

THE **CLIFF EDGE**

STAGE THREE OF THE IMPACT MODEL: P FOR PATTERNS

AIMS:

- Develop your understanding of what patterns are and the types that exist
- Identify the unhelpful patterns in your life and how to replace them with helpful ones
- Identify the helpful patterns in your life that you wish to develop further.

THE
IMPACT
MODEL



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THE CLIFF EDGE



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FIRST A STORY...

You find yourself in an unfamiliar place. Although you try to get your bearings, the dense fog surrounding you makes this impossible. So thick is the fog, in fact, that when you put your hand up to your face, you can't see it. You stumble along when, all of a sudden, the ground disappears from beneath your feet, and you fall into nothingness. Seconds pass, and still, you are dropping—you assume from a great height. Thump! You hit the ground. Coming to, you are bumped and bruised, but it appears no real damage is done.

Lying flat on the ground, you look up and reflect on what just happened. You decide not to give yourself a hard time because you had never been to that place before, and the fog made it doubly difficult, one of those unfortunate incidents.

You are back in the same place the following day, although you don't know this yet. It is clear and sunny today, and you can see for miles in every direction. Although this place looks unfamiliar—you don't recognise any part of the landscape—you have a gut feeling that you have been here before. Walking for a short while, you notice something up ahead. As you get closer, what you see is a Cliff Edge! The penny drops and your gut instinct makes sense. "Ah!" you exclaim. This is where you were yesterday when the ground disappeared beneath your feet.

A few seconds later, you hit the ground with a thump. It takes you a while to figure out what happened, but only one conclusion presents itself: you went over the Cliff Edge again. This time, your reflections are altogether different. While yesterday you can understand why you went over, it does not make sense at all today. After all, you saw the Cliff Edge before you got to it and yet, for reasons best known to yourself, over you went. The bumps and

bruises are more severe this time, and yesterday's forgiving tone has been replaced by something far more critical. In fact, you give yourself a hard time.

Next day, and you are back. There is something very seductive about this place, something that is drawing you back. You know exactly where you are, of course. Up ahead is the Cliff Edge. Suddenly, your brain registers that your right foot is no longer in contact with the ground. Adrenaline rushes through your body, and you throw yourself backwards, landing with much less of a thump a metre or so away from the Cliff Edge. "Phew! That was close," you say.

The awareness of what you have just prevented begins to register with you. "If I am to return to this place, and I accept that I must, I can't keep going over that Cliff Edge." You give it another glance and shake your head. Getting to your feet, your gaze takes in the panorama of the landscape—a beautiful landscape. A question comes to mind. If I am not going over the cliff, then where am I going? Your gaze sweeps the landscape again and settles on a spot not too far away. An intense feeling, more intense than the one that kept bringing you back to the Cliff Edge, connects itself to the spot not too far away. It is a feeling of hope and potential.

"I'm going Over There," you say to yourself. Mentally, you trace a path from where you are now to where you want to be. A few seconds later, you are on that path. The Cliff Edge still exerts its influence, and you feel its pull at times, but like a fraying rope at breaking point, it becomes a weak tether. The further down the path you travel, the stronger the pull of 'Over There' becomes. And then it dawns on you in a moment of true liberation that you will never go over that Cliff Edge again.

WHAT IS A CLIFF EDGE?

A Cliff Edge is anything you do a lot of – a pattern – that isn't working.
In The IMPACT Model a Cliff Edge is an unhelpful pattern.

WHAT IS AN 'OVER THERE' PLACE?

An 'Over There' place is where you consistently engage in patterns that work for you. It's the place you reach when you stop repeating your cliff-edge patterns and become the person you want to be, doing what you truly want and living the life you desire. In The IMPACT Model, 'Over There' places are filled with helpful, life-affirming patterns.

WHAT IS A PATTERN?

In The IMPACT Model, patterns are anything that regularly features in your life that either enhances (helpful) your thriving and surviving or undermines (unhelpful) it. Patterns can be 'internal' to you, such as patterns of thought, or external to you, such as patterns of relationships (to people, places and 'stuff').

TYPES OF PATTERNS

Below are the main types of patterns we come across. Consider the list and take some time to answer our questions, adding any of your own as you do so. Remember to keep our definition of a pattern in mind as 'anything that regularly features in our lives that either enhances our thriving and surviving or undermines it.'

- Attention: what do you focus your attention on? Who or what gets the lion's share?
- Thinking: what do you think about? How would you describe your thinking style?
- Believing: what beliefs do you hold about yourself and the world around you?
- Behaving: what actions and behaviours do you carry out? What are your routines?
- Feeling: what emotions do you typically experience?
- Relating: what types of relationships do you form with people, places and 'stuff' i.e., objects, possessions?
- Time: how do you manage your time? Can you prioritise or not?
- Physical: what postures do you adopt? How do you move and express yourself physically?
- Transformational: how do you approach your academic, personal and professional transformation?

HOW DO PATTERNS FORM?

Patterns in our lives are a combination of innate (what we are born with – nature) and learnt (what we acquire from others and learn by ourselves – nurture) patterns. Take language. Nature gives us a head start, and then we build on it through nurture. Sometimes, this process works to our advantage; sometimes, the opposite is true. This activity focuses on understanding how to encourage the former and avoid the latter.

UNHELPFUL PATTERNS FORM FOR POSITIVE REASONS

It will not surprise you that helpful patterns form for positive reasons, but what might do is that unhelpful patterns form for positive reasons, too. So, we want this to be your working assumption: unhelpful patterns that have become established in your life will have done so for beneficial reasons i.e., they will have made enough of a difference at the time. A common example is overeating to cope with stress or unhappiness. Uncovering the positive roots of unhelpful patterns is crucial for replacing them.

AWARENESS IS KEY

Awareness is key to identifying, understanding and changing patterns. If we are unaware, we might think there isn't anything to correct or improve, or we might mistake partial for complete awareness and fail to see enough of a pattern. Like a light being turned on in the darkness, awareness allows us to have a good look at our patterns and ask essential questions, such as:

- What am I doing a lot of that isn't working and that I will need to stop or do much less of?
- What am I not doing enough of that is working and that I will need to build and develop?

With awareness, we avoid going over our Cliff Edges and become permanent residents in our Over There place.



STAGE ONE: SARAH'S ACTIVITY

Doing the Cliff Edge activity is equivalent to the moment in the story when you stop going over your Cliff Edges, jump back and save yourself from yet another bruising landing. It is when you become acutely aware that you cannot afford to keep repeating your unhelpful patterns or neglecting your helpful ones.

To get the most out of the activity, here are some suggestions for how to go about it:

- Look at Sarah's (one of our clients) completed Cliff Edge for guidance.
- Do the activity more than once, with gaps in between, as it can take time to become helpfully aware of our patterns.
- Do the activity by yourself and, if possible, with at least one trusted other.
- Appreciate your findings regardless of what you discover. It is much better to know about than not know about our Cliff Edges.

SARAH'S CLIFF EDGE ACTIVITY

PATTERN TYPES	UNHELPFUL PATTERNS: GOING OVER YOUR CLIFF EDGES	HELPFUL PATTERNS: IN YOUR OVER THERE PLACE
Attention: where, who, and on what?	Excessive social media use; following several influencers; non-stop comparing to others	Professional attention is much better; never lose track at work
Thoughts: what you think about and your thinking style	How I am failing at everything and how others are succeeding; highly damaging, self-critical	Clarity of thought at work; can keep personal and professional separate
Beliefs: about yourself and the world	I will never achieve in life; I will never be happy	Can't think of any
Behaviours: actions and routines	Doom scrolling on mobile phone; excessive exercising, constant dieting; self-sabotage	Very productive and organised at work

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STAGE ONE: SARAH'S ACTIVITY

SARAH'S CLIFF EDGE ACTIVITY		
PATTERN TYPES	UNHELPFUL PATTERNS: GOING OVER YOUR CLIFF EDGES	HELPFUL PATTERNS: IN YOUR OVER THERE PLACE
Emotions and feelings	Low moods, anger	None
Relationships: to people, places and 'stuff' (objects, possessions)	People-pleasing; hang around in places, especially gyms, to boost self-esteem	Cooperative, collaborative and supportive at work; like being at work
Time management and prioritisation	Personally, non-existent	Professionally, on it
Physical posture, movement and expression	Tense, stiff; people ask me if I am ok because I look angry	can be relaxed when absorbed in a task
Academic, personal and professional transformation	Never happy with what I have achieved. Always looking to the next course to make me happy, but it never does.	Objectively, I have achieved and constantly seek out new developmental opportunities

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The discovery of so many Cliff Edges could have been upsetting, but for the fact that knowing about them has meant I no longer go over them with such regularity. The biggest win, though, has been the discovery of my Over There place, which I never knew existed. I keep visualising the end of the animation when I am finally free.

Sarah

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STAGE TWO: OVER TO YOU...

YOUR CLIFF EDGE ACTIVITY		
PATTERN TYPES	UNHELPFUL PATTERNS: GOING OVER YOUR CLIFF EDGES	HELPFUL PATTERNS: IN YOUR OVER THERE PLACE
Attention: where, who, and on what?		
Thoughts: what you think about and your thinking style		
Beliefs: about yourself and the world		
Behaviours: actions and routines		
Emotions and feelings		
Relationships: to people, places and 'stuff' (objects, possessions)		

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STAGE TWO: OVER TO YOU...

YOUR CLIFF EDGE ACTIVITY		
PATTERN TYPES	UNHELPFUL PATTERNS: GOING OVER YOUR CLIFF EDGES	HELPFUL PATTERNS: IN YOUR OVER THERE PLACE
Time management and prioritisation		
Physical posture, movement and expression		
Academic, personal and professional transformation		

What did you discover?

Depending on your starting point i.e., how well or otherwise you understood your Cliff Edges and your Over There place, what did you gain from the activity? Were initial suspicions confirmed, or were you surprised by your discoveries? Are you seeing more Cliff Edges than is good for you? Or is your Over There place closer than you realised? Finally, what unhelpful patterns do you need to replace, and what helpful ones do you need to strengthen so you can live permanently in your Over There place?