The Behavior Loop

How experiences, context, and consequences can shape responses

One possible pattern. The order can vary.

1. Learning History
(Past and Ongoing Experiences)

Experiences can shape what we expect and how we respond. Learning includes childhood, recent events, and repeated interactions.

EXAMPLE

Expressing a need has sometimes led to criticism or conflict.

→

2. Schema
(Beliefs and Expectations)

Broader beliefs may influence how we interpret ourselves, other people, and situations.

EXAMPLE

Standing up for myself may lead to conflict.

→

3. Thoughts
(Interpretations in the Moment)

Thoughts may reflect expectations, memories, and what is happening now.

EXAMPLE

If I disagree, they might get upset. What do I actually know?

→

4. Body
(Sensations and Emotions)

Sensations can interact with thoughts and circumstances. They do not establish what a situation means.

EXAMPLE

- Tight throat
- Warm face
- Racing heart
- Urge to withdraw

→

5. Behavior
(What You Do)

You respond, sometimes before noticing an available choice. The same action can serve different purposes.

EXAMPLE

- Stay quiet
- Withdraw a preference
- Agree despite disagreement
- Apologize before asking

6. Consequence
(What Happens Afterward)

What follows an action may affect whether it happens again. Relief reinforces a response only if it increases its future likelihood.

EXAMPLE

The conversation moves on. Tension decreases. Later, the person feels unheard.

Repeated outcomes may strengthen or change a pattern.

These pieces can interact in different orders. Consider the current setting and compare several moments before drawing conclusions.

THE OBSERVER
(Noticing Can Reveal Options)

Notice thoughts, sensations, urges, actions, and circumstances. Awareness may help; safety, support, and available options also matter.

WHAT MAY HELP CHANGE A PATTERN?

- Notice what happens before and after
- Explore another response when manageable
- Seek support or change the setting
- Observe what happens over time

SAME ACTION, DIFFERENT PURPOSES

Staying quiet may help someone avoid criticism, think, rest, or listen when information is missing. Look at the situation before explaining the action.

THE GOAL

Understand your patterns, identify available options, and consider responses that fit your priorities and circumstances.

FINDING HERS
Understand. Observe. Choose.

This is an illustrative conceptual overview, not a universal causal sequence.