

Module 5: Your Body's Pattern Library

Introduction

You know the spot the one that always tightens first. Maybe it's your neck after a busy week, your lower back when you're tired, or your jaw when life feels intense.

These tension patterns aren't random. They're part of your body's unique way of responding to the world and they often show up before you even realise you're under strain.

In this module, we'll take a gentle, curious look at these recurring "hot spots."

We'll explore:

- Why the same areas tend to flare up
- What your body might be protecting you from
- How to map your own tension patterns without judgement
- Ways to support these areas early, before discomfort grows

The goal here isn't to get rid of your patterns. It's to *understand* them and to feel more confident in the way you respond.

This is another step in building a more trusting, responsive relationship with your body. Let's begin.

Why the Same Spots Keep Flaring Up

Tension has favourite places. It's rarely random, it tends to return to the same muscles or joints that have been overloaded, injured, or "on duty" for too long. You might notice that when stress builds, so does the familiar ache in your neck, jaw, or lower back. That's not coincidence. It's your body's pattern library at work.

Our bodies store experience. They remember not just physical injuries, but also emotional load, habits, and long held movement patterns. These patterns aren't your fault, it's simply how the body adapts and protects.

Think of it like this:

- **Shoulders** might carry the "weight of the world", tension builds when life gets overwhelming
- **Lower back** often flares when you've been sitting too long, pushing through exhaustion, or missing rest
- **Stomach** or gut tension can show up when emotions are swirling or life feels unpredictable

- **Neck and jaw** might tighten in response to pressure, decision making, or even the unconscious habit of bracing for the next thing

"Let's say every time things get busy at work, your neck starts aching by Thursday. That's not just bad posture, that's a body pattern. When you notice it, you can gently step in: heat, slow shoulder circles, a lunchtime walk... and maybe a massage booking before it builds."

Over time, these patterns become familiar routes your body takes, not because it's injured, but because it's trying to keep you safe in the way it knows how.

These flare ups aren't failures. They're signals, early messages that something may be out of balance: posture, breath, sleep, stress, boundaries, or movement.

The more you learn to recognise these signals as helpful prompts instead of problems, the easier it becomes to respond with care.

We're not trying to erase your patterns. We're trying to *understand* them and gently support your body in creating new, more sustainable ones.

What Patterns Are Really About

Recurring tension is often a signal, not a random one, but a purposeful attempt by your body to communicate. When the same spots keep tightening, aching, or feeling fatigued, it's usually because they're taking on more than their fair share.

This might be due to:

- **Physical overload** – Certain muscles work overtime when other parts of the body aren't moving as well or when you've taken on more physical activity than usual. For example, your upper traps might be working hard to hold up your posture when your core or back muscles are underused or fatigued.
- **Emotional holding** – Stress doesn't just live in your thoughts. It can show up as tension in the jaw, shallow breathing in the chest, or clenching through the hips and shoulders. These physical responses are your body's way of bracing and preparing, even if there's no actual danger.
- **Postural habits** – The way you sit, stand, sleep, and move through daily tasks can slowly reinforce specific movement patterns. Over time, this can place uneven loads on your body, leading to consistent tightness in particular areas.
- **Past experiences or injuries** – Areas that have been vulnerable before often stay on "high alert." Your nervous system may create a kind of protective buffer around these spots, which can lead to tightness or discomfort even when there's no current threat.

These patterns aren't personal failings, they're learned responses. Your body is doing what it knows to keep you going.

Rather than jumping straight to fixing or stretching, try asking a few gentle questions when you notice familiar tension arise:

- “What’s going on around me right now?”
- “Have I been sitting in the same position for a while?”
- “Is this a moment where I’m under pressure or rushing?”
- “Is this area trying to support something that feels off elsewhere?”

When you ask these kinds of questions, you create space for self-awareness rather than frustration. That’s where meaningful change begins, not by fighting your body’s responses, but by understanding why they might be showing up.

Tool 5: Map Your Hot Spots

Instead of just noticing what’s happening today, this practice helps you explore what tends to happen over time and why.

You’ll need:

- A few quiet minutes
- A printed body outline or a notebook
- Optional: coloured pens or stickers

Step 1: Reflect

Think back over the past few weeks. Where does tension or discomfort usually show up? Choose 1–3 key areas.

Step 2: Map It

Use a drawing, journal entry, or even a simple list to mark where these "hot spots" are for you.

Step 3: Get Curious

For each area, ask yourself:

- When does this usually flare up?
- Are there common triggers? (e.g., long workdays, family stress, lack of movement)
- What helps or what makes it worse?
- Is this area doing extra work to support another part of me?

Step 4: Name a Pattern

Finish by writing a short sentence or phrase for each hot spot:

- “My shoulders tighten when I’m overloaded.”
- “My lower back aches when I skip my walks.”
- “My jaw tenses when I’m holding something in.”

Patterns Can Be Helpful (Even If They're Uncomfortable)

It's easy to see recurring pain or tension as something going wrong. But often, these patterns are your body's way of helping, a kind of internal heads up that something needs attention.

They're not just annoyances to push through or "fix." They're reminders of how your body manages load, stress, emotion, and movement over time.

These patterns can become useful tools once you learn to read them. For example, if your lower back tends to get grumpy during high pressure weeks, that's not random, it's a signal. One that says, "Let's ease up here," or "Can we add some support before this builds?"

Over time, recognising these patterns can help you:

- **Anticipate** when your body might need extra care, before the discomfort ramps up
- **Adjust your schedule or approach**, like prioritising rest, layering in movement breaks, or reaching for a tool you know helps
- **Feel more in control**, not because you can prevent every flare, but because you have ways to respond with kindness and clarity

Noticing these rhythms doesn't mean you have to become hyper-aware or anxious about every twinge. It's simply a way to grow more familiar with your body's patterns, to understand its story with a sense of ease and curiosity. You begin to see the cues earlier. You start to trust your ability to respond rather than react.

And slowly, these patterns become less scary and more like part of a conversation you're having with your body, day by day.

What's Next

What This Means for You

Your tension patterns are unique to you. They've been shaped by your life, your habits, your emotions, and your history.

This module is an invitation to:

- Recognise your body's "tells" — those early signals that whisper "I'm under pressure"
- Respond with small supports instead of waiting until discomfort shouts
- Reframe recurring tension as useful feedback, not failure

What's Next

In Module 6, we take everything you've noticed about your body, the patterns, the signals, the clues, and turn it into action.

You'll begin to build your personalised between, treatments toolkit: a mix of breathwork, balm, movement, rest, and practical supports tailored to how *your* body tends to respond.

You'll learn how to:

- Match tools to your most common tension or energy patterns
- Use small, repeatable actions that feel doable (not overwhelming)
- Build a rhythm of care that fits into your real life, no need for rigid routines