

WHY DO I FEEL BEHIND IN LIFE? (LOLA, Your Trauma Voice)

The Deep Dive Worksheet: Running Your Own Race

This worksheet goes with the blog. It has 7 short activities. Each one tells you exactly what to do, and shows you a filled-in example first, so you always know what your answer should look like.

Take your time. There are no wrong answers here.

1. THE STARTING LINE LOG

Instructions: This week, catch the moment the "behind" feeling hits, big or small. As soon as you notice it, come back and log it: what triggered it, LOLA's verdict, and the feeling underneath the comparison.

What kind of moments usually trigger the "behind" feeling for you? (check all that apply)

- ☐ A wedding, baby announcement, or milestone post
- ☐ Birthdays
- ☐ A friend's promotion or new job
- ☐ Family gatherings where progress gets compared out loud
- ☐ Other: _____

EXAMPLE ENTRY

What triggered it: A friend's post about closing on their first house.

LOLA's verdict: "Everyone's building a life and I'm still figuring mine out."

The feeling underneath the comparison: A sinking, gut-level panic, not really about houses at all.

The job I was actually doing at that age instead: Managing my mom's anxiety and keeping my younger siblings on schedule most nights.

ENTRY 1 — What triggered it:

LOLA's verdict:

The feeling underneath the comparison:

The job you were actually doing at that age instead:

ENTRY 2 — What triggered it:

LOLA's verdict:

The feeling underneath the comparison:

The job you were actually doing at that age instead:

ENTRY 3 — What triggered it:

LOLA's verdict:

The feeling underneath the comparison:

The job you were actually doing at that age instead:

2. MAP YOUR ACTUAL RACE

Instructions: Pick two specific ages from your childhood or teen years. Rate how sure you are that you were "just a kid" during those years, then write down what you were actually responsible for.

VERY SURE — SOMEWHAT SURE — NOT REALLY SURE — NO IDEA, HONESTLY

EXAMPLE

Age: 14

Circled: Not really sure.

What I was actually responsible for: Getting my brother to school, making dinner most nights, and reading my dad's mood before anyone else got home.

What most of my peers were doing instead: Sports practice, sleepovers, figuring out who they liked that week.

What this tells me about that year: That wasn't a normal childhood year. That was a work year wearing a childhood's clothes.

Age:

Circle one above, then write it here:

What you were actually responsible for:

What most of your peers were doing instead:

What this tells you about that year:

3. WHERE THE JOB GOT ASSIGNED

Instructions: Nobody signs up to run someone else's race first. This activity traces back where the job first got assigned to you, so you can see it as something that happened to you, not a fact about your natural personality.

EXAMPLE

Where the job got assigned: A parent who struggled with their own emotions, so managing the household's mood quietly became my job by default.

What I concluded from it: "Things only stay okay if I'm the one keeping them that way."

About how old I was: Around 11.

Where I'm still applying that lesson today: I over-function at work and in friendships, managing everyone's mood before I ever check in on my own.

Where the job got assigned:

What you concluded from it:

About how old you were:

Where you're still applying that lesson today:

4. NAME YOUR MOVE

Instructions: When the behind feeling hits, you default to one of two moves: sprinting to compress years of catching up into months, or freezing and deciding it's too late to bother trying. Circle the one you reach for most.

I SPRINT TO CATCH UP — I FREEZE AND CALL IT TOO LATE

EXAMPLE

Circled: I sprint to catch up.

What this move protects me from: The unbearable feeling of just sitting in the gap without doing anything about it.

What it's actually cost me: Burnout, twice this year, from treating my twenties like a deadline instead of a decade.

One thing I might do differently if I dropped it for a day: Let one goal move at a normal pace instead of an emergency one, and see what that actually feels like.

Circle one above, then write it here:

What this move protects you from:

What it's actually cost you:

One thing you might do differently if you dropped it for a day:

5. THE REAL RESUME FILE

Instructions: The years you think you "lost" were never actually empty. This activity builds a running file of the real, invisible jobs you were doing, the ones that never made it onto an actual resume but were work all the same.

EXAMPLE

"Age 15: unofficial translator for my grandmother at every doctor's appointment, school meeting, and bill that came in the mail."

1.

2.

3.

Tip: keep this file somewhere you'll see it again, and add to it every time you remember another piece of the job nobody ever gave you a title for.

6. A LETTER FROM AKO TO LOLA

Instructions: AKO is your Higher Self, the part of you that can see the whole timeline, not just the gap. Let AKO write LOLA, your Trauma Voice, a short letter, thanking her for keeping score of what got missed, and telling her what's changed since she first started running that math.

EXAMPLE

"Dear LOLA, thank you for noticing what got missed. I know the gap feels like proof something's wrong with us. But those years weren't wasted, they were spent keeping people afloat who couldn't do it themselves. We get to start our own race now, from right here, at our actual pace."

Dear LOLA,

7. THIS WEEK'S IMPERFECT START

Instructions: Pick one thing you've been putting off "until you catch up." Choose a small, imperfect version of it to try this week, at your actual current age, not the age you think you should already be at. Predict what you think will happen. Then do it, and come back and write what actually happened.

EXAMPLE

The thing I've been putting off: Taking a beginner art class, something I've wanted to try since I was a teenager.

My small, imperfect version: Signing up for one single drop-in session, no commitment beyond that.

I predict: I'll feel embarrassed being a beginner at my age, surrounded by people who started years ago.

What actually happened: Half the room was also brand new, and nobody seemed to be keeping score but me.

The thing you've been putting off:

Your small, imperfect version:

I predict:

What actually happened:

Nothing here proves the years you lost weren't real, or that the gap doesn't exist. It proves you were working a job nobody hired you for, and you're allowed to start your own race now, from exactly where you're standing.

You got this! Nobody is coming to save you... you have to save yourself!

HAPPYISH HUMANS