

THE
ONE DAY
RESET

FOR THE MIND THAT NEVER STOPS.

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A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

This is not a book about becoming less ambitious.

It is about what happens when a
capable mind receives more than it
has time to absorb.



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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

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Give yourself permission to disconnect.

————— *Not for ever.* —————

LONG ENOUGH

This is not a book about becoming less ambitious.

I want to begin there because I know the kind of mind that may be reading this. I also know exactly what I would do with a book about rest: underline it, take notes, look up the studies and quietly turn “switching off” into one more thing I was determined to do extremely well.

I suspect I am not alone.

This is not an argument for abandoning the life you have built, moving to the countryside, deleting every app or learning to be the calmest person in the room. It is not another project in which you become a slightly more optimised version of yourself.

It is about what happens when a capable mind receives more than it has time to absorb.

You may call that feeling tiredness. You may call it overwhelm, burnout, indecision, disconnection or simply a bad week that has somehow lasted for months. You may still be performing exceptionally well. Often, that is exactly what makes the problem difficult to see. From the outside, your life works. From the inside, everything is taking a little more effort than it used to.

You are still answering the questions. You are still holding the room. You are still getting things over the line. But small decisions have become strangely expensive. A message from someone you love feels like one more thing to process. You open a book and cannot stay with the story. You sit at your desk because you are behind, produce very little, and then feel guilty for not trying hard enough.

For a long time, I used that continued performance as proof that I was fine. If I could still think quickly, hold the room and show up fully for work I loved, how tired could I really be?

Quite tired, as it turned out.

The evidence was simply arriving somewhere else: in the novel I could no longer follow, the phone I did not want to answer, the afternoon off I could not enjoy and the strange feeling that I was available to everybody except myself.

This book offers a different place to begin.

Before the next decision, goal, strategy, course, reinvention or attempt to push through, give yourself permission to disconnect. Not for ever. Not as an escape. Long enough for the volume to come down and for your own thoughts to become audible again.

That is the purpose of The One Day Reset.

The e-book gives you recognition, context and the science beneath the experience. The workbook will hold the deeper reflection and life-area mapping. The guided audio meditation will let you experience one route back into the present without having to work out how to do it. The reset day brings those elements together.

You do not need to complete exercises while you read. You do not need to make decisions. You do not need to prove that you are taking this seriously by turning it into work.

Read slowly. Put the book down when a sentence lands. Let there be a little space around it.

That space is where we begin.

Who this is for

**I wrote this for people whose minds
move quickly.**

They are ideas people, doers, builders, leaders, specialists, creatives, founders and quiet overachievers. Some run companies. Some are early in their careers and already carrying far more than anyone realises. They are not united by title or age. They are united by a particular relationship with possibility: they can see what could be improved, learned, solved, built or understood, and they are usually willing to work very hard to get there.

They care about doing well, but not only in the shallow sense. They want to create a version of success that is genuinely theirs. They want to be good at their work and good to the people around them. They want to grow. They are interested in why they do what they do. They read, study, train, go to therapy, listen to podcasts, improve their bodies, examine their relationships and keep acquiring new ways of becoming better.

They are also, very often, the people who have come to believe they are uncoachable.

Not because they resist help. Because they have already thought about the problem from twelve angles. They know the language. They can explain the family pattern, the market conditions, the leadership dynamic and the neuroscience. They are cognitively fast enough to arrive at the coach's next question before it has been asked.

The conclusion is usually: Nobody is really going to understand this.

I work with these people almost exclusively. I trained and qualified as an executive coach and team coach, and my work has taken me through leadership, transition, burnout, multicultural teams and complex systems. I have also changed careers more than once.

Every field I have moved through has left something useful behind. I study how the mind works because I am fascinated by how people make decisions, how we adapt, and why intelligent people can understand a pattern perfectly and still remain inside it.

The best coaching, to me, is not a performance of how much the coach knows. It is the ability to take a large body of knowledge and offer the small part that can move the needle for this person, in this moment, in this life.

You probably do not need more information. You have plenty. You may need less input, a better frame, and enough quiet to use what you already know.

A note on the evidence

The subjects in this book attract exaggerated claims. You will hear that meditation switches off the brain, that a walk guarantees insight, that a single day rewires your neural pathways, that dopamine is the enemy, that all mind-wandering is creative and that every form of exhaustion is burnout.

None of those statements is accurate.

Where the research supports a useful conclusion, I will tell you. Where a study applies only to a specific laboratory task, I will keep it there. Where the evidence is mixed, I will say so. The references are numbered in the text and collected at the end.

This book is educational, not diagnostic. Persistent exhaustion, cognitive changes, anxiety, depression, sleep problems or physical symptoms deserve appropriate medical or psychological attention. A reset can create space. It cannot replace care, repair an unsafe workplace or solve a structural problem by asking you to regulate yourself more efficiently.

With those edges left on, there is still something hopeful here.

You are not lost. You may simply have been receiving for so long that you can no longer hear your own thoughts.

PART 01

The cost you can hide from everyone except yourself



CHAPTER 01 / THE ONE DAY RESET

01



What Cognitive Overload Looked Like in My Own Life

I could still hear my clients. What I could no longer hear was myself.

Last year, I worked more or less without stopping from January until November.

I should say immediately that I was not unhappy. I love my job. I love my clients. The work gives me energy, and that made it very easy to miss the point at which it also began to consume more than I could restore.

By autumn I was working with several organisations at once, two of them very intensively. Inside each were multiple stakeholders, different nationalities, a great many teams and situations complex enough that holding the whole picture in mind was a task of its own. There was a lot of travel. There were also ninety-seven individual clients who could call me at any time. I calculated that number on a flight by looking at my calendar, I hadn't even realized.

I ensured each of my clients felt like my only client. That's the job and that's the level of care you need to excel at this job.

I attempted a holiday. I took calls throughout it. I was building off-sites and creating content.

I was also learning, because learning is one of the things that makes me feel most alive. I did a neuroscience course in the evenings. I worked at weekends to research programmes and create content because I wanted to be genuinely current, not approximately current. I went to a remarkable trauma conference and listened to some of the most respected people in the field.

And my brain appeared to be functioning brilliantly.

That is not retrospective irony. The work was good. I was absorbing an enormous amount and using it. I felt capable, stimulated and grateful. If you had asked whether I was doing too much, I would probably have given you a very intelligent explanation of why I was not.

In November, I decided to take a few days away. There was a birthday in the Dominican Republic. I closed my computer on Friday night and was due to fly on Saturday morning.

The fever arrived between those two things.

I flew anyway, because the flight was booked and I had finally decided to rest, and apparently this was how the resting was going to happen. I spent five days alone in a hospital on the other side of the world, not really understanding what was wrong with me.

After I came home, I was on and off antibiotics until March.

I cannot tell you that the workload caused the illness. That would turn a sequence into a medical conclusion, and it would be irresponsible. I can tell you that the hospital made something visible that I had been able to hide from myself while I was moving.

My mind was no longer working in the way I knew it.

I could still do my job. I could prepare, coach, listen and respond. I could enter the room and find the part of myself that knew exactly how to be there for a client. This mattered to me, so I gave it everything I had.

What disappeared was the capacity around the work.

I could not read fiction. I would open a novel and find that I could not hold the story. It was not boredom; following a narrative required something I did not have. I could not watch a series. I told myself that I lacked the time, which was partly true, but not the whole truth.

Most painfully, I could not truly listen to people I loved.

I live in London. Friends would suggest a drink or a visit to the pub, and I could not make myself want to hear one more person's story. I hated the sound of my phone ringing. I did not call people back. Friends became frustrated because the version of me they knew—the one who was curious, present and interested—was not available to them.

It was not that I had stopped caring. There was no room left in which to express the care.

I could still hear my clients. I could still do the work. What I could no longer hear was myself.

That was the part that frightened me.

I had been using output as proof of capacity. As long as I could perform, I assumed I was fine. The evidence I ignored was quieter: the lost curiosity, the unread novel, the irritation at the ringing phone, the friendships receiving the diminished version of me, the absence of any unclaimed part of the day.

It took much of the following year, deliberately lived at a different speed, to recover space around my own thoughts.

The experience changed the question I ask first. When someone comes to me full of ideas, decisions, goals or an urgent need to change their life, I do not immediately begin with What do you want?

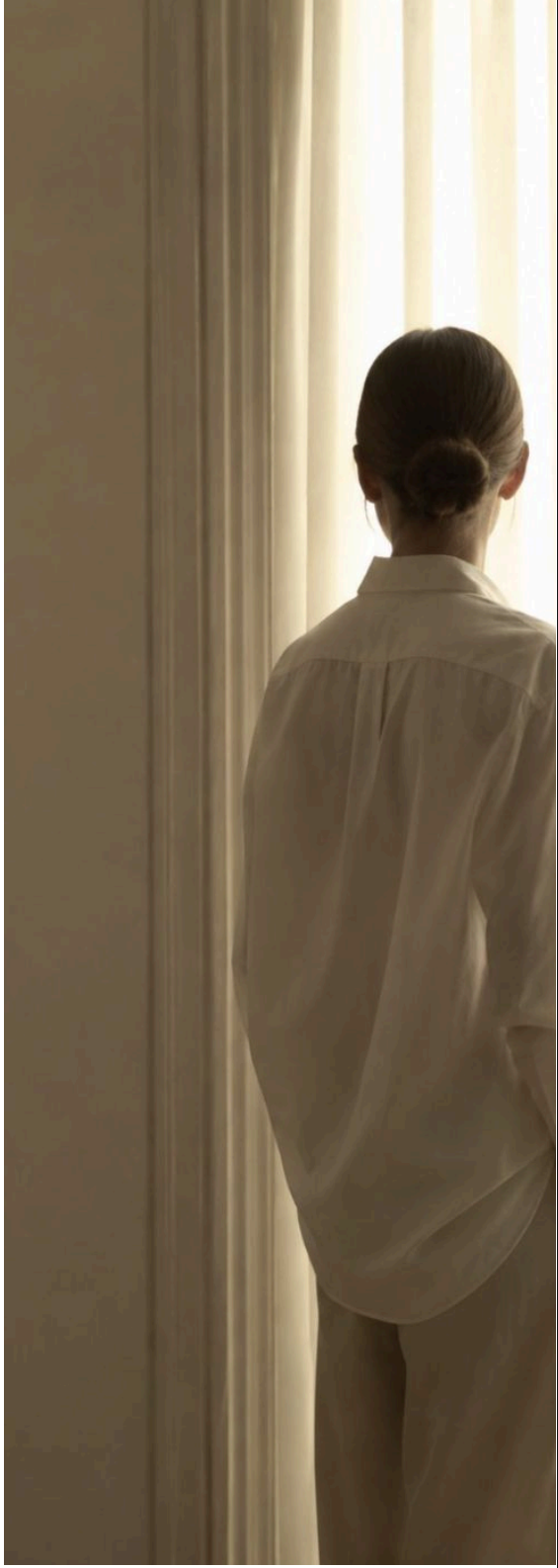
First I want to know: Can you hear yourself clearly enough to answer?

02



How Cognitive Overload Hides Behind High Performance

*Overload narrows the field of view.
A reset reopens it.*



There is a picture of overload that is easy to recognise. The person cannot get out of bed. The work stops. Everyone can see that something is wrong.

There is another version that is far more common in the people I meet.

They continue to perform while becoming emotionally unavailable. They listen for the point of a conversation while already assembling the answer. Their curiosity goes quiet. A small decision—where to eat, which message to answer, whether to accept an invitation—takes an absurd amount of effort. They remain at the desk long after clear thinking has gone, because every pause feels like lost momentum.

Then the mind begins offering dramatic exits.

I need to resign.

I need to move.

I need a completely different life.

Sometimes those decisions are right. A reset should never become an argument for staying in a job, relationship or environment that is harming you. But distance matters.

When you are carrying too much, a complex problem can begin to look as though it has only one possible answer: leave. Office politics that might require a boundary or a difficult conversation feel like evidence that the whole career is wrong. A relationship in need of attention feels like proof that the life around it must be dismantled.

Overload narrows the field of view. A reset reopens it. It does not make the decision for you.

This is one reason the word burnout is used so widely. It provides a serious name for an experience that can otherwise sound vague: I am doing well, but I do not feel like myself.

Burnout is real, but it has a specific meaning. The World Health Organization describes it as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed, characterised by exhaustion, increased mental distance or cynicism toward one's job, and reduced professional efficacy. It is not classified by the WHO as a medical condition, and the definition applies specifically to the occupational context.¹ That definition can help us think more precisely; it cannot diagnose us from a page. You may be burned out. You may also be grieving, ill, depressed, sleep-deprived, living in an impossible system, carrying family responsibilities, experiencing hormonal or neurological change, or dealing with several things at once. Cognitive overload is not a rival diagnosis. It is one useful lens on what constant receiving, switching and unfinished thinking can do to the experience of your day.

The lens matters because it catches people who are still functioning. People who love their work. People whose professional efficacy remains high even while the rest of their lives becomes smaller. It lets us ask a question before reaching for a life-changing conclusion:

- What happens if we reduce the input and restore some room?

CHAPTER 03 / THE ONE DAY RESET

03



The Psychological Cost of a World That Never Ends

*The environment learned how to reach you faster
than you learned how to protect your attention.*

The modern problem is not simply that there is more information. It is that information no longer arrives with a natural edge.

A newspaper once ended. A programme finished. The post arrived once a day. Work could follow you home in your thoughts, but most colleagues and clients could not enter the room in your pocket. Now the next item is always available. The feed has no final page, the group chat has several time zones, and the email you are writing contains a notification about the email that has just arrived.

We have not merely become busier. We have become permanently reachable and permanently exposed to what we are not doing.

Consider an ordinary morning. Before your feet touch the floor, your phone shows you names, headlines, requests and the evidence of lives already in progress. One message is urgent. Another is emotionally complicated. A third requires an answer you do not yet have. You do not respond, but you have received it. You carry it into the shower.

At work, you begin a document. A notification appears. You read it because ignoring it also requires a decision. You return to the document, but not all of your attention returns with you.

Researcher Sophie Leroy uses the term attention residue for what can remain when we switch from one unfinished task to another. In her experiments, difficulty disengaging from the first task was associated with poorer performance on the next.² Laboratory task-switching research also shows measurable costs when people change rules or goals, particularly when tasks are unfamiliar or complex.³ In a workplace experiment, interrupted participants finished a task faster but reported more stress, frustration, time pressure and effort—a useful reminder that maintaining output does not mean an interruption was free.⁴ None of this means that every glance at a message damages your brain. It means that attention has transition costs, while most of our tools are designed as if it does not.

**The cost accumulates in a life made of
micro-arrivals:**

- the question you have not answered;
- the conversation you need to return to;
- the idea captured in three different places;
- the course you bought and have not finished;
- the article saved for later;
- the appointment you must remember to book;
- the tiny red number telling you that other people have continued without you.

Some of these items belong to working memory. Some are held through prospective memory—the system involved in remembering to do something later. Some return through rumination or because an unfinished goal remains easy to reactivate. They are not literally all occupying four identical boxes in the brain. The mechanisms differ. The lived experience, however, is recognisable: you are not thinking about everything at once, but almost anything can call itself back.

This creates a day with very little psychological completion. You stop working without feeling finished. You rest while mentally keeping watch. You go to dinner with one part of the mind still in the meeting. You wake with the sense that you are already late for something.

There is another layer. When you open social media, you enter a stream of edited fragments: someone's promotion, someone else's body, a launch, a holiday, a home, an opinion delivered with perfect certainty. Your brain does not receive the missing context.

It receives evidence.

The research on social-media use and wellbeing is more mixed than public conversation often suggests. A 2024 meta-analysis found no significant relationship between sheer “excessive” use and two forms of wellbeing, while problematic use showed small negative associations and results varied substantially across studies.⁵ That nuance is important. The issue is not that every minute online is harmful. It is that particular patterns of use can add stimulation, comparison and obligation to an attention system that already has no endpoint.

You close the app with three new things to want, two new things to worry about and no memory of choosing any of them.

The problem is not weakness. The environment learned how to reach you faster than you learned how to decide what gets in.



PART 02

What the mind is doing when it appears to be doing nothing

04



What Happens When Too Much Competes for the Same Mind

*Conscious mental workspace is not
infinite.*



Working memory is the mental workspace that allows us to hold and manipulate a small amount of information for the task in front of us. It is what you use when you keep the beginning of a sentence available while reading the end, compare two options, follow directions or calculate something in your head.

Its capacity is limited. Nelson Cowan's influential review argued that, under particular conditions that control for rehearsal and grouping, the central limit is often around three to five meaningful units, commonly summarised as about four chunks.⁶

This finding is useful and frequently abused.

It does not mean your mind owns four permanent slots and that an unpaid bill is sitting in the same literal container as your relationship, your presentation and the message from your mother. A “chunk” depends on knowledge and grouping; the capacity estimate comes from specific memory tasks; and daily life involves several interacting systems.

What it does tell us is simpler: conscious mental workspace is not infinite.

When a task is already complex, interruption leaves less room for the task itself. When you are trying to hold several conditions in mind—what this stakeholder needs, what that colleague knows, what cannot be said yet, what the client asked last week—an apparently small additional demand can be the thing that makes the whole picture wobble.

This is why cognitively fast people can be especially confused by overload. Speed has protected them for years. They can take in more, connect more and respond faster than many people around them. They have learned that when the load increases, they can increase output.

Until the strategy stops scaling.

At that point, the instinct is often to force the same system harder. Stay at the desk.

Open another tab. Search for a better method. Consume more information in the hope that one piece will finally create clarity.

But clarity is not always missing information. Sometimes clarity is what appears when fewer things are competing for the same moment of attention.

Think of the walk around the block.

You have been staring at the problem for an hour. The document has not improved. You are no longer producing; you are supervising your inability to produce. Still, leaving the desk feels irresponsible, so you remain there to prove commitment.

Then something forces you up. You walk to buy coffee. You turn a corner, see nothing remarkable, and the sentence arrives.

The walk did not multiply your intelligence. It changed the conditions under which your intelligence was trying to work.

CHAPTER 05 / THE ONE DAY RESET

05



The Six Kinds of Tired—and What Each One Actually Needs

What is tired in me—not, what is wrong with me?

When a client says, “I am exhausted,” I rarely assume we both know what the word means.

There is physical tiredness: the body is under-rested, unwell, under-fuelled or depleted by effort.

There is cognitive depletion: sustained concentration feels expensive; words or decisions that are normally easy take longer.

There is emotional capacity: you may be able to analyse a problem but unable to absorb another person's feelings.

There is motivational flatness: you know what to do and cannot make yourself care about beginning.

There is alertness: the basic difference between being sleepy and being awake enough to engage.

And there is aliveness: the sense of interest, meaning, appetite and connection that cannot be measured by the number of tasks completed.

These are not a validated six-part diagnostic scale. They are a coaching lens—a way to stop using one word for several experiences that may need different responses.

Sleep matters profoundly, but sleep alone does not answer every form of depletion. A weekend in bed may not restore curiosity if every waking minute is filled with input. A holiday can leave you physically rested and mentally crowded if you remain on calls, keep studying and never leave an unoccupied hour. A person can feel highly alert and emotionally empty. Another can feel motivated and physically unwell.

Precision creates choice.

If the body is tired, the body needs care. If your attention has been switching all day, another hour of concentration may not be the answer. If you have no emotional capacity, the kindest response may be a boundary rather than a better conversational technique. If you have lost aliveness for a long time, a one-day reset may be informative, but it may not be sufficient.

The full workbook will help you look across the important areas of your life and notice where energy is flowing, where it is being restored and where it is being spent without consent. For now, hold only this distinction:

— What is tired in me?

Not, What is wrong with me?

That change of question is small and often relieving. The first question invites observation. The second turns a temporary state into an identity.



CHAPTER 06 / THE ONE DAY RESET

06



Why Your Best Thinking Often Arrives After You Stop Trying

Sometimes a walk is allowed to be a walk.

The brain does not switch off when you stop directing it at a task.

Early brain-imaging work identified a set of regions that showed organised activity during quiet wakeful rest and decreased activity during many externally focused tasks. This work helped establish what became known as the brain's default mode network.⁷ The popular translation—"doing nothing is when the brain solves everything"—goes much further than the evidence.

Still, the central correction is valuable. Resting wakefulness is not an empty neurological state. When external demands recede, the mind may remember, simulate, drift, integrate, plan, rehearse or return to unresolved concerns. Some of this is helpful. Some is repetitive and unpleasant. Silence does not guarantee wisdom; it simply makes different mental activity possible.

Three states are often confused here: mind-wandering, incubation and flow.

Mind-wandering is attention moving away from the current task toward internally generated thought. It can support autobiographical planning and creative association, but it can also become worry or rumination. In an experience-sampling study, people reported mind-wandering frequently, and it was associated with lower momentary happiness on average.⁸ That does not make all wandering bad. It means that leaving the present is not automatically restorative.

Incubation is the effect sometimes observed when a difficult problem improves after being set aside. A meta-analysis found an overall positive incubation effect, especially for divergent-thinking tasks, while also showing that results depend on the kind of problem and what happens during the break.⁹ In one well-known experiment, an undemanding activity that allowed more mind-wandering supported later performance on a particular creative task better than a demanding activity, rest or no break.¹⁰ This does not prove that folding laundry will solve your business model. It suggests that continued direct effort is not the only legitimate way to work on a problem.

Flow is different again. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi used the term for deep absorption in an activity whose challenge and required skill are well matched, where attention becomes organised around what you are doing and self-conscious monitoring recedes.¹¹ Flow is not empty-mindedness. It is highly engaged attention. A musician playing, a surgeon operating, a writer inside a paragraph and an athlete responding to the game may all describe it.

These states have different uses.

Mindfulness can bring you back to the present. Incubation can give a stuck problem distance. Flow can organise attention through meaningful challenge. Quiet rest can reduce demand without needing to produce an insight at all.

The mistake is to value each state only for what it can extract from you.

If you take a walk solely to generate a better idea, turn meditation into a performance metric and judge rest by how productive you feel afterwards, the improvement project has followed you into the silence.

Sometimes a walk is allowed to be a walk.



PART 03

Why stopping is hardest for the people who need it most



CHAPTER 07 / THE ONE DAY RESET

07



The Hidden Cost of Constantly Trying to Become Better

What brings me back to myself? What takes me away from myself?

Self-development is one of the great privileges of this period of history.

We know more about nutrition, movement, sleep, relationships, trauma, leadership and mental health than any previous generation could access in an ordinary afternoon.

Therapy has become discussable. Coaching is no longer reserved for someone who is failing. People are examining the lives they inherited and deciding which parts they want to keep.

This is wonderful.

It can also become exhausting.

The modern high achiever is not only doing a job. They are managing a personal curriculum that never ends. There is the body to optimise, the relationship to improve, the attachment style to understand, the investment strategy to learn, the language app streak to maintain, the leadership book to finish, the podcast episode that everyone is discussing, the course bought during the last burst of motivation, and the new course that appears before the first one is complete.

Even leisure acquires a syllabus.

You go for a walk and fill it with a podcast. You take a holiday and pack the serious book that will finally teach you the thing. You feel faintly guilty for reading fiction when you could be learning. An empty afternoon produces discomfort, so you populate it with useful activity and call the result rest.

We have become more conscious of how we live, and then added consciousness to the list of things we must do correctly.

The language gives it away. You should be balanced. You should be fit. You should have a rich social life, a meaningful career, a passionate relationship, a regulated nervous system, a beautiful home and a morning routine that happens before the rest of your family wakes. You should be spontaneous, but also book everything in advance. You should be present, but also document the moment. You should rest, but rest in the evidence-based way.

No single “should” is fatal. Together they create the sensation of failing a life that is objectively going rather well.

The growth industry is especially seductive for people who are genuinely curious.

Learning does help. Insight can change a life. The problem begins when learning becomes a way to avoid the unstructured moment in which no expert is speaking.

More information feels safer than not knowing. A new framework gives the mind something to do. Research can create the sensation of movement before anything has changed. For a fast mind, it is a particularly elegant form of staying exactly where you are.

I know this because it is one of my own most convincing strategies.

If you left me alone with the instruction to recover, I could easily read three books about recovery, compare four approaches, take a course and emerge with a beautifully structured body of knowledge while remaining completely unrested. I could turn the need for space into a research project and feel responsible while doing it.

The One Day Reset exists partly to interrupt that tendency in me.

On your reset day, you will not be asked to become an expert on rest. You will be asked to notice what happens when you stop feeding the system that has been receiving continuously.

The silence may initially feel boring, itchy or inefficient. This does not prove that the silence is wrong. It may simply reveal how accustomed you have become to being occupied.

There is a useful difference between something that nourishes you and something that prevents you from meeting yourself. The same activity can be either. A book can open you or hide you. Exercise can reconnect you with your body or become another place to judge it. A conversation can restore you or take the last piece of attention you have.

The question is not, Is this a good habit?

The question is, What is this doing to me today?

This is the basis of the reflection we will explore more fully in the workbook:

— What brings me back to myself?

What takes me away from myself?

The answer is personal. Turning off the phone at night may bring you back. Walking around the block when you are stuck may bring you back. Reading a novel badly, slowly and for no useful reason may bring you back. So may cooking, dancing, prayer, being near water, music, a conversation with the person who does not need anything from you, or twenty minutes alone in the car before you enter the house.

What takes you away may be just as ordinary: agreeing to the call you do not have capacity for, answering messages in bed, cancelling a holiday because you “should” be doing more, buying another course, turning every walk into a lesson, or using guilt to keep yourself at a desk after your thinking has gone.

No universal list can tell you which is which. The clue is the version of you that remains afterwards.



CHAPTER 08 / THE ONE DAY RESET

08



Why High Achievers Override Their Own Limits

Of course you are coping. Coping is your speciality.

The people most likely to override themselves are often the people who have been rewarded for it.

They were the child who finished quickly, the young professional who could take on one more project, the founder who found a way through, the parent who kept the family moving, the leader who stayed calm while everyone else lost theirs. When something became difficult, they increased competence.

That strategy works. It produces trust, opportunity and a formidable identity.

It also makes stopping psychologically complicated.

If your self-respect has become entangled with being the person who can handle it, capacity is no longer information. It feels like a moral test. Saying “I cannot take this in tonight” sounds to you like “I am no longer the person I believed I was.”

So you reinterpret every signal.

Exhaustion becomes a time-management issue. Irritability becomes evidence that other people are inefficient. Lost curiosity becomes maturity. The weekend at the laptop becomes commitment. The holiday with calls becomes the price of being important.

None of this is necessarily conscious. Often it sounds more reasonable:

— This is just a busy period.

After the launch, it will settle.

I am lucky to have this problem.

It is quicker if I do it myself.

Nobody else has the full picture.

Sometimes every sentence is true. The danger is not the sentence; it is the absence of an endpoint.

High capability creates a delay between exceeding your limits and seeing the consequences. You can compensate. You can work faster, prepare more, narrow your life and protect the performance. The cost is paid elsewhere first—in sleep, patience, creativity, health, friendship, sexuality, humour and the ability to enjoy anything that does not have a purpose.

This is why the question “Are you coping?” is almost useless.

Of course you are coping. Coping is your speciality.

A better question is: What has coping required you to become unavailable for?

For me, the answer was friendship and my own interior life. For one client, it was play with his children: he was physically on the floor with them and mentally inside the next meeting. For another, it was music. She had not stopped loving it; she had stopped tolerating an activity she could not convert into progress. For someone else, it was kindness. He was still fair, still professional, still delivering, but every additional human need felt like an unreasonable demand.

These are not side effects outside “real” performance. They are part of the system.

Leadership changes when attention is depleted. You become quicker to categorise and slower to inquire. You hear the problem you expect instead of the person describing it.

You reduce ambiguity by making a decision, then call the speed decisiveness.

Relationships change for the same reason. Listening is not merely staying silent while someone speaks. It requires enough available attention to be surprised. When that capacity disappears, intimacy becomes administration: dates, logistics, messages, necessary updates. You may love someone deeply and have no open channel through which they can feel it.

This is not a character verdict. It is a capacity signal.

The most capable people I know are often frightened that if they stop, everything will catch up with them. The unread messages, the emotions, the fatigue, the choices postponed by motion. Staying busy keeps the queue moving and prevents the whole queue from becoming visible at once.

The fear deserves respect. Silence can be uncomfortable. Meditation is not universally soothing, and people can have difficult or adverse experiences with contemplative practices; the research is methodologically uneven but clear enough that distress should not be dismissed as failure.¹² If sitting still intensifies anxiety, trauma symptoms or other distress, you do not need to force it. Choose movement, orient to the environment, shorten the practice, stay connected to appropriate support, or leave meditation out entirely.

The reset is not a test of how much stillness you can tolerate. It is permission to reduce demand in a way that is safe enough for you.

For some people, the first experience of relief will happen sitting quietly. For others, it will happen while walking fast, washing dishes, swimming, drawing, gardening or lying on the floor with music playing.

The form is less important than the shift: from continuous receiving to contact with your own experience.

CHAPTER 09 / THE ONE DAY RESET

09



Why You Need Distance Before You Decide What Comes Next

You take the day before the answer.

When September approaches,
or January, or a birthday, or the
end of a quarter, the culture
encourages direction.

What do you want next?

What are your goals?

What will you stop, start or scale?

These are useful questions. They are simply
not always the first questions.

Imagine trying to hear a quiet conversation while six radios
are playing. You can ask the speaker to be clearer. You can
become frustrated by your inability to understand. You can
make a quick decision based on the fragments you caught.

Or you can turn down the radios.

The One Day Reset is the turning down.

It is tempting to promise more. A day after which you know your purpose, make the brave decision, recover your motivation and build the perfect routine is a more dramatic product. It is also another demand placed on a tired mind.

The reset has a narrower and, I think, more honest purpose. You disconnect from incoming noise. You let what you have already received settle. You notice your state without immediately improving it. You reconnect with what is true today. Only then do you begin to ask what deserves your attention next.

This sequence matters because urgency and importance are easy to confuse from inside overload.

Urgency has sound. It pings, escalates and presents itself through other people's expectations. Importance is often quieter. It may be the health appointment you have delayed because it never became an emergency. The relationship that needs a conversation, not another holiday booking. The piece of work that matters more than the fifteen visible tasks surrounding it. The desire you keep translating into something more respectable.

When the outside volume is high, the urgent wins by default.

Distance creates the possibility—not the guarantee—of seeing the difference.

One useful practice from attention research is deceptively simple. When work is interrupted, a brief “ready-to-resume” plan—recording where you were and what you will do when you return—has been shown in experiments to reduce attention residue and support performance on the interrupting task.¹³ The useful principle is not that writing a note magically closes every mental loop. It is that the mind may disengage more easily when the return has been made concrete.

This can be as small as:

The proposal is paused after section two. When I return, I will check the numbers in the second table and write the transition into recommendations.

Compare that with:

— Finish proposal.

The first gives your future attention a doorway. The second gives your present attention a threat.

Before your reset day, you may use a simple version of this principle to park what you are leaving. Write down what is open, the next visible step where one exists, and when you will look again. Then stop. Do not turn the list into a full planning session. You are not completing your life in order to earn a day away from it.

This is a crucial reversal.

Many high achievers believe they may rest once everything is handled. In a life without an ending, that condition can never be met. There will always be another message, idea, improvement, person or problem. If completion is the price of permission, permission will never arrive.

You take the day because you are unfinished.

You take it before the answer.

You take it so that the answer, when it comes, has a chance of being yours.

A warm, golden-hour photograph of a hallway corner. The walls are a soft, textured beige. On the right, a doorway leads to a bright, sunlit room, creating a strong light gradient. The floor is made of large, light-colored stone tiles. A white rectangular box with a thin brown border is positioned on the left side of the image, containing text.

PART 04

The ways back

10



Eight Ways Back to Yourself—No Empty Mind Required

Eight doors. No empty mind required.



01 Meditation is not switching off your brain

Many people reject meditation because they believe they have already failed at it.

They sat down, tried not to think, discovered that the mind continued producing thoughts and concluded they were not the meditating type. Fast minds are particularly offended by the experience. They can manage organisations, solve difficult problems and anticipate three moves ahead, yet apparently cannot stop thinking about an email for sixty seconds.

The misunderstanding is in the instruction.

Meditation is not one technique, and its goal is not to turn the brain off. The word covers a family of practices that train or organise attention in different ways: staying with the breath or body, repeating a phrase, observing thoughts, cultivating compassion, moving with awareness, listening, praying or following guidance.

Thoughts are not evidence that the practice has failed. Noticing that attention has moved and choosing what happens next is the practice.

Imagine lifting a light weight once. The point is not to freeze the arm at the top. The movement away and the return are the repetition. In many attention-based meditation practices, the return works similarly: breath, thought, notice, return. Sound, plan, notice, return. Memory, judgement, notice, return.

No empty mind is required.

Mindfulness and meditation are related but not identical.

Mindfulness is the quality of bringing attention to present experience with less automatic judgement. It can be practised formally in meditation, but it can also happen while drinking coffee, walking, listening or washing your hands. Meditation is the deliberate period in which you practise a particular way of relating to attention and experience.

A guided visualisation gives attention a structured internal object: a voice may invite you to imagine a place, move through sensations or picture a future encounter. This can be easier for someone whose mind resists an unstructured silence. It is not less legitimate because a voice is helping. The purpose of the audio in The One Day Reset is not to produce a special brain state. It is to reduce the number of decisions you must make while you settle.

What does the evidence say?

A systematic review and meta-analysis of meditation programmes found small improvements in anxiety, depression and pain for mindfulness meditation compared with active controls, with more limited evidence for stress and some other outcomes. It did not support the extravagant idea that meditation improves everything, and the authors noted weaknesses and gaps in the research.¹⁴ A smaller randomised study found that two weeks of mindfulness training improved working-memory and reading-comprehension performance in a student sample while reducing mind-wandering during the tasks.¹⁵ That is interesting; it is not a guarantee that a short meditation will turn every overloaded executive into a cognitive athlete.

This is the relationship with evidence I would like us to keep: curious, hopeful and unseduced by magic.

You may also hear that different meditation styles move the brain neatly from beta to alpha to theta, and that achieving the correct wave will transform your life. Brain oscillations are real, complex phenomena. The consumer version that assigns a simple emotional promise to each band is not a useful instruction for your reset. You do not need to monitor an EEG, chase a state or wonder whether you are vibrating at the wrong frequency.

Notice the most ordinary evidence:

— Is your jaw less tight?

Can you feel the chair?

Did you discover how quickly you reach for stimulation?

Can you stay with one breath without requiring it to improve you?

When attention leaves, can you return without turning the departure into a criticism?

That last capacity matters beyond meditation. A day is made of departures and returns.

You lose yourself in a meeting, a fear, a notification, a story about what someone thinks of you. The aim is not never to leave. It is to become more able to notice and come back.

If stillness makes you more agitated, that does not tell us one simple thing. You may be unused to quiet. You may be tired, anxious, traumatised, physically uncomfortable or simply using a form that does not suit you. Do not force an explanation. Open your eyes.

Shorten the practice. Feel your feet. Look around the room and name what you see.

Choose walking or an externally anchored activity. Seek professional support when distress is significant or persistent.

Meditation is an option inside the reset, not an entrance exam.

The right practice is not the one with the most impressive reputation. It is the one that reliably changes your relationship with input.

For one person that is ten minutes with the breath. For another, it is a walk without headphones. Someone else needs a pen moving across paper until the internal queue becomes visible. Another person returns through music, prayer, water, cooking or a chapter of fiction.

The reset offers several doors because human beings do not all settle in the same way.

02 Walking

Walking changes context, recruits the body and loosens the visual field. It also removes you from the physical site where you have been trying to force an answer.

In four experiments, Marily Oppezzo and Daniel Schwartz found that walking improved creative ideation during and shortly after the walk compared with sitting.¹⁶ This is a specific finding about particular creative tasks, not a promise that every walk produces insight. Combined with the incubation research, it gives us a reasonable reason to stop treating movement as the opposite of thinking.

When you are stuck, a walk around the block can be a legitimate change of method.

For the reset, leave the podcast behind at least once. This may feel wasteful. You have been trained to use the walk twice: exercise plus learning, fresh air plus phone call. Try using it once. Let the street remain the street. Notice the temperature, the pace at which your body wants to move and how quickly the mind begins offering you something to consume.

The point is not to ban podcasts. It is to rediscover unfilled attention.

03 Free writing

Free writing gives thoughts somewhere to land without requiring them to become a plan.

This is different from journalling toward an answer. You are not crafting a coherent account or diagnosing yourself. You are allowing the mental queue to become external:

the remembered task, the irritation you have explained away, the idea you keep returning to, the fact that you are tired of a commitment you once wanted.

Paper is useful because it does one thing. A note on your phone lives next to messages, news, photographs and every open channel. The page does not notify you that somebody else has had a thought.

The workbook will guide the deeper writing. On the reset day, the principle is simple: let the pen move before the editor arrives.

You may write nonsense for a page. You may repeat the same sentence. You may discover that nothing dramatic is underneath the noise—only fatigue and a need for lunch. That is information too.

04 Reading for pleasure

Reading can be input, but not all input has the same effect.

Professional reading asks you to extract, remember and apply. Fiction asks you to follow, imagine and inhabit. Poetry may slow the speed at which language is consumed. A familiar book can be restful precisely because there is nothing to master.

If you have begun to feel guilty about reading something that does not improve you, pay attention to the guilt. It reveals how thoroughly usefulness has colonised pleasure.

Do not choose a book because it is good for you. Choose one because some part of you wants to know what happens next.

If concentration is difficult, read two pages. The reset is not a literacy test. The aim is to experience interest without converting it into achievement.

05 Mindful attention

Mindfulness can be almost invisibly small.

Feel the water when you wash your hands. Taste the first mouthful before speaking.

Listen to a person without preparing the next sentence. Stand at a window and let the eyes rest on distance. Put both feet on the floor before opening the laptop.

These moments do not make you enlightened. They interrupt automaticity. They place a small piece of choice between stimulus and response.

The practice is especially revealing in conversation. Overload encourages listening for categories: I know this problem; I know where this is going. Mindful listening stays long enough to discover whether you are wrong. That is not only a wellbeing skill. It is a leadership skill and a relationship skill.

06 Guided visualisation

Visualisation can provide a bridge for a mind that needs enough structure to stop creating its own agenda.

The reset audio will guide attention rather than demand that you generate the experience. If images do not come vividly, nothing has gone wrong. People imagine differently: some see pictures, some sense space, some follow words, some feel almost nothing visual at all. Stay with whatever form is natural.

The value is not the realism of the inner picture. It is the permission to follow one gentle sequence without managing the sequence yourself.

07 Music, making and ordinary tasks

Some activities occupy just enough attention to let the rest of the mind loosen: cooking without rushing, gardening, knitting, drawing, repairing something, swimming, playing an instrument, organising a shelf because the hands want a simple job.

Recall the incubation research carefully: low-demand activity sometimes supported later creative performance, depending on the task and conditions.⁹¹⁰ Your life is not a laboratory task, and the activity does not owe you a revelation.

Choose it for the quality of attention it creates now.

08 Actual silence

Finally, there is silence itself.

No headphones. No voice guiding you. No book. No task disguised as rest.

For five minutes, perhaps, nothing is required.

At first the mind may reproduce the noise internally. You will remember the message, rehearse the conversation, reach mentally for the phone. Silence is not the immediate absence of thought; it is the absence of fresh material being added.

Over time, the internal queue may slow. Or it may not. You are still allowed to remain.

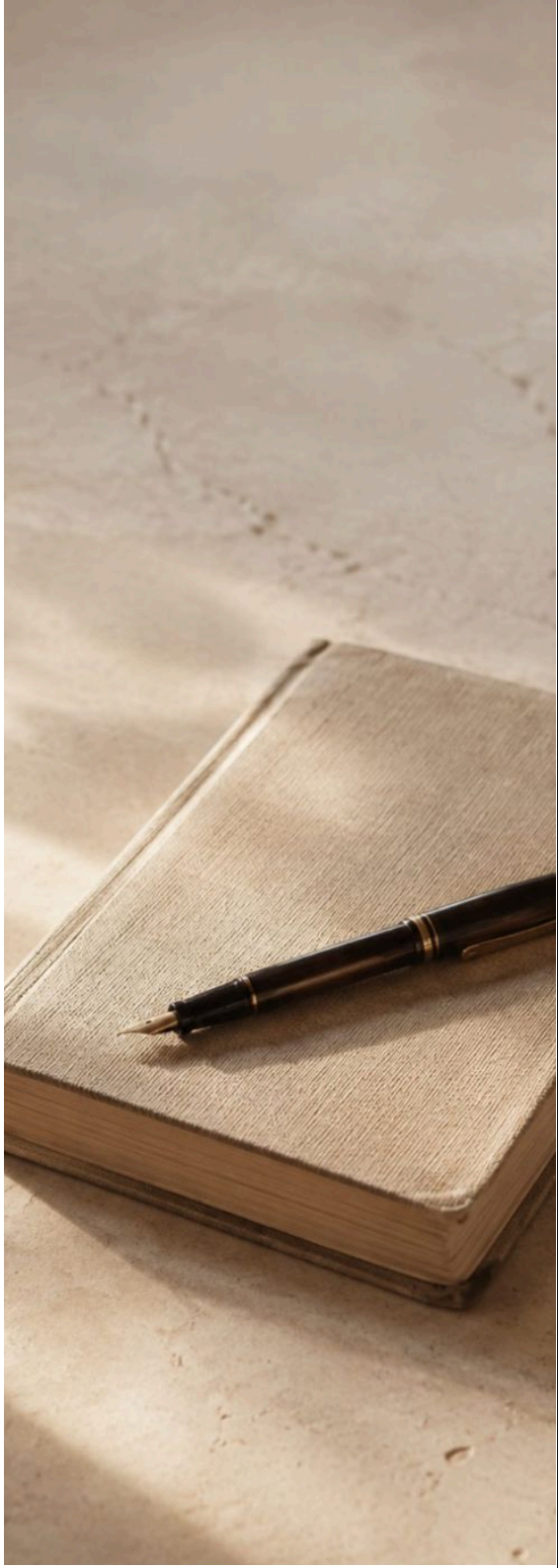
The reset is not built around choosing the “correct” door. It is built around noticing which doors bring you back to yourself, and making them available before you are desperate.

11



How to Build a Reset Practice That Survives Real Life

*You do not need a perfect streak.
You need a way back.*



An ideal routine is easy to design in an ideal state.

You wake early. You meditate for thirty minutes. You write three pages, exercise, prepare breakfast, avoid the phone and enter the day as a composed person with excellent boundaries.

Then the real week arrives.

A child wakes in the night. A flight leaves at dawn. A client crisis crosses time zones. You are ill. The train is late. You miss the routine twice, decide the system has failed and return to having no system at all.

The practice that matters is not the most complete version. It is the version that remains possible when life is least cooperative.

Research on habit formation suggests that automaticity develops through repetition in a consistent context, but the time course varies widely between people and behaviours. In one real-world study, participants took anywhere from 18 to 254 days to approach their individual plateau; missing one opportunity did not materially derail the process.¹⁷ The famous idea that a habit takes exactly twenty-one days is not supported by that work.

This is good news.

You do not need a perfect streak. You need a recognisable cue and an action small enough to repeat.

Your cue might be:

- after I close the laptop;
- before I unlock the phone in the morning;
- when I notice I have reread the same sentence three times;
- after the last meeting;
- when I enter the house;
- before I answer a message that makes my body tighten.

Your action might be:

- three slower breaths with both feet on the floor;
- writing the next step before leaving a task;
- one turn around the block;
- five minutes without input;
- putting the phone in another room during dinner;
- one page of fiction;

asking, What is tired in me?

These are not branded tools. They do not need clever names. They need to exist when you need them.

A two-minute practice will not reverse chronic overwork, treat burnout or repair a life without support. The point of a minimum practice is not to pretend a small intervention can solve a large problem. It is to preserve the pathway back to yourself during periods when the full version is impossible.

Think in three sizes.

The full version is the One Day Reset: protected time, reduced input and enough space for the system to settle.

The ordinary version may be twenty minutes of walking, writing, meditation, reading or quiet at a repeatable point in the day.

The smallest version is the action you can take when you believe you have no time at all:

close the eyes for one breath, feel the feet, record the next step, silence one nonessential notification, stand outside for two minutes.

The smallest version is not there to increase your tolerance for an intolerable situation. It is there to prevent total disconnection between larger moments of care.

You may worry that taking time makes you slower. Sometimes it will, in the literal sense that a ten-minute walk occupies ten minutes. But time at the desk and useful attention are not identical. Interruption research shows that people can protect output by working faster while paying in stress and effort.⁴ Incubation and walking studies show that sustained direct effort is not always the best condition for particular forms of creative thinking.⁹¹⁶

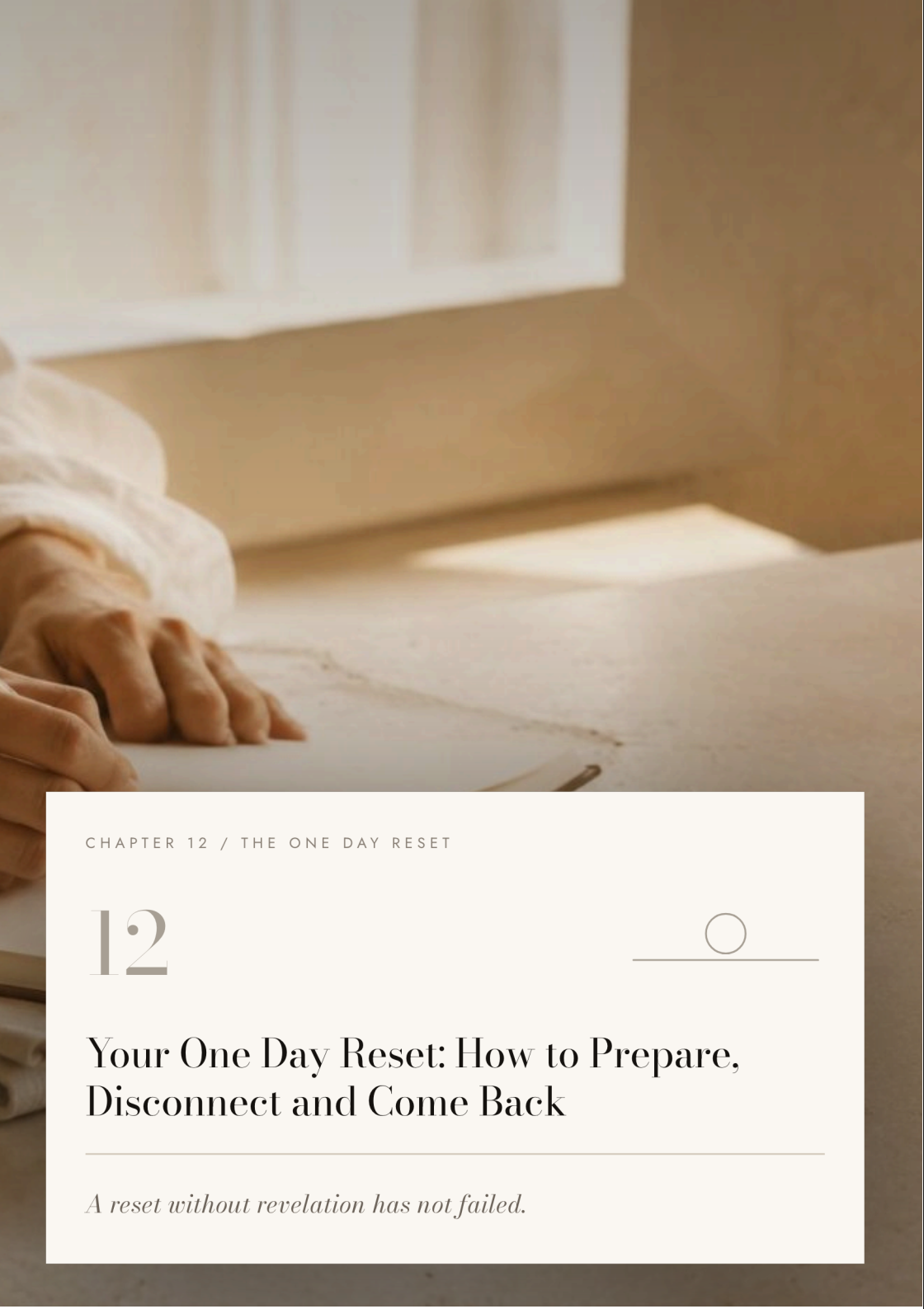
The honest promise is not “rest makes everything faster.”

It is this: a pause can change the quality of the attention you bring back. In a life built on judgement, creativity, listening and decisions, quality matters.

PART 05

One day away





CHAPTER 12 / THE ONE DAY RESET

12



Your One Day Reset: How to Prepare, Disconnect and Come Back

A reset without revelation has not failed.

The One Day Reset is a deliberate interruption of continuous receiving.

It is not a retreat in miniature. You do not need a beautiful property, a white robe, perfect weather or a week alone. It can happen at home, in a hotel room, at the house of someone who understands what you are doing, or across a day spent partly outside.

It is not a detox. Your phone is not a toxin, and dopamine is not a moral failing.

It is not a test of discipline. If you spend the day congratulating yourself for not checking email, email is still running the day.

It is not a planning intensive. You are not required to emerge with annual goals, a life vision or a resignation letter.

It is a reset: a reduction in external demand long enough to notice your internal state, restore some capacity and prepare for clearer exploration later.

01 Before the day

Make unavailability real.

Tell the people who genuinely need to know. Decide how a true emergency can reach you, and distinguish that route from ordinary access. If your work or care responsibilities make a full day impossible, protect the largest honest block you can. A reset built around shame for what you cannot arrange will reproduce the problem it is meant to relieve.

Park open work. Write where you stopped, the next concrete step and when you will return. Do not attempt to empty every inbox first.

Choose the lowest-friction setting available. Gather food that will not turn the day into logistics, water, comfortable clothes, paper, a pen, the workbook, the audio and something you might read for pleasure. Remove decisions you do not need.

Then decide what “no input” means for you.

It may include email, news, social media, work messages, podcasts, courses and nonessential calls. Music may stay. A conversation with someone safe may stay.

Medication, support and care arrangements stay. The aim is not sensory deprivation. It is to stop other people's priorities and edited realities from continually entering.

02 At the beginning

Do not start by evaluating your life.

Arrive in the body first. Eat. Drink water. Shower. Stretch. Walk. Use the guided meditation if it feels supportive. Let the first part of the day be deliberately unremarkable.

You may feel relief. You may feel exhausted. You may feel an urge to “use the time well.”

You may become aware of how many times your hand moves toward the phone without a conscious decision.

None of these reactions needs fixing.

The first information of the reset is what happens when the usual input stops.

03 As the day opens

Move between simple forms of attention rather than filling an itinerary.

Write if there is pressure in the mind. Walk if you feel stuck or physically restless. Rest if the body asks. Read if pleasure returns. Sit quietly if quiet feels possible. Use the workbook when you feel ready to observe, not when you feel compelled to perform.

Leave margins. If every hour has an assigned reset activity, you have built another programme to complete.

You may discover a wave of tiredness that your ordinary speed has been holding back.

You may sleep. You may become emotional. You may feel nothing dramatic at all.

A reset without revelation has not failed.

Sometimes the most important experience is eating lunch without a screen and realising that the world continued.

04 When thoughts arrive

You are not trying to stop thought. Let thoughts appear without promoting each one to a decision.

Capture what would otherwise make you anxious to forget. Use a page called “later.” A business idea can go there. So can the difficult conversation, the purchase, the person you want to call, the question about your future.

Writing something down does not mean you must act on it. It means you do not need to keep rehearsing it today.

This is especially important when a dramatic answer appears.

The quiet may make a truth visible. It may also make a temporary emotion louder.

Record the insight; do not require immediate action. Give important decisions a night, a conversation with the right person, or whatever due diligence they deserve.

The reset restores your ability to explore. It is not an oracle.

05 Toward the end

Notice what has changed without grading the day.

Is your breathing different? Does the room feel slower? Are you more aware of tiredness, or less? Did curiosity reappear anywhere? Which activity brought you closer to yourself?

Which one became another performance?

The workbook will help you hold those observations. Keep them descriptive.

INSTEAD OF:

— I need to become a person who meditates every morning.

TRY:

— Ten quiet minutes before input made the day feel
like mine.

INSTEAD OF:

— I must quit my job.

TRY:

I felt immediate tension when I imagined Monday's leadership meeting. I want to understand that before deciding what it means.

INSTEAD OF:

— I waste too much time on my phone.

TRY:

— I reached for my phone whenever there was an unstructured minute.

**Description gives you material. Judgement
rushes to a verdict.**

06 Re-entry

Do not end the reset by opening every channel at once.

Choose what returns first. Look for actual urgency. Allow the rest to wait until the time you set. If possible, protect the evening after the reset from a full social or work load.

You will not preserve the day's exact state. That is not the goal. Life will become noisy again. The value lies in having felt the difference between noise and your own mind.

Once you have experienced that distinction, you can begin to design for it.

Not perfectly. Purposely.



CLOSING

What Becomes Possible When You Can Hear Your Own Voice Again

The opposite of overload is not underachievement. It is available attention.

There was a moment in the hospital when the facts of my life looked almost absurd.

I was on the other side of the world because I had finally decided to stop, and I was alone in a room where stopping was no longer optional.

What I understood there was not that work was the enemy. I did not need a different career. I did not need to become less interested, less committed or less myself.

I needed to learn a skill that my ambition had allowed me to postpone: how to stop receiving before I disappeared underneath what I was receiving.

The distinction matters.

If you believe the problem is your ambition, recovery can feel like self-betrayal. If you believe the only alternatives are relentless momentum or a smaller life, you will keep choosing momentum. Most of the people I work with would.

But the opposite of overload is not underachievement.

It is available attention.

Available attention is what lets you hear the question before answering the one you expected. It lets you feel that a friend needs presence rather than advice. It lets you notice that the idea you are forcing is not ready, that the meeting has changed direction, that your body is asking for something, that a pleasure has gone missing.

It changes leadership because curiosity returns.

It changes relationships because there is room for another person to be more than one more demand.

It changes work because speed is no longer your only method.

And it changes your relationship with yourself because your inner life stops being the last stakeholder in the queue.

Your capacity is not a character test. Time is finite. Attention is selective. Physical, cognitive and emotional energy fluctuate. You cannot give the same hour to every person, possibility and version of yourself.

But you can become more purposeful about where the flow goes.

That does not mean controlling every minute. It means noticing what repeatedly brings you back and what repeatedly takes you away. It means protecting some silence before you are desperate for it. It means allowing a pause to be information rather than evidence that you are falling behind.

Most importantly, it means refusing to make the reset another standard you can fail.

You may read this book and feel relieved. You may feel recognised and then put it down for a week. You may take one full day. You may begin with an afternoon. You may discover that you need more support, more rest or a structural change that no personal routine can substitute for.

All of those outcomes are allowed.

I created The One Day Reset because I needed it.

I did not want to go on a retreat. I did not want to disappear alone for a week. I wanted to have a life and a summer and the people I loved, while making enough space to meet myself inside them. I also knew that, left entirely to my usual methods, I would probably research the problem, learn a great deal and arrive at the next season informed but unchanged.

I wanted to do it differently.

Perhaps you do too.

So before the goals, before the vision board, before the difficult decision and the next version of success, take one day away from the noise.

You do not need to find your whole future there.

You only need to hear yourself again.

That is enough for a beginning.

NOTES ON THE EVIDENCE

The edges stay on.

The research is here to clarify the experience—not to turn a human life into a universal promise.

The research below supports the numbered claims in the text. Where a source reports a laboratory or clinical finding, the manuscript keeps the conclusion within that setting rather than treating it as a universal promise.

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- [2] Attention residue. Leroy, S. (2009). "Why is it so hard to do my work? The challenge of attention residue when switching between work tasks." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 109(2), 168–181.
- [3] Task switching. Rubinstein, J. S., Meyer, D. E., & Evans, J. E. (2001). "Executive control of cognitive processes in task switching." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 27(4), 763–797.
- [4] Interrupted work. Mark, G., Gudith, D., & Klocke, U. (2008). "The cost of interrupted work: More speed and stress." *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 107–110.
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- [10] Undemanding activity, mind-wandering and creative incubation. Baird, B., Smallwood, J., Mrazek, M. D., Kam, J. W. Y., Franklin, M. S., & Schooler, J. W. (2012). "Inspired by distraction: Mind wandering facilitates creative incubation." *Psychological Science*, 23(10), 1117–1122.
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ABOUT ALESSANDRA FRAUSIN

Curiosity, translated into movement.

I am Alessandra Frausin, an executive and team coach and impact consultant. I hold the Professional Certified Coach (PCC) credential from the International Coaching Federation (ICF).

PCC / ICF



Before coaching, my career moved through journalism, television, communications, music and entrepreneurship.

Those chapters may look unrelated from the outside. To me, they are all part of the same lifelong fascination: how people think, communicate, create, lead and change. In 2016, I founded S-GNATURE to bring that curiosity into my work with individuals and organisations.

Today I work with exceptional people—leaders, founders, teams and creatives—navigating transition, complex organisations and the very human cost of sustained performance. I am endlessly curious about how the mind makes decisions, why highly capable people override themselves and what helps us hear our own voice again.

I do not believe most people need more generic advice. I believe they need to feel genuinely seen, to have enough honest space to think and, sometimes, to meet the right question at exactly the right moment.

For the minds that keep moving.

The One Day Reset is for all of us: chronic overachievers, dreamers in action, people whose minds keep moving and whose ideas keep flowing. It is for those of us who always want more, who want something to change, who are not entirely sure what we want—or who know exactly what we want but have far too many things on the want list. It is for those moments when, in the middle of all that movement, ambition and genius, we simply need a moment to breathe—and hear our own voice again.

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