



The Power of Mindful Productivity

The neuroscience behind tiny experiments.

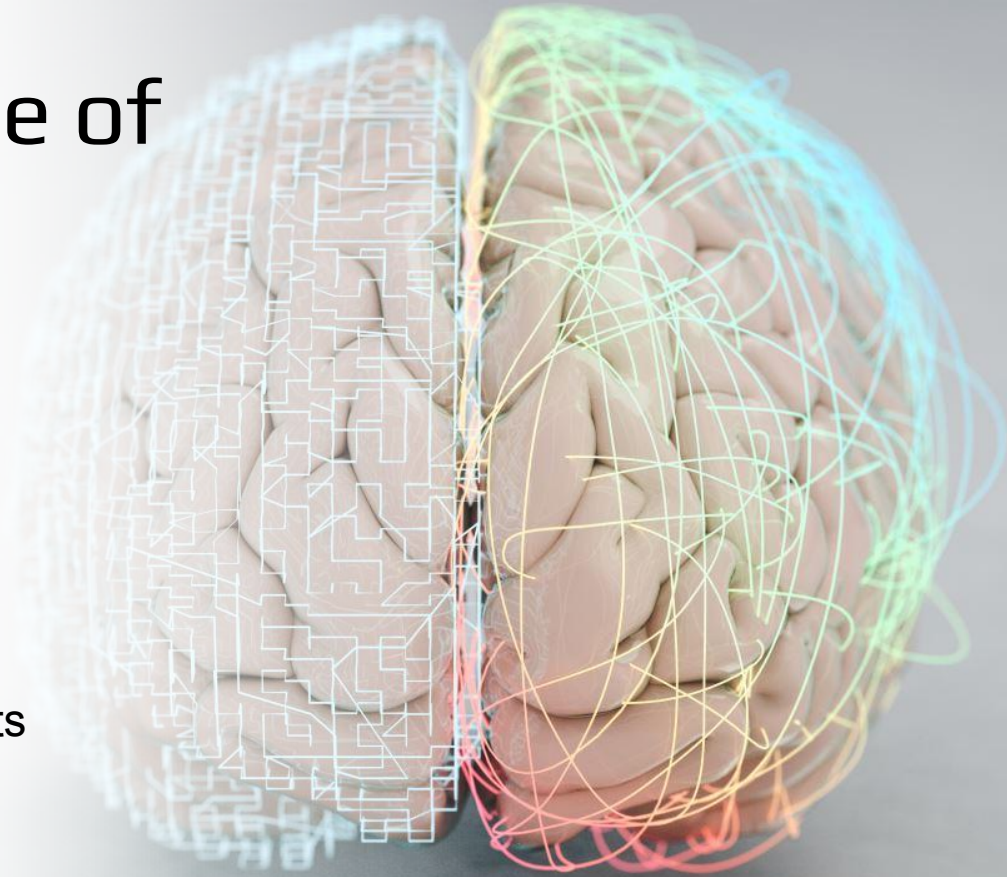


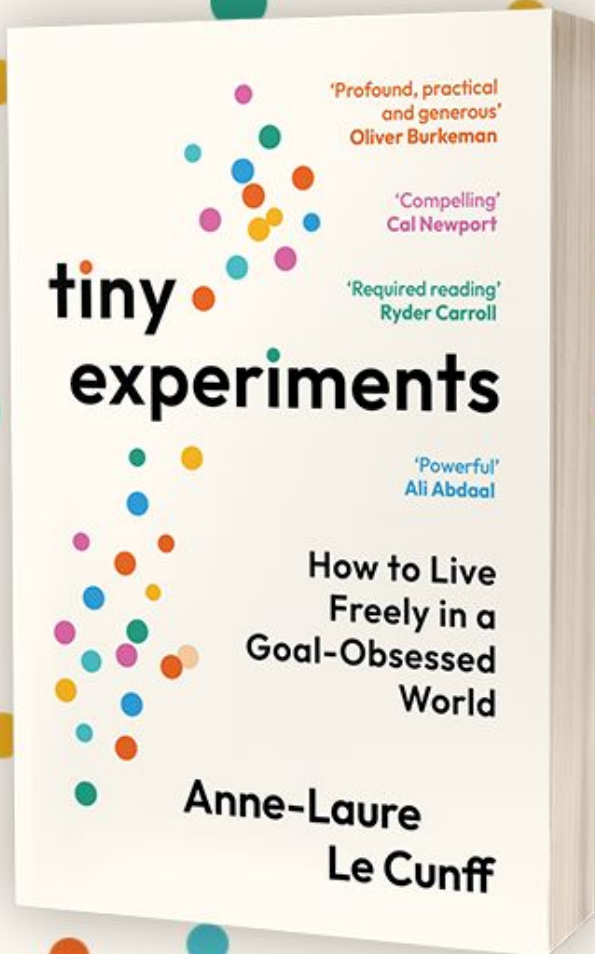
Christine McCormick, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent Educational Services
Nevada County Superintendent of Schools
christinemccormick@nevco.org

<https://bit.ly/3OyVx9M>

Neuroscience of Learning

- Curiosity activates rewards centers in the brain
- Iterative learning builds resilience
- ADHD research supports flexible adaptive environments
- Mindful productivity enhances focus and well-being





**'A new compelling take
on a timeless concern'**

CAL NEWPORT

**'I loved this profound,
practical and generous book'**

OLIVER BURKEMAN

**'A powerful guide to embracing
curiosity and developing
an experimental mindset'**

ALI ABDAAL



Rethinking Goal Setting

The trap of linear goals



5 Strategies for Goal Achievement



SMART GOAL SETTING Example: Getting Fitter this year

S	Specific	You know what to do	Go jogging
M	Measurable	You know if you are doing it	Go jogging each day
A	Achievable	You can do it	Go jogging 15 min weekdays, and 30 min weekends
R	Relevant	It matters to you	Jogging is recommended as part of wellness which is important to me
T	Time-bound & Timely	You know when to do it It's the right time	I will do it every day in January. It's a good time because I want to set a SMART goal instead of a New Year's



Hidden costs of linear goal setting



Constant fear of failure
and judgment



A fixed mindset that
limits learning
opportunities

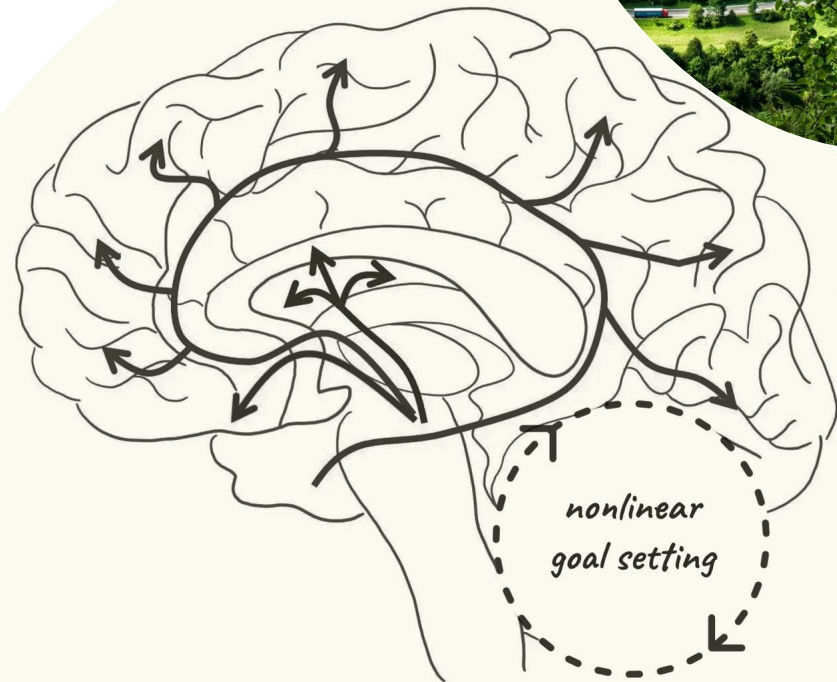


Toxic positivity that
pressures us to always
present as successful



Unhealthy competition
that isolates us from
potential collaborators

Nature
Hates
Straight
Lines





Alternatives to Linear goals

- **Themed Time Blocks:** Instead of a strict goal to "finish a book," try a theme of "creative exploration month".
- **Process-Based Habits:** Focus on daily actions (e.g., "write 200 words") rather than the final result ("finish the manuscript").
- **Experiment Logs:** Maintain a journal of what you are testing, what you learned, and how you will pivot, treating your career or life as a laboratory.

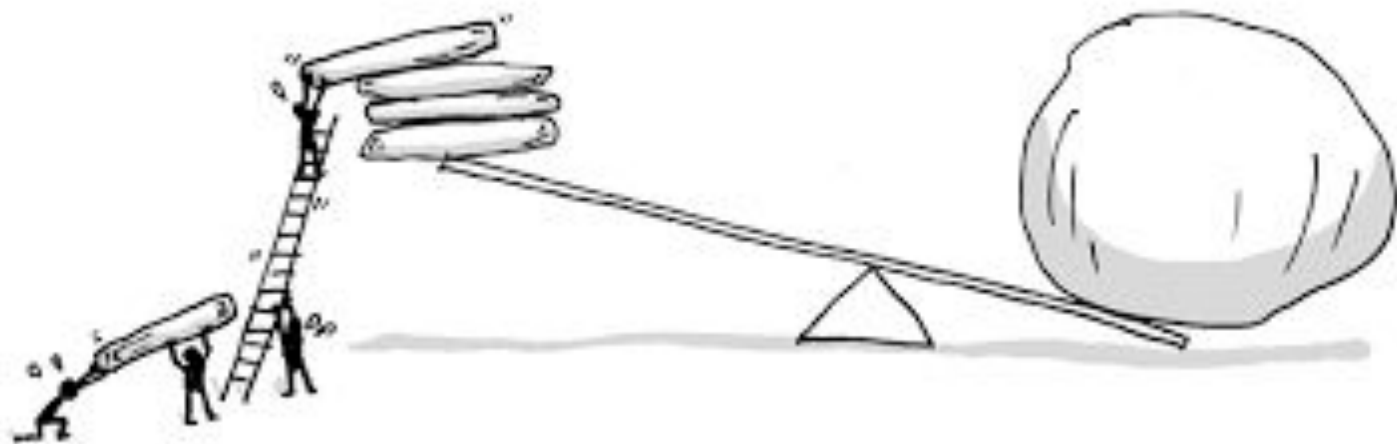
Where to start

How to implement a circular model of growth focused on curiosity and learning rather than binary success or failure?



How do you currently manage your time? Reflect on how shifting from a focus on efficiency to a focus on the quality of your experiences might impact your daily life?





Consider the Goal of the Goal

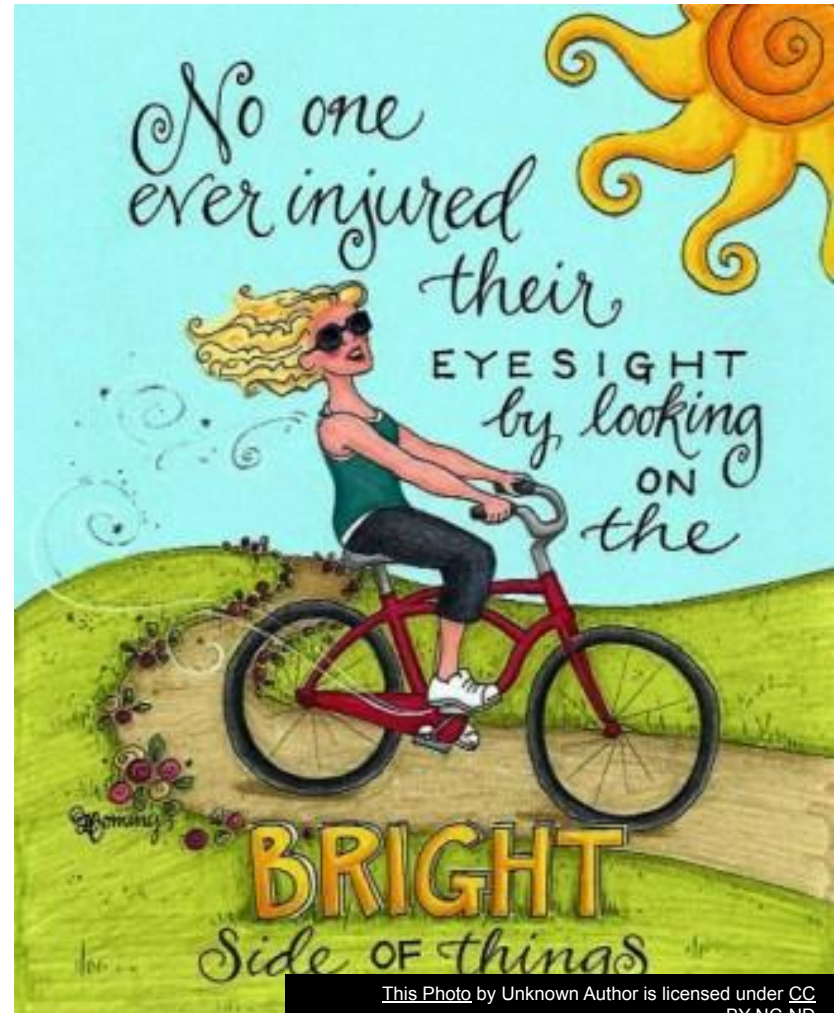
Ask yourself the “Miracle
Question”

“A miracle happened overnight
that fixed a critical challenge.
What are the first things you
notice, after you wake up, that
reveal that the miracle
happened?”



Study Your Bright Spots

- In your life
- On your team
- Among departments in one organization
- Across different organizations doing similar work



Being Intentional



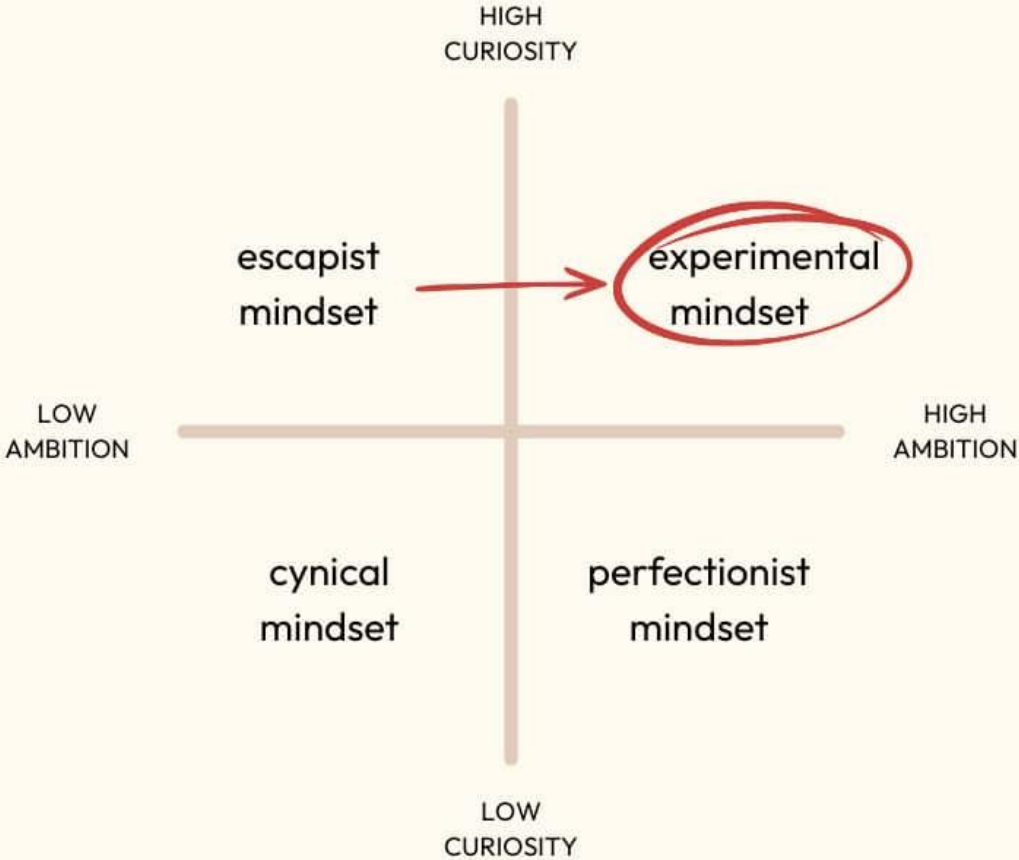
INTENTIONALITY > WILLPOWER



GOALS ALIGNED WITH
VALUES



"INTENTION STACK"





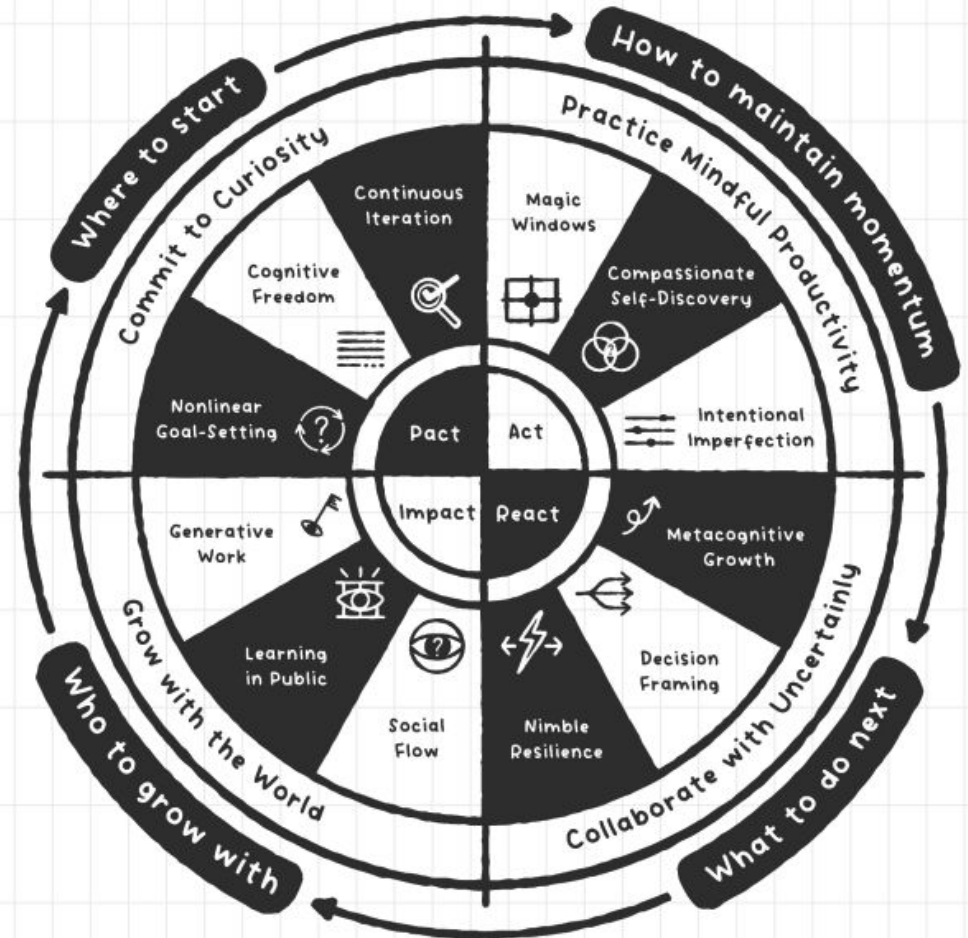
Are we limiting our creativity and productivity?



How do you
create room
for curiosity,
wondering
and
exploration?



Experimentalist Toolkit



PACT: Commit to Curiosity



ADOPT AND
EXPERIMENTAL MINDSET
WITH *THREE MENTAL
SHIFTS*



CHALLENGE COGNITIVE
SCRIPTS WITH *FIELD
NOTES*



DESIGN SMALL
ITERATIVE EXPERIMENTS
WITH *PACT*

Escape the Tyranny of Purpose

Break the shackles of cognitive scripts

The Sequel script: When we follow our past

Are you following your past or discovering your *path*?

The Crowdpleaser script: When we follow the crowd

Are you following the crowd or discovering your *tribe*?

The Epic script: When we follow our passion

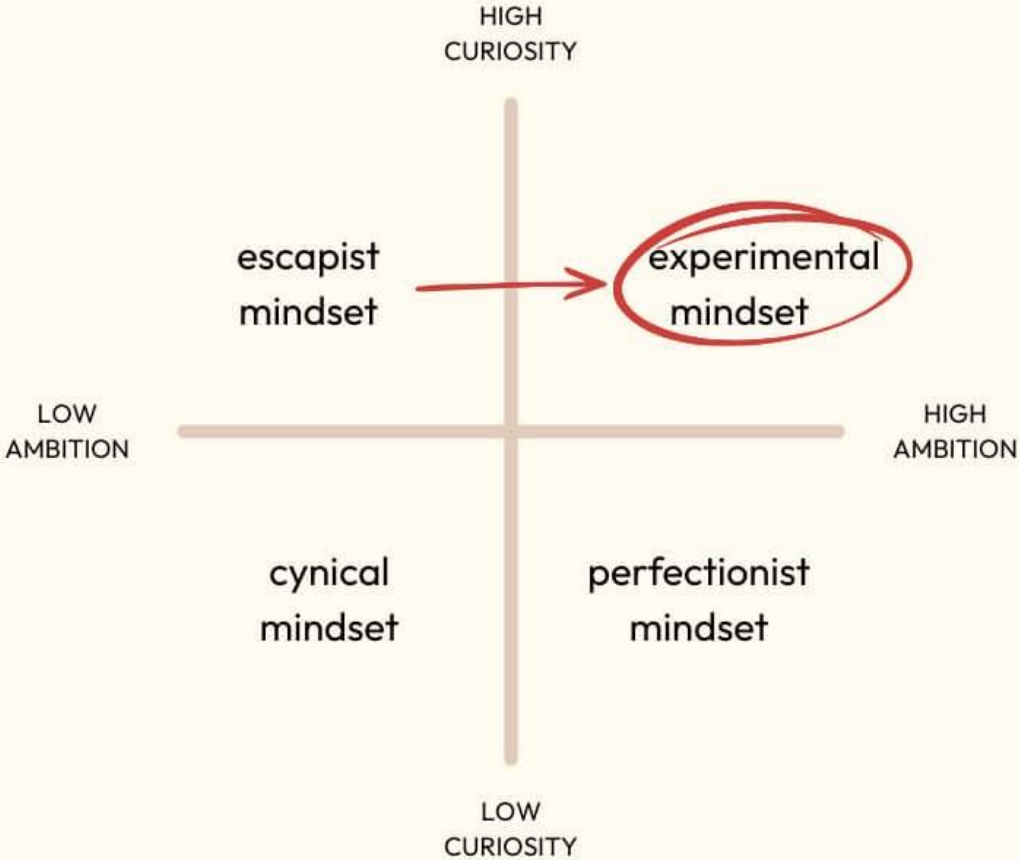
Are you following your passion or discovering your *curiosity*?



What is a tiny experiment

A "tiny experiment" is a small-scale, time-bound commitment designed to test a hypothesis about your life. Unlike goals, which focus on **outcomes** you can't always control, experiments focus on the **process**.





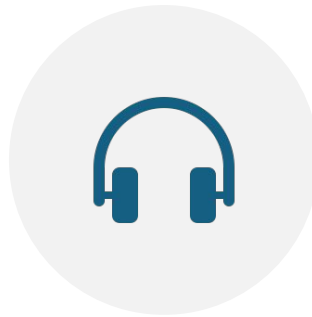
Recall a recent source of doubt or fear or question. How could you turn this into a small iterative experiment to learn and grow rather than a barrier?



ACT: Practice Mindful Productivity



OPEN MAGIC
WINDOWS WITH
KAIROS RITUAL



LISTEN TO
PROCRASTINATION
WITH *TRIPLE CHECK*



LEVERAGE
IMPERFECTION WITH
AMBITION DIALS

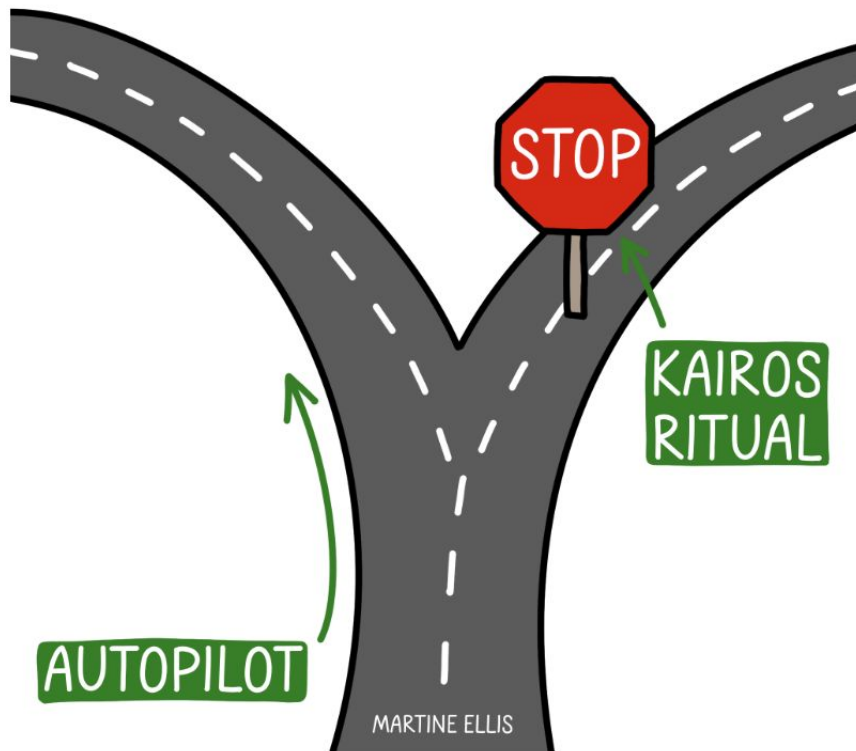
Kairos Rituals

Magic Windows: Deepening sense of time

“Kairos moments”- those periods of creative flow that often occur when we are immersed in activities that capture our full attention.

Kairos captures what the traditional views of productivity ignore – that the value of time depends on the situation.

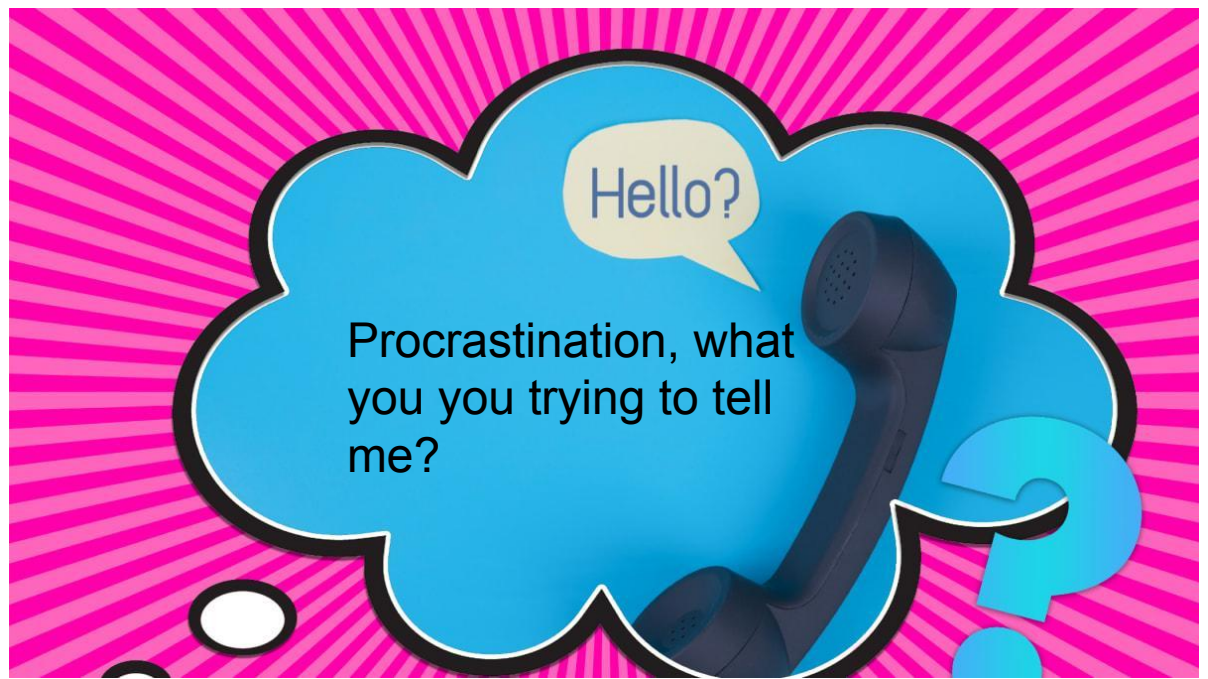
Mindful productivity is centered around managing your physical, cognitive, and emotional resources – those ingredients give rise to “Kairos” moments.



Domain	Principle	Practice
Physical	Energy: Align tasks with natural rhythms	Energy syncing
Cognitive	Executive function: Avoid multitasking	Sequential focus
Emotional	Emotions: Adapt stress response	Conscious movement

Design your own Kairos Ritual

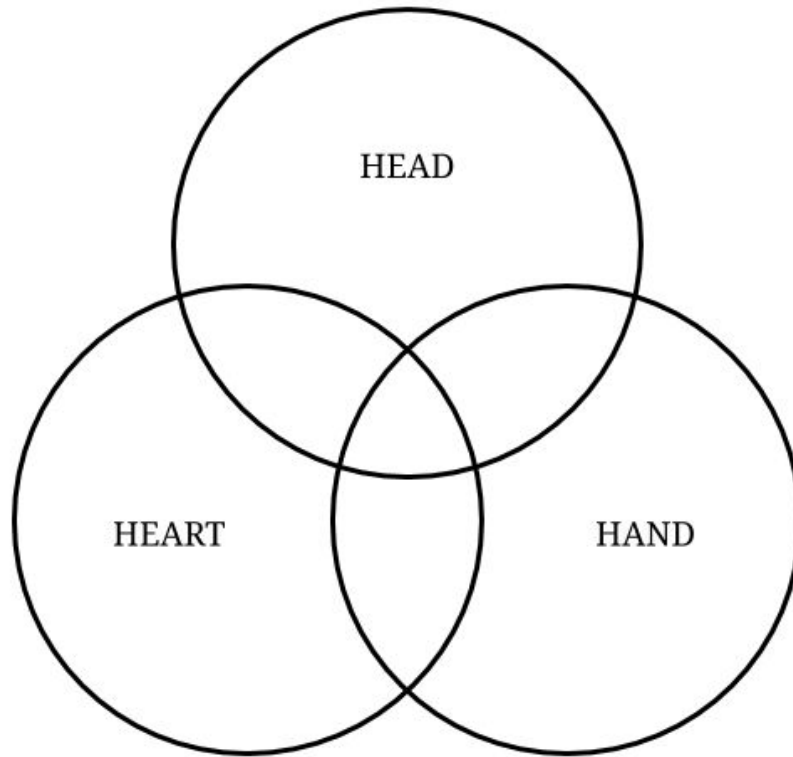
What is a simple action that can quickly shift your mood, such as music, a scent, reconnecting with your body with stretching or breathing, or a simple check in with yourself by making a handwritten list of your intentions for the rest of your workday.



Triple Check

Compassionate Self-discovery: Listening to procrastination

What is your procrastination telling you?



- **Head:** “Is this task really important to me and relevant to my goal?”
- **Heart:** “Do I enjoy this task?”
- **Hand:** “Am I good at this task?”

Head	Heart	Hand	Strategy
✓	✗	✓	Reframe the task to make it more enjoyable
✗	✓	✓	Find new incentives to convince yourself
✓	✓	✗	Get coaching, training or help from someone

Applying a strategy

Being Intentional



INTENTIONALITY > WILLPOWER

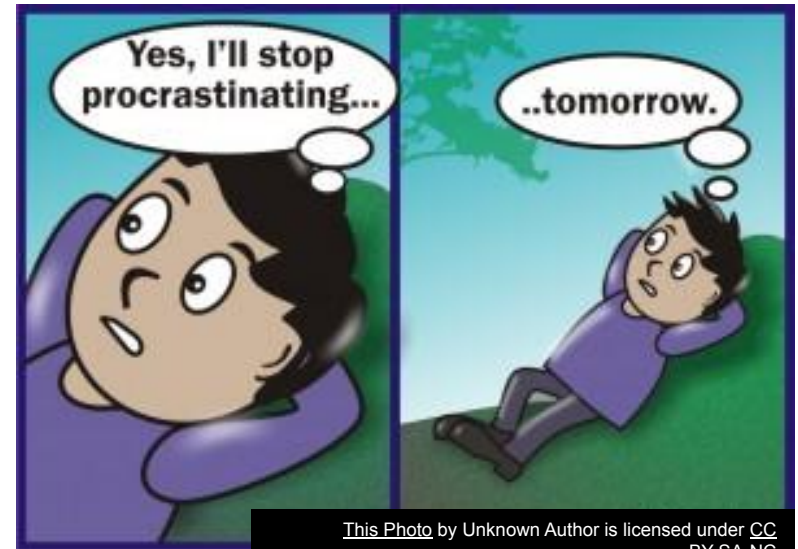


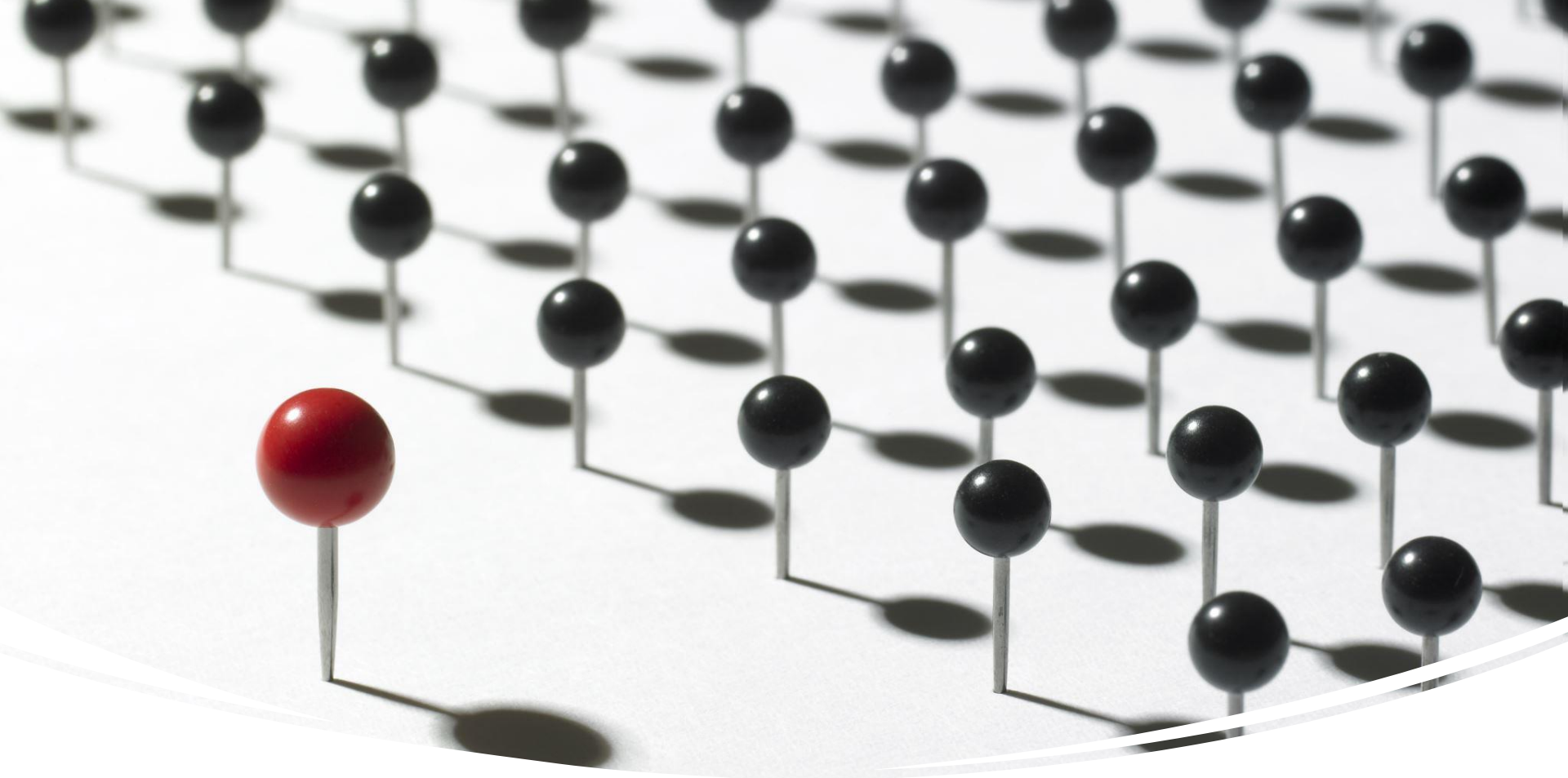
GOALS ALIGNED WITH
VALUES



"INTENTION STACK"

Consider a recent instance of procrastination. What might you have been signaling, and how could you address the underlying issue constructively?





Ambition Dials

Intentional Imperfection: Practicing strategic mediocrity

1. Identify perfectionist patterns
2. Challenge your unrealistic targets
3. Choose progress over perfection

Identify an area in your life where perfectionism holds you back. How could embracing intentional imperfection help you move forward while still being satisfied with your work?



The Personal Experiments Cycle

Observation

What is the current situation?

01

02

Hypothesis

What could be different?

Data Collection

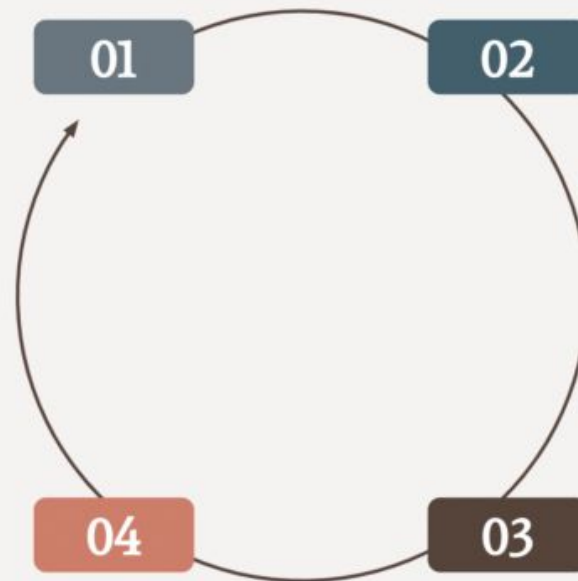
How will I test this hypothesis?

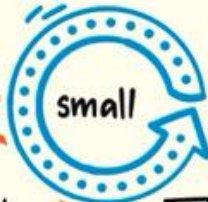
03

Data Analysis

What are the results of the experiment?

04

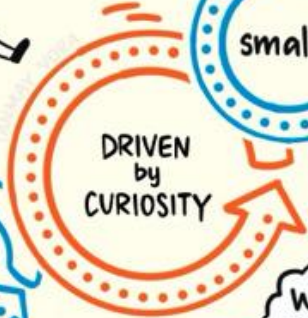




TINY EXPERIMENTS



ANNE-LAURE LE CUNFF

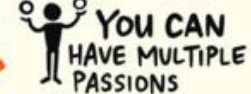


1. COMMIT to CURIOSITY



GOALS
PRESCRIBE A LINEAR PATH of
NARROW DETERMINATION
TINY EXPERIMENTS IS ABOUT BOUNDLESS EXPLORATION

2. ESCAPE the TYRANNY OF PURPOSE



3. THE POWER of a P.A.C.T.

"I WILL [action] FOR [duration]"



PURPOSEFUL ACTIONABLE CONTINUOUS TRACKABLE
BUILDS CONFIDENCE through REPEATED TRIALS

EXPERIMENTS THAT BRING INTRINSIC SENSE of FULFILMENT IRRESPECTIVE of OUTCOME

A SPACE for INTEREST and OPENNESS



A FERTILE GROUND for EXPERIMENTS



3 SHIFTS

FROM TO

RESPONSE 1 Defensive

RESPONSE 2 Proactive exploration

FIXED LADDERS Linear progression

GROWTH LOOPS iterative cycles

OUTCOMES Ticking off tasks

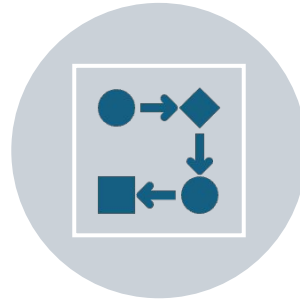
PROCESS unfolding path

WE EACH HAVE WITHIN US UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES; PURPOSE IS NEVER SINGULAR DISCOVERY

3 tools to get you started



STEP 1: MAKE A
PACT WITH
YOURSELF



STEP 2: REFLECT
ON YOUR
PROGRESS



STEP 3: DECIDE
WHAT'S NEXT

Formulate your Pact

1. What is the current situation?
2. Pick an interesting hypothesis
3. Use the mini protocol:

I will [action] for [duration]

Some ideas:

- I will write one short reflection each morning for two weeks
- I will meditate for ten minutes every day for ten days
- I will try a new plant-based recipe every week for two months

4. Make your pact public by sharing with a friend or on social media



Assess the
current
situation:
Where do you
currently
stand?

Capture field notes for a day or two

- Just like an anthropologist, you want to keep a log of your experiences.
- Whenever you take a break or switch between tasks, write down the time and anything you noticed.
- This could be your reaction after a conversation, moments of procrastination, or ideas that gave you energy.

Formulate a research question

Go through your notes and look for patterns.

What's working?

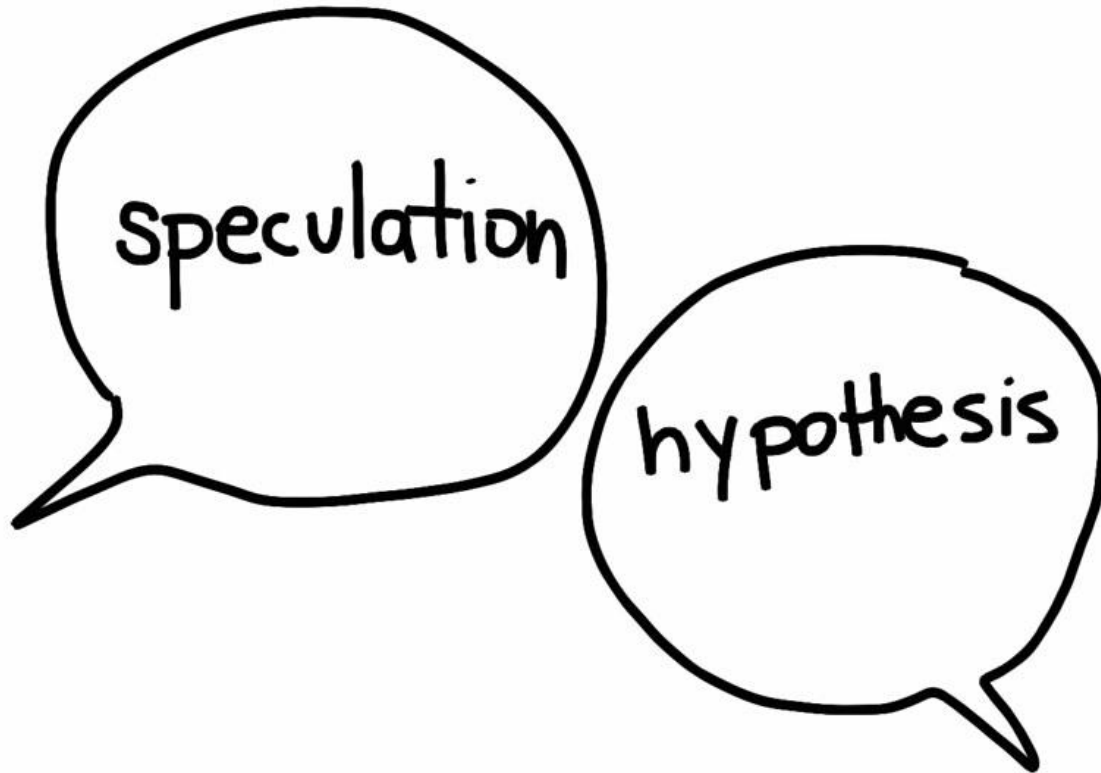
What are your stressors and sources of joy?

What could be better?

Then, just like a scientist, turn these observations into a research question.

Observation	Question
I tend to get more done when I wake up early.	Would I be more productive if I woke up earlier?
I often procrastinate on logistical tasks.	Would I find it helpful to work with a virtual assistant?
I always get pumped after an interesting conversation.	Would I enjoy hosting a podcast?

Test your hypothesis



Analyze
the
results



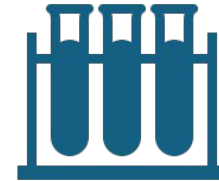
Plus Minus Next



Plus: What worked well?

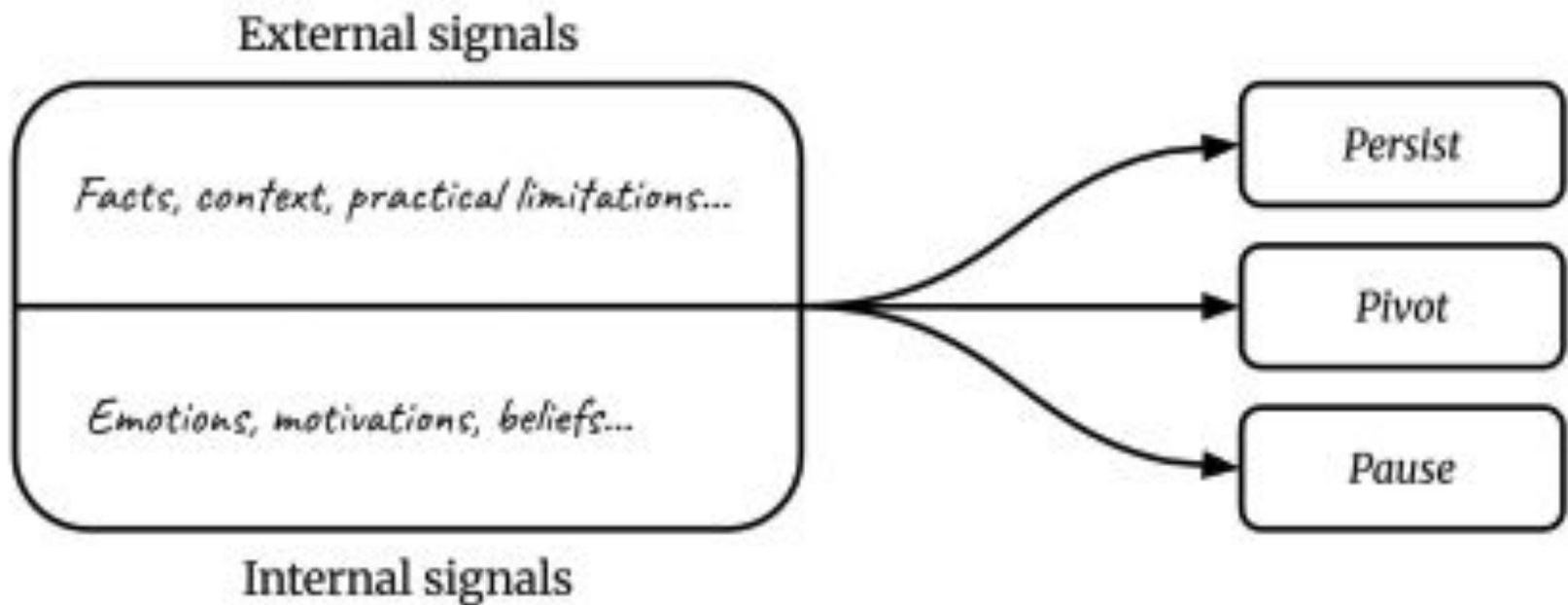


Minus: What didn't work or felt draining?

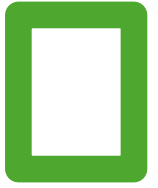


Next: What will I try differently in the next experiment?

Decide what's next



What small meaningful actions could you take today to contribute to your work, life or well-being?



THE FUTURE BELONGS TO
THE CURIOUS.
THE ONES WHO ARE
NOT AFRAID TO **TRY IT,**
EXPLORE IT,
POKE AT IT,
QUESTION IT
AND **TURN IT INSIDE OUT.**

skillshare.com



If you want to explore more....

Anne Laure Le Cunff

[Tiny Experiments](#)

[Ness labs](#)

[You Tube channel Anne-Laure Le Cunff](#)

[No Small Endeavor PodCast Interview](#)

[Anne Laure Le Cunff @ TedX](#)

Charles Duhig

[The Power of Habit](#)

[No Small Endeavor PodCast Interview](#)





*I appreciate your feedback
in SCHED*



<https://bit.ly/3OyVx9M>
