

Reflection Exercise: “Success, Failure, and the Stories I Tell.”

This exercise helps you surface the subtle ways self-serving bias shapes your interpretations of events.

Recall Two Recent Events

Choose:

- One success from the past month
- One setback from the past month

Write a brief description of each. Keep it factual — no interpretation yet.

Identify Your First Story

For each event, answer:

- What was my immediate explanation?
- What did I assume about myself?
- What did I assume about others or the situation?

This captures the “automatic narrative” — the one the mind generates before reflection.

Look for the Bias Pattern

Now examine your explanations:

- Did I attribute success to my traits or effort?
- Did I attribute the setback to external factors?
- What emotions were present that might have shaped the story?

Notice the asymmetry. No judgment — just awareness.

Rewrite Each Story With More Balance

For each event, rewrite the explanation using these prompts:

- What internal factors contributed? (choices, habits, preparation, mindset)
- What external factors contributed? (context, timing, support, constraints)
- What would a neutral observer say?

This step helps restore proportion and nuance.

Extract a Growth Insight

For each event, complete:

- “One thing I genuinely did well was...”
- “One thing I could improve or take responsibility for is...”

This transforms the exercise of self-protection to self-authorship.

A Closing Reflection

Finish with one or both:

- “How does the self-serving bias protect me?”
- “How does it limit my growth or relationships?”

This helps integrate the insight into your broader philosophy of intentional living.

Worksheet designed by Copilot based on directed prompts.