

# **THE HANDBOOK**

---

## **A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PATHBLAZING**



---

**NOAH HUISMAN**



**COPYRIGHT 2023 © BY NOAH HUISMAN**

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THIS BOOK OR ANY  
PORTION HEREOF MAY NOT BE  
REPRODUCED OR USED IN ANY MANNER  
WHATSOEVER WITHOUT THE EXPRESS  
WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER  
(EXCEPT FOR THE USE OF BRIEF  
QUOTATIONS IN A BOOK REVIEW).**

**IRON & INK PUBLISHING**

**WWW.NOAHHUISMAN.COM**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION: IN A DARK WOOD.....  | 5  |
| CHAPTER 1: AWARENESS.....          | 9  |
| CHAPTER 2: ACTION.....             | 15 |
| CHAPTER 3: ENDURANCE.....          | 21 |
| CONCLUSION: DEFERRAL IS DEATH..... | 29 |
| APPENDIX A: LIFE WHEEL.....        | 31 |
| APPENDIX B: FEAR SETTING.....      | 33 |
| APPENDIX C: 30-DAY OVERHAUL.....   | 35 |

**“THE OPUS CONSISTS OF THREE PARTS:  
INSIGHT, ENDURANCE, AND ACTION.”  
(CARL JUNG)**



# **INTRODUCTION: IN A DARK WOOD**

**“MIDWAY ALONG THE JOURNEY OF OUR  
LIFE I WOKE TO FIND MYSELF IN A DARK  
WOOD, FOR I HAD WANDERED OFF FROM  
THE STRAIGHT PATH.”  
(DANTE ALIGHIERI)**





## Introduction

---

### In a Dark Wood

There comes a point in each of our lives where the foundation under our feet crumbles, and we free fall. Some call this period a “mid-life crisis.” Others among us more spiritually inclined might refer to it as a “dark night of the soul.” In both cases, what people are referencing is the inevitable point in one’s life where, usually quite suddenly, the entire foundation upon which one’s life has been built feels compromised.

It’s this universal experience that Dante gives poetic expression to when he opens his *Divine Comedy* with the lines: “Midway upon the journey of life I found myself within a dark forest, for the straightforward pathway had been lost.” In Dante’s case, losing his love Beatrice sent him into the abyss. For us, it often arrives in the wake of a breakup, the loss of a job, the surfacing of a new health concern. Sometimes, it’s even self-induced, washing over us after our own self-questioning causes the dam to crack.

We start questioning everything. Nothing is off-limits. Did we *really* choose our careers, or were they picked for us by the desires of our parents? Did we *really* decide the trajectory of our lives, or did societal pressures? If we took away the status labels we worked for, what of us remains?

In the moment, this period of our lives is painful. We are left with nothing of our lives up to that point but debris, forced to sift through the rubble and figure out which stones are still sturdy and worth keeping and which need to be discarded. Stone by stone, we reassemble ourselves.

And the question becomes: will we rise sturdier? Or will we simply re-create the foundation that led to our collapse? Will we revert to old loops or use our destruction as an opportunity to start fresh? Maybe. Just maybe. We might even find the perspective that thanks fate for stripping away the things we could not willingly let go of, remembering Nietzsche's words: "How could you rise anew if you have not first become ashes?" Dante would never have seen Paradise had he not first been willing to walk through Hell.

How hard it is to tell what it was like,  
this wood of wilderness, savage and stubborn  
(the thought of it brings back all my old fears),

a bitter place! Death could scarce be bitterer.  
*But if I would show the good that came of it*  
I must talk about things other than the good.

Whether you are someone who currently feels like Dante in a dark forest, someone who has been there before, or one for whom this experience has yet to come, all of us were sent into this world without a map, and it's up to us to find our way out.

It is a long and painful process, but if we would have the good that comes of it, like Dante's journey, we must go through it.

## **The Map: Awareness, Action, Endurance**

---

If the experience of Dante's dark forest is universal, then so too Jung's recognition that the opus consists of insight, action, and endurance. This Triad offers a map we can return to whenever we feel disoriented—it is seeing (awareness), returning to (action), and staying on (endurance) the path. If Aristotle was right that happiness is "the virtuous activity of the soul" along the way, then insight, action, and endurance allow us to progress down the soul's path and experience true joy.

I believe Jung's Triad is primarily something that ought to be applied to our soul's dream (for the soul's dream is the life's purpose), and I *also* believe it can help in each of our endeavors. Books, business, self-knowledge, relationships. The work of evolving toward our apex and potential becomes a matter of how quickly we can

gather insights, take actions based on those insights, and then apply consistent pressure in the form of endurance to shape lasting change and unlock the power of compounding interest.

It's a process that involves first using psychological examination to find insight and embrace what the dilemma is really about. Then, we must have the courage to live out the remedy in the world. Finally, we must have the strength of will to continue in the face of internal and external opposition. Hence, why the three chapters in this book have the titles they do: Awareness, Action, and Endurance.

Before we dive in, a quick word on the structure and style of this book is needed. At the end of each chapter is an empty page titled "Note." This page is for you. It is my hope and recommendation that you use it for a few purposes: as a home for any thoughts sparked by the material and as a space to answer some of the questions posed throughout the text.

# CHAPTER 1: AWARENESS

**“THE UNEXAMINED LIFE IS NOT  
WORTH LIVING.”  
(SOCRATES)**



## Chapter One

---

### Awareness

One of the benefits of being cast down into the pit is that we find ourselves in the realm of the unconscious, with the opportunity to honestly examine what external pressures have been pulling the strings of our lives. “Until you make the subconscious conscious,” Carl Jung reminds us, “it will direct your life, and you will call it fate.”

In our early years, each of us is set in a stream, taking us in a direction we didn’t choose. We are stamped at birth with the DNA of our ancestors and then programmed on how to operate in the world by (often well-intentioned) parents, preachers, and teachers. Before we’re fully conscious and aware of what is happening, we carry a pre-packaged pattern of being inside us and are put on paths we did not pick for ourselves.

This pattern becomes our default way of operating. It becomes “why” we do what we do or believe what we believe. Some make it their entire lives without genuinely questioning their motivations, sleepwalking through life—staying in jobs and on paths that bring them little joy before arriving at the end with little time left for what they love. Others step out of the stream much sooner, either because a “dark night of the soul” forced them out or because a book, a podcast, or a mentor put them on to how they’re haunted. It’s not a question of *whether* we have been programmed; it’s a question of how quickly we can step off the path we did not pick so we can start going in a direction of our choosing.

It's a process that involves witnessing ourselves and carefully examining our habits and beliefs—taking them apart one by one—and then sourcing those behaviors back to their origin. It's a long excavation of the soul that slowly makes the subconscious conscious and enables us to reclaim agency over our lives. It's a long and painful process that requires letting go of familiar and comfortable things.

But in the end, it is the only life worth living. Because it is the only life that is truly our own. The unexamined life is the inauthentic life. And the inauthentic life is not life; it is envy and imitation, both of which depress our fullest expression and serve as an agent against our flourishing. The unexpressed grows depressed, and the truth of Emerson's words "envy is ignorance," and "imitation is suicide" play out.

It is up to each of us to wage war against the inauthentic lives. The first part of pathfinding for ourselves and putting ourselves back on track, is self-examination. It is looking at our lives and the decisions we've made for ourselves with a microscope—where we're at, who we're with, and how we spend our days—and then making an honest assessment about *why* we've made the decisions we've made. Who had a vote? Parents, significant others, children, bosses, friends, fears, doubts, uncertainty?

---

### Notes Exercise #1: Examining Your Life

---

In the Notes page at the end of this chapter, take some time to write down where you're at (geographically and in life), who's around you, how you spend your days. Then, I want to draw an arrow from each of those leading to your explanation of *why* you've made those decisions. Be honest. Ruthlessly honest. It won't work unless you are. If done correctly, there will be *at least* one thing on that list—job, relationship, enterprise, commitment—that you know in your heart of hearts something other than your soul has selected.

If you have space and time, notice where your inner Resistance is fighting you (or how it's telling you that you can skip this exercise). Watch your thoughts. And if there are limiting beliefs that come up—I don't have the time, talent, or treasure—start to source those also. Maybe it was something a parent, an ex-, or a teacher whose love you craved said. Maybe it was a time the other kids laughed at you and you felt alienated and alone. This exercise is intended to get us to come back to who we really are, and the echoes of those memories carry lies from our past into our future.

Keep only what is truly yours; everything else weighs too much.



## Taking Aim

---

After awareness of where we've been and why we're there comes, our attention must turn to where we're going. "Without a vision," Proverbs tells us, "the people perish." Or as Seneca puts it: "If man knows not to which port he sails, no wind is favorable."

As humans, we are not only something that is and has been; we are also something that is constantly becoming. Heraclitus immortalized our consciousness of this fact in his infamous aphorism that "man never steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he is not the same man." We, like all of nature, are always changing into something.

We don't get to choose whether we are changing; we only get to choose *what* we are changing into. We are always on our way to our future selves. And if we don't have a vision for (or like the vision of) who we are becoming, we get stuck between wishing for the past and fearing the future.

Without a higher vision for our future—without a view that places our becoming over our being in some meaningful respect—our spirit starts to dissolve. That's the sentiment enshrined in Proverbs' declaration that we perish without a vision. That's why it remains essential for us to have an ideal to aim at and ascend toward. We all need a map that outlines the territory and a compass that sends us upward.

To orient our internal compass, we must first identify and develop a view of the ideal we'd like to progress toward. Lucky for us, inheritors of all world literature, our ancestors have left a lot of material for us to work from. When it comes to answering the question of who we might be, we can look to the stories of those we admire and begin to construct a view from the ground up.

We can read lines of Marcus Aurelius like "the best revenge is to not be like them," and decide we believe that's an honorable way to approach the world. We can hear of how Solomon, when given the chance to ask for anything, asked for wisdom instead of riches, and something in us admires that decision. We can be moved by Hercules, his choice to take the hard path of virtue and his braving of the 12 Labors and be moved to take the path of most resistance ourselves.

The list of those we can choose from goes on. For each of us, the people and the attributes will be unique. "Imitate Jesus and Socrates" like Benjamin Franklin. Or strive to embody Sir Lancelot's meek yet bold spirit (as C.S. Lewis advocates for in his essay *On the Necessity of Chivalry*). The people and stories you can choose from are endless. The only requirement is this: you must pick only from people you

admire. The ones that you feel particularly close or drawn to. It cannot be those you feel like you *should* admire; it must be those, when you search your heart of hearts, that you do admire.

As Jordan Peterson writes in *Beyond Order: 12 More Rules for Life*:

An unforgettable story captures the essence of humanity and distills, communicates, and clarifies it, bringing what we are and what should be into focus. It speaks to us, and motivates the attention that inspires us to imitate. We learn to see and act like the heroes of the stories that captivate us. These stories call to capacities that lie deep within our nature but might still never develop without that call. We are dormant adventurers, lovers, leaders, artists, and rebels, but need to discover that we are all those things by seeing the reflections of such patterns in dramatic and literary form. This is part of being a creature that is part nature and part culture. An unforgettable story advances our capacity to understand our behavior, beyond habit and expectation, toward an imaginative and then verbalize understanding.... Question: who are you—or, at least, who could you be? Answer: Part of the eternal force that constantly confronts the terrible unknown, voluntarily; part of the eternal force that transcends naivete and becomes dangerous enough, in a controlled manner, to understand evil and beard it in its lair; and part of the eternal force that faces chaos and turns it into productive order, or that takes order that has become too restrictive, reduces it to chaos, and renders it productive once again.

---

## Notes Exercise #2: Taking Aim

---

In the Notes section at the end of this chapter, take some time to write down what you're aiming. Avoid the temptation to write down only *things* you are trying to accomplish (selling a certain amount of product, getting a certain amount of subscribers, etc.); write down *who* you are aiming to be.

Who are the people and what are the attributes of those people that you wish to embody. What traits would it take for you to become a tool capable of obtaining everything you're after. Identify your heroes—the ones whose stories seem to stick with you. Try to identify *why* their stories stick with you. What is it about their lives that you love and admire? How might you be history's latest avatar?

# NOTES



## **CHAPTER 2: ACTION**

**“MERCHANT MARINERS GET THEIR SAILING  
ORDERS IN THE SAFE HARBOR; MEN-O’-  
WAR OPEN THEIR INSTRUCTIONS ON THE  
HIGH SEAS.”  
(SØREN KIERKEGAARD)**



## Chapter Two

---

### Action

All the awareness in the world won't move the needle forward in our lives. Without action directing our energy to mobilize our insight, our energy dissipates, and nothing changes. Much of what we witness as success is the inevitable result of someone who has trained themselves to reduce the time between when they receive an insight and when they act. Fortune favors the bold because the bold favor action.

It's one of the lessons embedded in the story of Perseus and Medusa: the hero has a bias toward action where others tend to freeze. As told by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* and Apollodorus in *Bibliotheca*, a budding prince, Perseus, is tasked with retrieving the head of Medusa—one of the three Gorgon sisters whose sight (like *Harry Potter's* Basilisk) turned all who gazed upon her to stone. As the embodiment of fear, her powers mimic the freezing effect of anxiety seen in everyday life.

But Perseus was no ordinary man. He was the half-divine son of immortal Zeus and mortal Danae, destined to set an example of how the heroic soul acts in the face of such forces: they default to action and step aggressively forward where others freeze or default to inaction. Heroes, as Jung puts it, are those that step toward the source of fear:

The spirit of evil is fear, negation, the adversary who opposes life in its struggle for eternal duration and thwarts every great deed, who infuses

into the body the poison of weakness and age through the treacherous bite of the serpent; he is the spirit of regression, who threatens us with [] dissolution and extinction... For the hero, fear is a challenge and a task because only boldness can deliver from fear. And if the risk is not taken, the meaning of life is somehow violated, and the whole future is condemned to hopeless staleness...

Hidden in plain sight in Perseus' legend is the lesson that the path to cultivating the divine hero within us is confronting what others—including ourselves—so often avoid. Of course, this applies to the big fears in our lives. The risks we don't take for fear of failure. The art we don't create for fear of rejection. Perseus' story is absolutely one that commands us to face those things in our lives.

But it isn't *just* relevant for the fears we avoid; it also applies to the everyday tasks we put off. The ones that, as they pile up, do just as much to eat away at our essence and steal our potential as the fears that bully us.

So often, when an opportunity, request, or desire arises, our first impulse is to place it in the future. Instead of taking immediate action and doing what we can in this exact moment, we put an obligation somewhere out on our linear timeline—maybe it's tomorrow, perhaps it's ten months from now, or maybe it's ten years. Instead of burdening our present self, we place it on the plate of our future self.

Sometimes, we do this because we overestimate the pain or time the task will involve; other times, we simply default to deferral out of habit. Somewhere there also in the mix is typically the self-deception that we don't have all the necessary information to take immediate action—a lie we tell ourselves simply because we've trained ourselves to favor information over action.

It might seem harmless at first. Until we quickly find that our future is filled with these deferred obligations and the mirror of our destiny reflects nothing but a life of playing catch-up until the curtains close. Suddenly, the future looks like somewhere we'd rather not arrive. Each task earmarked for later takes up mental space and weighs us down. Like ghouls shuffling and scratching at the walls of our skulls, they haunt us every second they live as something yet to be addressed, stealing little slices of our life force each time we recall their presence.

But this is where it pays to remember Perseus. How heroes have a bias for action. How our highest self was meant to move and create before fear trained us to overthink everything. How the soul grows diseased in stagnation and yearns for us to operate with an action bias. In his book *Time Warrior*, Steven Chandler describes this action-oriented way of being as “non-linear time management”:

Non-linear time management is a commitment to action in the present moment...

The old-fashioned time management programs had a huge, burdensome focus on the future. The line of tasks stretched out forever into the future. It was fear-based and it was overwhelming to have so much of a future to carry around with you. It resulted in massive, pathological procrastination. Everything got put off in the name of perfectionism...

But when I teach people to go non-linear, a strange thing happens. New life and energy come in. When they open their emails they don't get to save them for later. They have to deal with them if they open them. Like little attackers in a computer game, there is no longer anywhere to hide. Life becomes a great game and everything is handled right now on the spot.

All fear comes from picturing the future. Putting things off increases that fear. Soon we are nothing but heavy minds weighing down on weary brains. Too much future will do that.

Only a warrior's approach will solve this. A warrior takes his sword to the future. A warrior also takes his sword to all circumstances that don't allow him to fully focus...

Most people think too much. Then they compound that problem by studying the feelings that come up for them as a result of that thinking. All this time that they spend thinking and feeling they could have been taking action.

To break the cycle of valuing information over action, we must remind ourselves that it isn't information we lack; it's experience. *The time to act is always now.* That's what the hero knows and one of the things that the story of Perseus has to teach us.

If we want to become who we're capable of becoming, we must develop a bias toward action that favors transmutation over the disintegrating holding pattern of always waiting for enough information. That's how you separate yourself from the masses and close the gap between your being and your potential.

Start taking whatever action you can immediately—no matter how small—as to-dos arrive. Watch as your vitality returns and your energy flows freely.

---

### Notes Exercise #3: Taking Action

---

With the Notes page at the end of this chapter, I want you to think about a dream you have for your life. Maybe it's starting a business or a podcast, publishing a book, or building a pyramid. Whatever it is, write it down. Then write down any small actions you can think of that might get momentum moving in the direction of that dream's realization. It could be as small an action as googling: "how to write a book" or filing a certificate of formation with the Secretary of State to start your business. The idea is to remove the tendency we have to paralyze ourselves into action by convincing ourselves we don't know where to start. With the internet, not knowing where to *start* is no longer an excuse we can believe.

---



# NOTES



## **CHAPTER 3: ENDURANCE**

**“THE ESSENTIAL THING ‘IN HEAVEN AND EARTH’ IS THAT THERE SHOULD BE LONG OBEDIENCE IN THE SAME DIRECTION; THERE THEREBY RESULTS, AND HAS ALWAYS RESULTED IN THE LONG RUN, SOMETHING WHICH HAS MADE LIFE WORTH LIVING.”  
(FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE)**



## Chapter Three

---

### Endurance

After awareness and action, there is an essential ingredient that often goes neglected, especially in today's world of instant gratification. Without it, nothing great can come to maturity. Without it, no acorn can ever become an oak. With it, however improbable in our singular attempts, success becomes statistically inevitable over the long term. That ingredient—that secret sauce and golden key—is endurance.

It is a sort of active patience—the compounding of immediate action and an eternal timeline.

The Greek origin of the word patience tells us everything we need to know. The Greek word for patience—*hupomonē*—is the combination of *hupo-* meaning under and *-meno* meaning to stay or remain. When put together, the word means something like endurance or to stay under [tension]. It is an active service and submission to something higher across time. It is, put differently, a commitment to long obedience.

“The essential thing ‘in heaven and in earth’” writes Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, is that “there should be long obedience in the same direction, there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living...” It is long obedience to a craft, a mission, an endeavor, that sees the benefits of compound interest that come only after years of consistent effort.

It requires us to live out the two words Epictetus thought we should commit to memory: persist and resist. It requires a type of endurance rarely found in today's world: a willingness to show up every day for decades and reaffirm a commitment

to a craft without any promise of when (if ever) results will come. It requires a steadfast resistance to the countless temptations and distractions of the day that try to pull us from our work. It requires a time under tension that most can't bear.

In C.S. Lewis's classic *The Screwtape Letters*, the senior demon Screwtape explains to his mentee (the junior demon Wormwood) why persevering is so hard for humans:

You see, it is so hard for these creatures to persevere. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair (hardly felt as pain) of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives and the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it—all this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition.

In an on-demand age of cheap dopamine, this struggle to stay true to our commitments seems to be getting harder for humans. Anybody who has attempted something that requires sustained efforts—whether writing books or blog posts, building a brand or a business, training for an event, or even maintaining a marriage—has felt the pressures of the force that opposes our dedication to the path. It's part of the force that Steven Pressfield (in the *War of Art* and *Put Your Ass Where Your Heart Wants to Be*) refers to as Resistance:

What is Resistance? It's our own tendency—yours and mine and everyone's—to yield to procrastination, self-doubt, fear, impatience, self-inflation, self-denigration, distraction, laziness, arrogance, complacency, and perfectionism. *It's our inability to focus, our incapacity to press on through adversity.* It's our terror of finishing and exposing our work to the judgment of the marketplace. It's fear of failure. It's fear of success. Fear of humiliation. Fear of destitution. *It's our inability to defer gratification, to acquire and act with self-discipline, self-validation, and self-reinforcement.* Resistance is our tendency to self-sabotage, fail to start, and fail to finish.

Resistance is the opposing force that wants us to run before we're done and forego all the fruits that don't fall until the end. But something else in us—something higher—wants us to stay until the good part. It is the voice of the higher angels of evolution that wants us to abide. The spirit of the ideal that John and the Gospels identify as Christ:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch is not able to bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you *are* the branches. The *one* abiding in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit.

Only the branch which abides bears fruit. Only the seed that remains grows strong. The Stoics also use the metaphor to advocate on behalf of patient persistence: We are, as Epictetus writes, like “the seed buried for a season, hidden, growing gradually so it may come to full maturity. But if the grain sprouts before the stalk is fully developed, it will never ripen...”

We see the wisdom and benefits of staying the course illustrated in the hockey-stick graph and captured in various clichés about the benefits of compounded effort (and interest) that we’ve all seen and heard (see below).

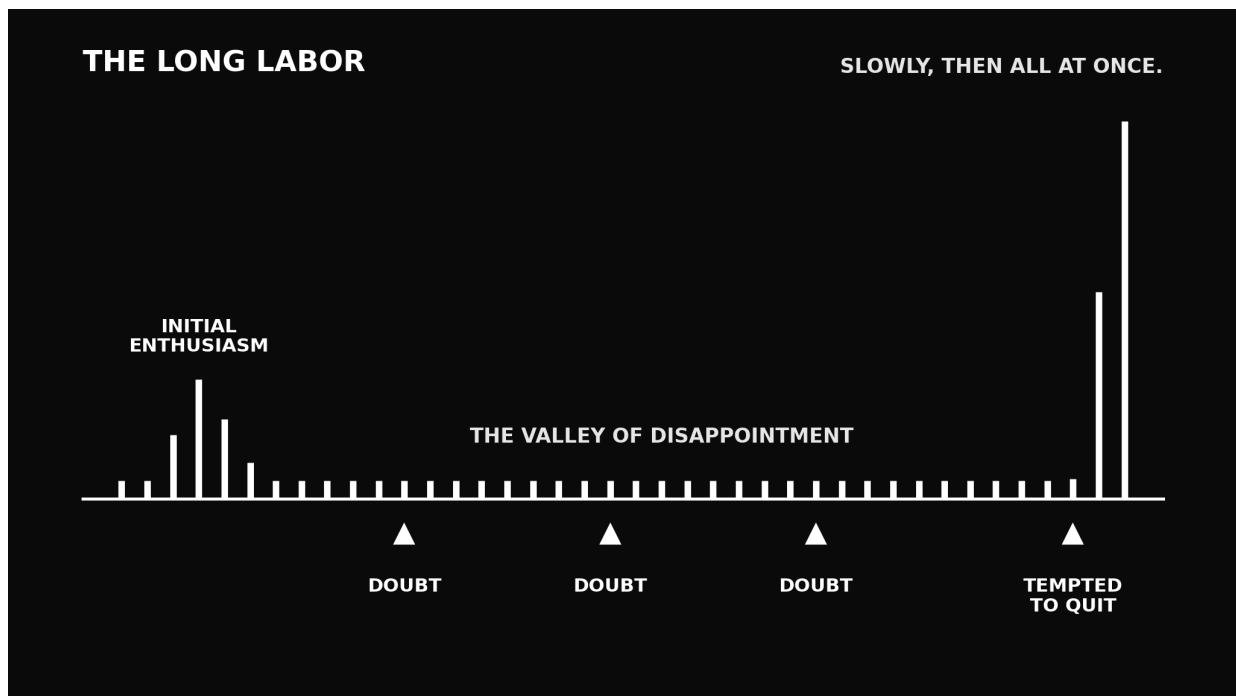


Figure: The Long Labor

Remember this graph the next time you’re tempted to quit. Remember Aristotle’s words: “Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.” Remember: the best comes at the tail end of a long labor.

---

## Notes Exercise #4: Applying Endurance

---

With the Notes page at the end of this chapter, I want you to think about where in your life you need to apply endurance. It is often the case that we can get stuck in the loop of the insight and action phases of our endeavors. Because those are the fun stages. We get the quick hits of dopamine and feel like we're making progress and then abandon the projects when the slow and monotonous days set in. In this next season of life, where do you need to endure? Where do you need to abide?

---

## Expect Setbacks

---

Another universal truth of every endeavor is that there will be setbacks. Each work will have its unique obstacles to overcome, but one thing you can be sure awaits you just over the horizon is the Valley of Disappointment.

This is the part of every endeavor where our initial burst of energy and enthusiasm has worn off, and the brutal reality that the road ahead is much longer than we anticipated finally sets in. This is the valley of doubt where many a dream goes to die.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape counsels Wormwood to hit hard during this trough:

Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman. *The Enemy allows this disappointment to occur on the threshold of every human endeavour.* It occurs when the boy who has been enchanted in the nursery by *Stories from the Odyssey* buckles down to really learning Greek. It occurs when lovers have got married and begin the real task of learning to live together. *In every department of life it marks the transition from dreaming aspiration to laborious doing.*

In *Atomic Habits*, James Clear refers to this period as the Valley of Disappointment. Slogging through its swamps at a slower-than-desired pace, doubt waxes, and willpower wanes. Eventually, the wanderer is so worn down that they give up, adding another set of bones to this graveyard of abandoned dreams.

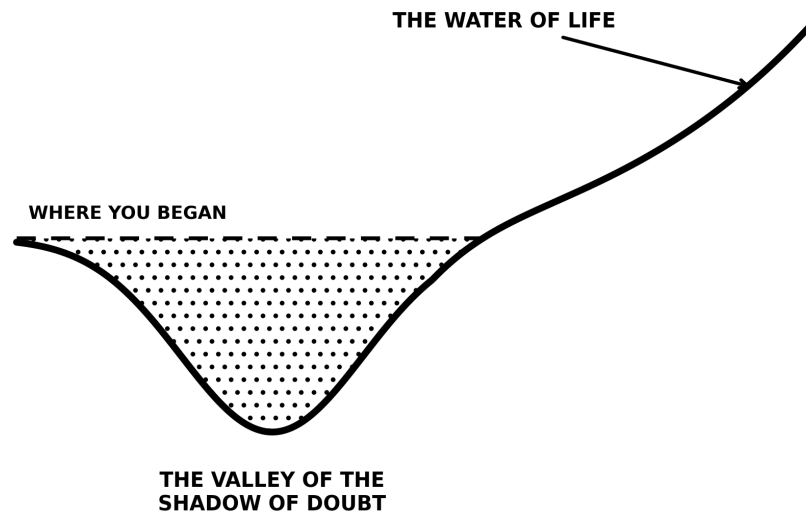


Figure: The Valley of the Shadow of Doubt

Understanding this is a feature of every endeavor can help us put our doubts in their proper context and encourage us to keep going, trusting in endurance's promise, because we know that, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of doubt, what awaits if we keep going is the water of life.

Beyond the Valley of Disappointment, there will be an untold number of additional setbacks. For those, there are a few tools in the Stoic kit to keep close: the Dichotomy of Control, what I call the Alchemical Touch, and the Love of Fate.

We start with the Dichotomy of Control outlined by Epictetus, which tells us that the chief task in life is to distinguish the things in our control from those outside, diverting all our energy toward what's in our control while letting go of the rest. When problems arise, this helps focus us on the parts of the problem that we can influence and prevent us from wasting precious energy on the things we can't change.

After deploying the Dichotomy of Control, we move to the Alchemical Touch—the “wand of Hermes [which] promises that ‘whatever you touch will turn to gold’...”bring what challenges you please and I will turn it to good account: bring

illness, death, poverty, slander, a judgment of death; they will all be converted to advantage by my wand of Hermes.” The Alchemical Touch is a stance toward life that sees external misfortune as an opportunity. It teaches us to train our focus on the collateral beauty of every situation rather than the collateral damage. It directs our imagination immediately to how this setback might be a setup in disguise. How we, with God’s help, might turn “what the enemy intended for evil for good.”

It is Jocko Willink saying “Good” when things go sideways to remind himself that when things go bad, there’s some good that can come from it (if you look for it): “Didn’t get promoted. Good. More time to get better. Didn’t get funded? Good. We own more of the company...Got injured? Good. Needed a break from training.”

Finally, we move to the Love of Fate.

It is to trust the work and forget the outcome. Focus on virtue and let come what may. The essential ingredient for human greatness, Nietzsche wrote, is that “one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backwards, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it.... but love it.”

When Thomas Edison, seeing everything he’d given his life to go up in flames, responded to his child with the words, “It’s alright, we’ve just got rid of a lot of rubbish,” he combined all three of these Stoic weapons—years of Edison’s relentless work, reduced to ash in an instant by the flames of fate. He would have been forgiven for reacting how many of us in his situation undoubtedly would have—with despair and desperation. Yet Edison did not weep. He did not lash out or shake his fist at fate. He focused on what he could control and got to work, telling a reporter the next day that he wasn’t too old to make a fresh start.

It was a move that would have made Marcus and the Stoics proud. If decrying your situation will not change it, you might as well accept it and get to work. If the event must occur, Edison’s response—*amor fati*—is the *only* productive response because it places the focus, in accordance with the dictum of the dichotomy of control, on what is in one’s control—what is yet to come.

The only control we have over our ability to accept the things that have not yet happened is to structure our lives so that fate finds us ready, because we have done what is within us to prepare for whatever future comes our way. We can rest without worry for the future, knowing that we have done what we can, so come what may, we will be ready.

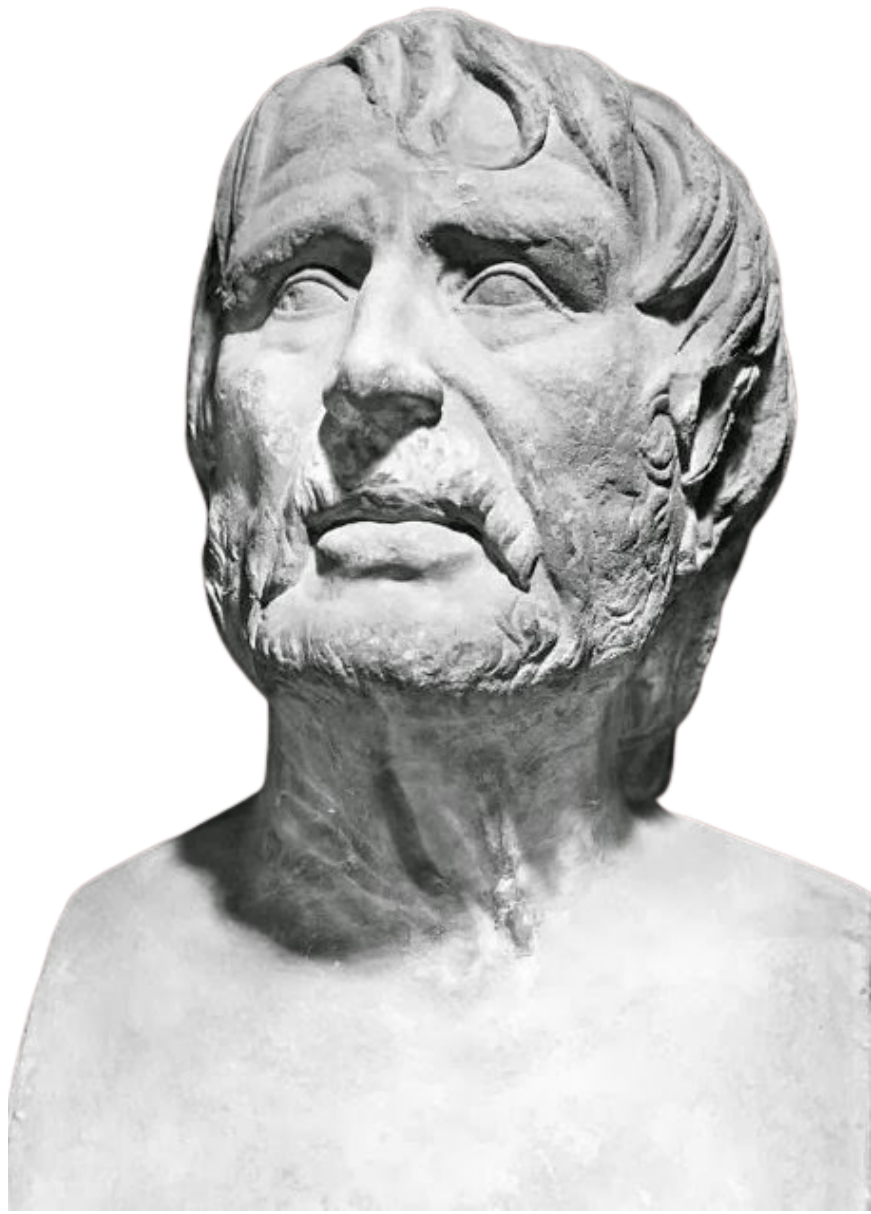


# NOTES



# CONCLUSION

**“WHILE WE WAIT FOR LIFE, LIFE PASSES.”  
(SENECA)**



## Conclusion

---

### Deferral is Death

There you have it. The tools that helped me transform my life from someone on the fast lane to hating my life to someone genuinely excited about the things I get to work on each day and the future I'm working toward. I offer them to you, hoping they might help you do the same.

Before we part, I want to light a flame inside you. When reading or consuming anything, the temptation is to move quickly to the next thing without ever digesting or implementing anything. It is the problem we talked about in Chapter 2—it is the insight without action that leaves us in a rinse-and-repeat cycle of the same problems and stuck with the regret of unlived dreams.

But you must ask yourself: When will the life you long for build itself? If not now, when?

It is an unfortunate human tendency to waste the present by putting off what we should do now. We all tend toward “the fool” who “with all his other faults,” writes Seneca, “has this also, he is always getting ready to live.”

We tell ourselves that life is something to be lived *someday*. Just not today. No, today is reserved for continuing to preserve the status quo. Staying in jobs or relationships we dislike. Stuck in infinite scroll mode on our Netflix and our phones. Doing anything we can to distract ourselves from the fact that our heart is growing sick and our spirit restless. All because we defer our dreams one day at a time, only to find

that there's forever in tomorrow. And that "while we are postponing, life speeds by." Those who live for tomorrow never get there.

There's forever in tomorrow, and someday is a disease that takes our dreams with us to the grave.

If there's one thing I hope you get out of this workbook, it is to take your "one days" and make them your todays. Start pouring into your passions and letting the power of compound interest do its thing. Swap what you do for money for what you want to do forever. Make time your ally and the future your friend.

Ask yourself, from time to time, what hopes and dreams have you been deferring? What have you been telling yourself that you will work on one day? How sick is that making your soul? How long before your sick soul metastasizes into a sick body? When will you start feeding your dreams? If not now, when? How long can you afford to keep putting it off? When will your dreams start building themselves?

I'll leave with the words of Epictetus:

How long are you going to wait before you demand the best for yourself?... If you are careless and lazy now and keep putting things off and always deferring the day after which you will attend to yourself, you will not notice that you are making no progress, but you will live and die as someone quite ordinary. From now on, then, resolve to live as a grown-up who is making progress, and make whatever you think best a law that you never set aside. And whenever you encounter anything that is difficult or pleasurable, or highly or lowly regarded, remember that the contest is now: you are at the Olympic Games, you cannot wait any longer, and that your progress is wrecked or preserved by a single day and a single event. That is how Socrates fulfilled himself by attending to nothing except reason in everything he encountered. And you, although you are not yet a Socrates, should live as someone who at least wants to be a Socrates.

A circular life balance scale template. The circle is divided into eight equal segments by radial lines. The segments are labeled as follows, starting from the top and moving clockwise: PERSONAL GROWTH & LEARNING, SPIRITUAL, BUSINESS & CAREER, FINANCES, HEALTH & FITNESS, FUN & RECREATION, RELATIONSHIP, and FRIENDS & FAMILY. The center of the circle is a small black dot. Concentric circles are drawn around the center, creating rings. The rings are numbered 1 through 10, starting from the center (1) and moving outwards to the outermost ring (10). The numbers are placed at the intersections of the radial lines and the concentric circles.

# NOTES



# APPENDIX B: FEAR SETTING

## STEP 1: DEFINE A FEAR, HOW TO PREVENT IT, AND HOW TO SURVIVE IT

| DEFINE                                                 | PREVENT                                                                                      | REPAIR                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU TAKE ACTION? | WHAT SPECIFIC ACTIONS COULD YOU TAKE TO REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF THESE SITUATIONS HAPPENING? | IF THIS SITUATION DOES HAPPEN, WHAT WOULD YOU NEED TO DO TO GET BACK TO WHERE YOU ARE? (OR GET BACK ON THE "RIGHT TRACK"?) |
| GET SPECIFIC.                                          |                                                                                              |                                                                                                                            |
| DEFINE YOUR WORST NIGHTMARES.                          | CONSIDER BIG AND SMALL ACTIONS                                                               |                                                                                                                            |
| RATE 1-10 FOR IMPACT.                                  |                                                                                              |                                                                                                                            |

## STEP 2: OUTLINE THE BENEFITS OF ADDRESSING

|                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| WHAT MIGHT BE THE BENEFITS OF AN ATTEMPT, OR A PARTIAL SUCCESS? |
| -                                                               |
| -                                                               |
| -                                                               |

## STEP 3: OUTLINE THE COSTS OF AVOIDING

| WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF INACTION?<br>(EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, FINANCIAL, ETC.) |        |         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| 6 MONTHS                                                                  | 1 YEAR | 3 YEARS |
| -                                                                         | -      | -       |
| -                                                                         | -      | -       |
| -                                                                         | -      | -       |
| -                                                                         | -      | -       |

# NOTES





# **APPENDIX C: 30-DAY OVERHAUL**

- DAY 1 - WRITE YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT**
- DAY 2 - GO FIRST (SAY HI OR SMILE AT A STRANGER FIRST)**
- DAY 3 - MAKE A MEAL YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO TRY**
- DAY 4 - HAND WRITE A LETTER TO A LOVED ONE**
- DAY 5 - GO FOR A 30-MINUTE WALK WITH NO PHONE**
- DAY 6 - CREATE A BUDGET**
- DAY 7 - FILL A BAG WITH UNUSED CLOTHES AND DONATE IT**
- DAY 8 - DO ONE THING YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING / DEFERRING**
- DAY 9 - START A JOURNAL (OR BUY ONE IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE)**
- DAY 10 - WRITE OUT THREE THINGS YOU'RE GRATEFUL FOR**
- DAY 11 - INVITE A FRIEND OVER FOR DINNER**
- DAY 12 - REACH OUT TO AN OLD FRIEND**
- DAY 13 - TELL 5 PEOPLE YOU LOVE THEM**
- DAY 14 - WRITE YOUR EULOGY (CONSIDER DEATH)**
- DAY 15 - WRITE YOUR ANSWER TO: WHY WERE YOU PUT HERE?**
- DAY 16 - TRY A FOOD YOU'VE NEVER TRIED**
- DAY 17 - SIGN UP FOR A FITNESS CLASS YOU'VE NEVER DONE**
- DAY 18 - GO TO A MOVIE BY YOURSELF**
- DAY 19 - IGNORE ALL EMAILS FOR AN ENTIRE WORKDAY**
- DAY 20 - WRITE OUT YOUR IDEAL DAY, WEEK, AND YEAR**
- DAY 21 - COMPLETE THE LIFE WHEEL ON APPENDIX A**
- DAY 22 - PICK A MEDITATION VIDEO ON YOUTUBE AND TRY IT**
- DAY 23 - DO A 24-HOUR FAST**
- DAY 24 - PICK A BREATHWORK VIDEO ON YOUTUBE AND TRY IT**
- DAY 25 - TRY AN ICE BATH OR FIND YOUR NEAREST SAUNA**
- DAY 26 - GET YOUR BLOODWORK DONE**
- DAY 27 - SERVE A MEAL AT A HOMELESS SHELTER**
- DAY 28 - PLAY THE SPORT YOU LOVED AS A KID (OR A NEW ONE)**
- DAY 29 - PICK A FEAR AND DO THE EXERCISE ON APPENDIX B**
- DAY 30 - CREATE AN OUTLINE FOR A BOOK**
- DAY 31 (BONUS) - CREATE YOUR OWN LIST OF 30 MORE THINGS TO DO THAT MIGHT IMPROVE YOUR LIFE**