep. The past nights have been filled with thoughts and memories, circling my brain until I give up on rest altogether and continue revising my Bridget Evans session notes. I don't know why but I have an uncontrollable impulse to go over them. I started reading at 3pm but even now, at some time past midnight these papers remain in front of me. I can't recall half of what I recorded whereas normally I remember everything, *everything*. I suppose a significant amount of time has passed since I last saw her, but still, it's disappointing. Looking back at these sessions reminds me of the person I was: fresh out of uni, eager to assist yet inexperienced. Bridget *was* the experience. I didn't count my past, after all, I had no professional knowledge as a child. Perhaps I didn't do as well as I could have; have I improved? After all, she is the reason I'm writing this now. She changed everything.

I remember our last session. It had been a quiet day, an ordinary Friday afternoon, until Bridget prematurely entered my room. We had an agreement that she would wait for me to call her, but she broke it, although she was in a rather hysterical condition. Tears streamed down her face, breathless, cherry red cheeks, shaking from head to toe even though it was twenty-eight degrees outside. Rather than her usual collected curling into the armchair, she collapsed on the floor before it, shoulders heaving, spasmodic, raspy breathing. Legs tucked rigidly close to her chest, blood dripping from her jawline. Wait, no, was it her jawline? Of course, it was beside her eye. But that doesn't sound right either. She never had a scar beside her eye. I am absolutely certain there was no scar. Why can't I remember? Regardless of where it came from, there was blood. She was unable to speak. I tried asking questions but there was no response, although this time it was due to an inability to breathe properly. My notes stop there but I distinctly recall the incident involving her classmates, or parents, I'm pretty sure that was it; however most people cannot precisely recall events that occurred three minutes ago let alone years ago. I didn't know how to help her. I remember the guilt, the

weight on my chest as she looked at me. I couldn't help her. I failed her. What if I didn't help others the way I remember? What if I tricked myself into believing I did so much more than I actually did in reality? Why am I questioning myself? I know my abilities.

It's quite hot in this room as I write this but the thermostat says it's below fifteen degrees. It must be wrong. Anyway, I've just been rummaging through my drawers. I found a lot of interesting files: records, journals, photos, some from decades ago. Okay, that's a bit better, the cold is coming back, although I didn't turn on the air conditioner. Anyway, I found a photo of Mother and I on our first day in London. We look so happy, much happier than *he* had ever been. The lighting is so warm and bright in this photo; it reminds me of her. I need to move, I'm getting pins and needles in my foot, not a great feeling. Although, I wasn't sitting on it. It's also overly cold now but the thermostat hasn't changed, still fifteen degrees. Goose-bumps rise on my arms, lots of lumps that cause shivering if touched. Anyway, back to these photos. There's another underneath the loving photo of Mother and I, but it's dim and colourless. In it, two adults and one child stand together yet far apart. It's evident they're a family, but the distance disconnects them. I recognise the man, and the woman. Why am I shaking? It's hard to see the picture when I'm shaking. And I'm sweating? It's irritating, my forehead is drenched with cold sweat, yet my mouth is so dry. I need water, although my churning stomach might not appreciate it. I haven't felt this way in a while, but I'm fine. Through the shaking I can make out the icy, blue eyes of the man glaring into mine. Even on photographic paper he still gives me that cold, disappointed glare. The glare he always gave when I didn't complete a job fast enough, or I didn't make his drink cold enough even when he'd already had a few, or cried because I fell over and cut myself, or needed attention because I was sick. The woman is looking at me too. Pity, regret. Her watery eyes look so sorry.

Although the photo shakes rapidly I can just make out the small child, sitting on the floor between them, eyes downcast. Barely older than two, this boy knows. Kids always know when they're loved, or not. The massive envy I felt when kids walked into school holding the hands of two parents.

He was supposed to care for me, hold me, kiss me, hug me, love me, isn't that what any normal parent should do? Isn't that why normal people have kids? Because they love each other so much and want to love someone they created? Together? Isn't that what a family is? It's not supposed to be this harmful, cruel, uncaring, unloving environment that sucks any living ability to feel out of you. It's human to feel. It's human to care. It's human to love. He wasn't human. I stumble towards the prism-mirrors, pins and needles now crippling my legs as I stand before them staring at the small frightened boy reflected back at me; the version of myself buried long ago. Sweat rolls down my forehead, moving over every bump and crevice of the scar *he* created as he threw the glass in a rage at my quivering face. Mum couldn't stop him then.

I need water, I can't breathe. My chest is so tight, so closed. I'm shaking, shivering, when did I start crying? Why am I crying? What is happening? I'm normally so strong, I can't let this happen. Everything's starting to fade; *his* ugly, glaring face spinning around, Bridget's scared expression crying, Mother's tearful gaze, Sage's reprimanding figure. That night comes rushing back. The cry of sirens echoing in my ears, him screaming at me so I can't speak, glass shards digging into my legs, alcohol seeping into my wounds as I edge away, blood dripping from the deep cut beside my eye. I feel the scar again, the bumps, ridges and rise of the skin; evidence of trauma faced long ago. That mark will never leave. That experience can never leave. Shaking intensifies as my breaths catch in my throat. I can't breathe. Shivering, whether from heat or cold I do not know. This is what *he* would have wanted. What did I do for him to hate me? Why wouldn't he love me? Why?

JULY 2021

It's amazing how even after decades, an event can still influence your everyday actions, thoughts and feelings without any cognitive awareness of it doing so. For years I denied the impact my past had on me, but over the past several months, reflecting on my sessions with Bridget, I have learnt more about myself (particularly that I didn't know myself whatsoever). I ridiculed Sage for advising me, but she was right. I did end up fixating on Bridget even though that is not my job. I couldn't sleep, eat or even breathe normally. But why? Simply because the immense stress placed on my body by fixating on Bridget and "helping" her caused me to forget that I am human too, and sometimes I have to ask for help. Before, I didn't even try to understand my past, in fact I tried to forget it. I chose to suppress my emotions rather than face them and move forward. I did everything Sage said not to do.

It seems incredible to me that in my initial writings, I was so emotionally unaware of my feelings. Initially, my understanding of the human condition, trauma and understanding was quite basic. Assumptions, not understandings. Now I have a clearer understanding. The human condition is a journey through life; It is what bonds us together. Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible experience such as neglect or continuous physical abuse. Understanding is how we process those traumas and how we face them; we don't let them break us down. My experience of life can hardly be described as normal and I wouldn't want it to be. The trauma I endured as a child was so detrimental, yet it moulded a huge aspect of my world. Although it was extremely difficult to relive the trauma of my past, it made me more grateful for the life I lead now and how I came to be here; especially my Mother. She was there for me when no one else was and I will always hold a special place in my heart for the woman who raised me and protected me when I couldn't defend myself. Back in June I asked "Why wouldn't he love me?" The *he* referring to my father who emotionally neglected me since the day I was born. It feels weird to be able to just say it. As I reflect on my various

interactions with my father I honestly cannot imagine him being any different, and I am now able to say with confidence that I am better off without him in my life. I can now begin my journey with a huge weight lifted off my shoulders.

As I had instructed previous clients, I stood before the mirrors and saw myself from their various angles. Instead of the frightened boy I usually saw and avoided, I now see a tall man with strong broad shoulders, not slouched or hiding away. This man is unafraid of his past. I see the scar beside my eye, once a constant reminder of trauma and neglect, now I see it as a sign of strength. Its faded colour not so evident against my olive skin. It is a part of me, and I am proud of myself for getting through those times. Those experiences created a strong individual who will no longer be pushed around, and I believe I am more prepared than ever to continue advising clients on how to avoid suppressing experiences. It is now clear to me that there is an incredibly strong bond between trauma and self-knowledge. Without those experiences I wouldn't be the person I am today. As I said before, life promises trauma, trauma prompts the response, the response evokes understanding causing an enhanced experience of the human condition. Life wants us to question what it means to be human.

Life doesn't want people to hide from their experiences. It wants people to face them and move forward. To understand themselves and see how their experiences have shaped them, like I have. Life doesn't want us to be afraid of gaining more experiences. We have to understand our trauma and how it has shaped us individually. It wants self-knowledge. Finally understanding is beautiful.

I can now stop chasing why.