LIMINAL FLUENCY™ · COMPANION TO FIELD GUIDE 01

The Exercise Guide

Thirty exercises for career transitions in the middle years, stage by stage.

SIX STAGES | 30 EXERCISES | PRINT AND WRITE

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The Liminalist · liminalfluency.com



Thirty exercises. You will not need all of them.

This guide is the practical companion to The Transition Map. The Map explains how a career transition works and helps you find where you are. This guide gives you the work for each stage.

Use it like a toolbox. Start where the weight sits now, which is usually earlier on the map than people think. Most readers use fifteen to twenty exercises over a few months. The exercises marked CORE are the backbone; the others are for particular situations.

Every exercise follows the same structure, including one field you will rarely find in other workbooks: **Watch for**. It names the most common way the exercise goes wrong and what to do instead.

Write in it. Print the pages you need or use the editable version. For most of this work, paper is better than a screen: it slows you down enough to notice things and to create some distance from the subject.

Working with AI. Six exercises go faster with an AI assistant such as Claude or ChatGPT: finding patterns in old messages (#11), checking your constants (#13), sorting your notes into one page (#16), finding territories (#18), finding the people who decide (#20) and testing your story (#25). They carry a ready prompt. Let AI sort, search and question. The evidence has to come from your own life.

WHERE TO START

- **You know your stage** (from The Transition Map, the Diagnostic or a session): go straight to that stage.
- **You don't know it yet**: read the four background pages (pages 3 to 6), then use the routing table on page 7.
- **You are short of time**: do only the Core exercises of the stage you are in.

ONE THING BEFORE YOU START

This is not therapy. If an exercise brings up more than you can handle, stop, use 'Before You Continue' (#04) and come back another day. If distress stays high for days, talk to your doctor or a therapist.

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Three ways in. The same wrong answer.

People arrive at a transition through different doors. Yet almost everyone is then handed the same solution, one aimed at a different problem.

Facing redundancy

The announcement is made and the clock is ticking.

Already out

The job is gone and the identity went with it.

Still employed

Outgrown the role, unhappy, quietly quit already.

ONE SHARED REALITY

Different situations and the same underlying one: **they do not really know what comes next and feel stuck in between.**

And the answer usually offered is the same for all three. A headhunter finds the same job with a different logo, a career coach polishes the CV and proposes marginal improvements to your LinkedIn profile and outplacement promises speed of new placement, but is often an expensive recruitment service that does not really help you move forward.

Each of these is competent at what it does. The limitation sits elsewhere: all three treat a transition as a **placement problem** and all three start from who you were in the past rather than from where you are now. Yet the more important question underneath is:

> Who are you **becoming?**

The distinction decides whether the help you buy can possibly work. It is the difference between a technical problem, one your existing skills and strengths can solve, and an adaptive one, where the identity itself is the patient.

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No amount of career planning fixes an
identity question.
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THE TEST

Person A

Needs a new marketing director role. Identity is intact. Knows who they are, what they are good at, where they belong. Uncomfortable, but technical. *They need a recruiter, not this guide.*

Person B

Loses the same job and realises they have been performing a role for fifteen years that never really fitted. Cannot answer “what do you do?” any more and does not want to go back. *Identity is in play, the transition has begun.*

Person C

Still has the well-paid job. Outwardly successful. But something has shifted internally. Going through the motions. *The ending has already begun and nothing external has changed yet.*

The A/B/C distinction follows Ronald Heifetz’s separation of technical problems from adaptive challenges. Person C is the largest group and the least served.

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Change is situational. Transition is psychological.

The change is the event. The transition is what you have to do internally for the event to mean anything.

The organisational researcher and consultant William Bridges drew this line in the 1980s and it remains one of the most useful sentences in the field. A change happens on a date: the role ends, the contract is signed, the office is cleared. A change often triggers a transition, which has no date. Change is the external event. Transition is the internal reorientation and the process that follows, so the new arrangement can hold.

Which is why a job search and a transition run on different clocks. The search operates on an implementation schedule, the transition on organic timing. Almost all of the distress people describe comes from holding the second thing to the first thing's deadlines and concluding, reasonably enough, that they must be failing, because it takes so long.

And it explains a pattern you have probably watched from the outside: organisations that restructure endlessly and yet change nothing. They manage the change, the schedules and the communication and skip the transition people go through while digesting all of it. Then they wonder why the status quo does not move and conclude that their people are change-resistant. In other words, the furniture keeps moving. The building stays the same.

Every transition starts at the ending

Not at the new beginning. Of everything a century of research has turned up, this is the part people resist hardest and the part most popular approaches invert. Skip the ending and the old identity travels with you as transition debt: unfinished, repeating its patterns, undermining the new arrangement before it has a chance to hold.

WHAT ACTUALLY ENDS

Bridges separated the ending into five distinct experiences. They do not arrive in order and you can be deep in one while being untouched by another.

01 DISENGAGEMENT

The break from the old way of doing things. Separation from the place, the people, the process.

02 DISMANTLING

The structures go. Titles, rhythms, team, the calendar that organised your week.

03 DISIDENTIFICATION

The hardest one. The self tied to the old reality no longer fits. *"If I'm not that any more, who am I?"*

04 DISENCHANTMENT

The spell breaks. The old world was not as good as memory made it. Painful, but it is what makes moving on possible.

05 DISORIENTATION

Unanchored. The reference points that told you where you stood are simply gone and nothing has replaced them yet.

Note: loss aversion is the mechanism underneath. We hold on to things that no longer fit because they still give us shape. This is not being irrational. It is being human.

> *We don't transform by adding more to who we are. We transform by letting go of who we are not.*
>
> RICHARD ROHR

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Three phases tell you what happens. Six tell you where you are.

WHERE THE SPINE RUNS OUT

Bridges gave us the spine: Ending → Neutral Zone → New Beginning. It is right, it is memorable, but on its own it is not enough to navigate by.

The problem is the middle. Two-thirds of the lived experience sits inside one undifferentiated box labelled *Neutral Zone*. If you are going through a transition, the three broad phases can confirm that you are in the middle, but not whether you are at the beginning, three-quarters through or going around for the second time.

So the middle has to be opened up, because lived experience is simply more granular than that. And to open it up you need a criterion for when it ends, which is where I deviate from Bridges' model.

FIRST PRINCIPLE

The Neutral Zone ends not when people *try* a new identity, but when they *identify* with it.

Bridges hints at this. He never quite lands it. It gives a sharper cut than the original three-phase model and it is the line between stage four and stage five.

`Trying ≠ becoming.`

That single distinction is what turns a description into a map. Trying on a new self is still liminal work; identifying with it is a beginning. Most people confuse the two and then either conclude they have arrived when they have only started experimenting, or conclude they are failing when they are exactly where they should be.

HOW THE TWO LAYERS FIT

MOVEMENT	STAGE
Release ENDING	1 Endings & Awareness
Navigate NEUTRAL ZONE	2 Entering the Threshold
	3 Inquiry & Deconstruction
	4 Experimentation & Prototyping
Emerge BRIDGE → NEW BEGINNING	5 Narrative Integration
	6 Emergence & Design Forward

Three movements are the map. Six stages are the lived journey. The movements are what you can hold in your head and draw on a napkin. The stages are what you actually recognise yourself in.

And they do not run in order

You can be experimenting on Tuesday and grieving on Thursday. Healthy adaptation is *oscillation* between facing the loss and rebuilding, not a clean progression through a queue. The stages describe territories you move between, sometimes several times. Cycling back is not regression; it is how the process works.

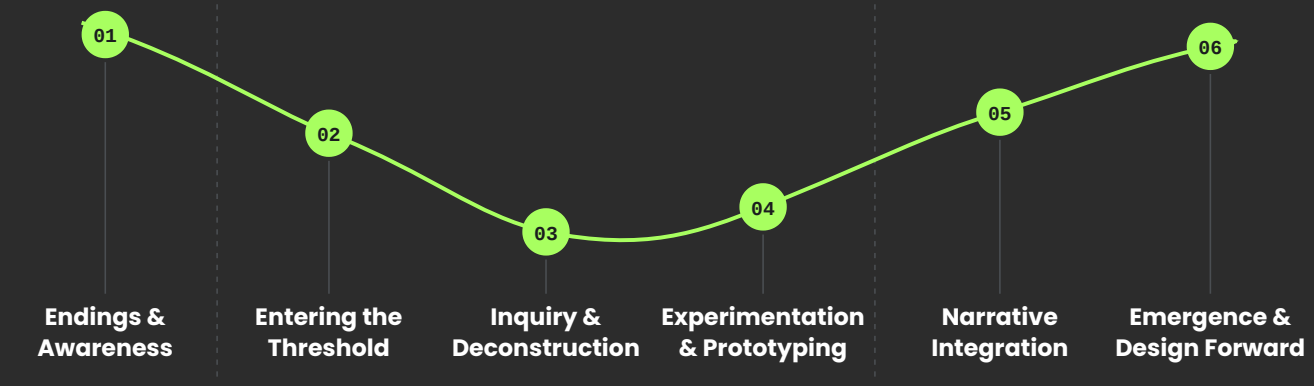
> *A compass that's still recalibrating.*
>
> CHRISTIAN OHM

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Liminal Fluency™

Three movements give you the map. Six stages tell you where you actually are. Six capacities tell you what to build next. **Note the widths. The middle is not a gap between two phases; it is most of the journey.**

01 · RELEASE	02 · NAVIGATE	03 · EMERGE
Letting go	*Operating without a map - the longest stretch of the journey*	*Committing under uncertainty*



SIX CAPACITIES: WHAT EACH MOVEMENT ASKS YOU TO BUILD

RELEASE

Loss Recognition
Naming what is actually ending. Honestly.

Emotional Grounding
Staying regulated when identity is disrupted.

NAVIGATE

Uncertainty Tolerance
Operating without a map, and without forcing one.

Identity Experimentation
Trying on new selves before committing.

EMERGE

Narrative Coherence
Constructing meaning from disruption.

Commitment Design
Moving forward before certainty arrives.

Release feels like

Grief, relief and disorientation at once. The work: naming what is actually ending.

Navigate feels like

Fog and impatience. *Who am I now?* The work: staying in it without grabbing the first exit.

Emerge feels like

Fragile clarity and the fear it won't hold. The work: committing before certainty arrives.

It is not a queue. You can be experimenting on Tuesday and grieving on Thursday. People cycle, double back and hold two stages at once - that is not confusion, it is an honest transition. The stages tell you where the weight currently sits, not how far along you are. **Wherever you land: you are not behind.**

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Start where the weight sits, not at page one.

The six profiles from The Transition Map describe how you are relating to the transition, not where you are in it. Each one suggests a different first route through this guide. Nobody is only one profile; use the one that sounds most like you this month.

PROFILE	USUALLY HERE	START WITH	LEAVE FOR LATER
The Holder Resisting the ending	Release · stage 01	#01 → #02 → #03	Stage 04 work (#17 to #22) until the ending is named
The Drifter Motion without traction	Release into early Navigate	#04 → #06 → #08 → #12	More options and planning tools: they keep you busy instead of facing the ending
The Wanderer In the fog	Navigate · stages 02 and 03	#04 → #07 → #09 → #10 → #12	Long archive searches (#11) before you feel steady
The Silent One The unwitnessed shift	Release, unacknowledged	#01 → #02 → #09 → #11	Public announcements; start with one trusted person
The Experimenter Trying without clicking	Navigate · stage 04	#14 → #16 → #19 → #22 → #27	Another experiment without a decision question
The Threshold Crosser Almost through	Emerge · stages 05 and 06	#03 → #25 → #26 → #28 → #29 → #30	Reopening the whole inquiry every time doubt returns

Not sure? Take the free Diagnostic at liminalfluency.com, or start at stage 01.

HOW TO READ AN EXERCISE PAGE

WHY THIS EXERCISE	What it does for you and why it is worth the time.
TIME	Realistic, including the thinking. Some run for weeks in two-minute entries.
WHEN TO USE IT	The situation it is built for. Best for and Take care name the profiles.
SKIP IT IF	When it will not help yet, or will do harm.
THE INSTRUCTION	Numbered steps. Do them in order.
WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR	What a useful result looks like.
IF NOTHING COMES	A smaller way in when you are stuck.
WATCH FOR	The most common way it fails and what to do instead.
WORKING WITH AI	A ready prompt, where an AI assistant helps.
LINEAGE	Whose research it builds on. Author-developed exercises are tested in client work.

THE CORE PATH

If you do nothing else, these eighteen carry the method from the ending to a commitment: #01 · #02 · #04 · #05 · #08 · #10 · #11 · #12 · #13 · #16 · #18 · #19 · #20 · #21 · #22 · #25 · #26 · #29.

Three rules that apply everywhere

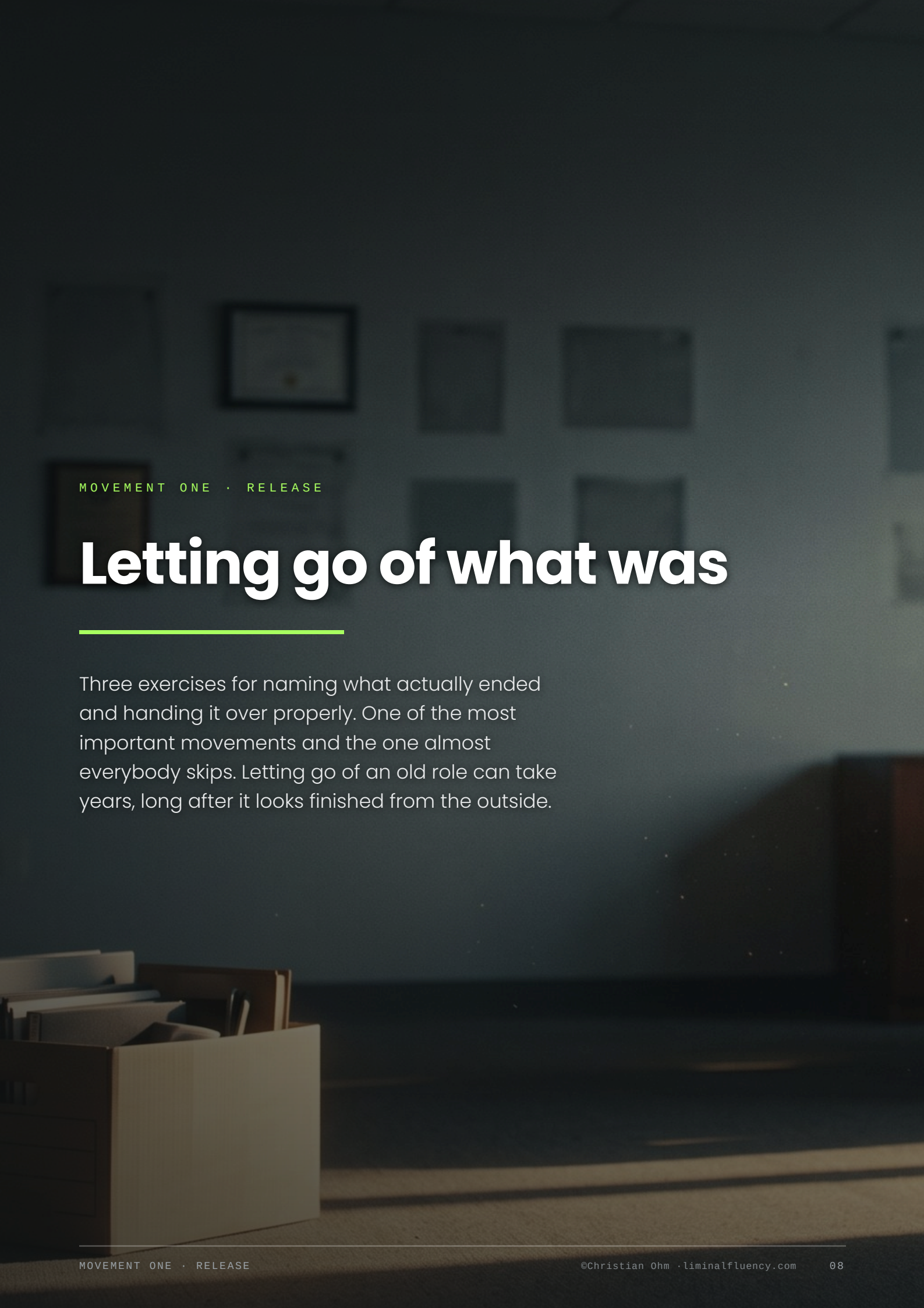
- Time-box every exercise. More reflection is not necessarily better: past a certain point it turns into brooding.
- Evidence before interpretation. Collect what happened first, decide what it means afterwards.
- Every insight should change something you do this week. If it does not, write down one action it points to, or drop it.

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MOVEMENT ONE · RELEASE

Letting go of what was

Three exercises for naming what actually ended and handing it over properly. One of the most important movements and the one almost everybody skips. Letting go of an old role can take years, long after it looks finished from the outside.



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01 Endings & Awareness

RELEASE · ENDING / LETTING GO

LOSS RECOGNITION EMOTIONAL GROUNDING

Something has ended and nothing has begun yet. This is where every transition starts. The work here is naming what actually ended, including the losses nobody sees.

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

01 *What am I ready to let go of: roles, beliefs, identities or long-held dreams that no longer serve me?*

02 *What ended without anyone marking or celebrating it?*

03 *What went with the role that wasn't just the role or its title?*

04 *What did I lose that I would feel embarrassed to say I miss?*

05 *What did I give up or hide to fit that role?*

06 *Which patterns am I done repeating?*

07 *If I let this go entirely, what am I afraid is or might become true about me?*

IN THIS STAGE

01 What Actually Ended CORE p. 10

02 The Handover Letter CORE p. 12

03 Keep, Change, Drop p. 14

WHO IS USUALLY HERE

The Holder and the Silent One most often. The Drifter too, usually without noticing.

ONE MOVE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS STAGE

Name one thing that ended and tell one person about it this week.

Done on _____

01

STAGE 01 · ENDINGS & AWARENESS

What Actually Ended

60 MINUTES | LOSS RECOGNITION | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

When a role ends, you lose more than the job. Every role also gave you things you rarely notice until they are gone: status, a safety net, people around you, the feeling of being successful. This exercise makes those losses visible one by one and helps you decide which ones still matter to you. Once a loss has a name, you can decide what to do about it.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Write the event in one line, with its date, e.g. the role ended, the company was sold, the promotion went to someone else.
2. In the first column, list everything that went with it, one thing per line. Use the examples at the top of the worksheet if you get stuck, but your own words matter more: “the Monday leadership meeting”, “feeling like the big guy in the room”, “the safety net of a monthly salary”.
3. In the second column, mark each line: gone, partly gone or still there for now.
4. In the third column, write what each thing gave you, often without you noticing: security, recognition, a reason to get up, people to talk to, the feeling of being successful.
5. In the last column, decide for each line: is this still important to me? If yes, how could I get it in another way (replace)? If no, mark it “let go”.
6. Circle the line that costs you or hurts you most. It is often not the job itself.

WHEN TO USE IT

Early, when something has ended or is ending and you cannot say exactly what. Also useful for the silent transition, where you still have the job and something has quietly stopped, or later in a transition when you realise something deeper still needs letting go.

BEST FOR

Holder, Silent One, Drifter

TAKE CARE

Holders: if someone pushes you to let go before you have named anything.

SKIP IT IF

The ending happened this week and you are still in shock. Do ‘Before You Continue’ (#04) first and come back in a few days.

WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR

The losses behind the event. Most people find three to five. The one that hurts is rarely the one they would mention at dinner. The last column is the practical result: what you will look for again in another form and what you are ready to let go.

IF NOTHING COMES

Start with your old calendar. Look at one ordinary week from six months ago and ask what in it no longer happens and what that does to you. Or ask the question the other way round: what have I been avoiding since the role ended?

WATCH FOR

Turning the list into a case against yourself (“I lost it because I …”), or rushing to replace everything at once.

Instead: Keep this list to what happened. Some things you may not want back, such as protection from uncertainty or a reason to justify sacrifices. “Let go” is a valid answer.

NOTES

LINEAGE Builds on William Bridges’ distinction between change and transition (1980) and Nancy Schlossberg’s transition model. The last column comes from the Liminal Fluency endings material. Author-developed worksheet.

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01 STAGE 01 · WORKSHEET

What Actually Ended

THE EVENT, IN ONE LINE, WITH ITS DATE _____

EXAMPLES OF WHAT A ROLE CAN GIVE YOU

a title and the status that came with it (Head of …, a team of ten) · proof that you are good at something · permission to decide or to speak with authority · the people you saw every day without arranging it · a monthly salary and the safety net it gave · the feeling of being successful · a structure for your week · an easy answer to "What do you do?" · the future you had planned · a belief in the company or what it stood for

WHAT I LOST OR LEFT BEHIND	GONE / PARTLY / STILL THERE	WHAT IT GAVE ME	STILL IMPORTANT? REPLACE HOW / LET GO

NOTES

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02

STAGE 01 · ENDINGS & AWARENESS

The Handover Letter

30 MINUTES | LOSS RECOGNITION | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

A handover letter is what professionals write when they leave a role: what the successor takes over, what to watch out for, what is unfinished. Writing one for your old role closes it properly, even if nobody ever reads it. It helps you see what you pass on, what you are proud of and what you take with you into the next thing.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Imagine the person who takes over your old role tomorrow. They can be real or imagined. Write them a short handover letter by finishing the six sentences on the worksheet. A few lines each is enough.
2. "What you inherit from me is …": what this person takes over from you, e.g. a team you built, clients who trust the role, a reputation, unfinished projects.
3. "Watch out for …": what the role cost you, said fairly and without accusing anyone.
4. "I was proud of …" and "I'm leaving behind …": what you did well and what you leave behind on purpose (a habit, an expectation, a title).
5. "What I take with me is …" and "I wish you …": what stays with you and what you hope for the next person, which is often what you hope for yourself.
6. Stop after 30 minutes. If you want, read it to one person and say first: "I don't need advice. I need you to listen to what I'm handing over."

WHEN TO USE IT

Once you can name what ended (#01). Good before you start anything new, because it closes the old role properly.

BEST FOR

Holder, Silent One, Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Anyone for whom the ending is still raw.

SKIP IT IF

The ending is still overwhelming. Come back in two weeks.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

A letter that sounds like you on a good day: fair to the old role and clear that it is over. The lines after "I'm leaving behind" and "I wish you" are often the most useful ones.

IF NOTHING COMES

Answer each sentence with one word first. Come back the next day and turn each word into a sentence.

WATCH FOR

A polished farewell. If the letter would work as a LinkedIn post, it is too tidy. Also watch for a letter that is only grievance.

Instead: Write the version you would not publish. If it is all grievance, add one honest thank-you, or leave the letter for a later week.

NOTES

LINEAGE Adapted from the Identity Obituary in the Liminal Fluency coaching practice. The time limit is based on the research on expressive writing after job loss (Spera, Buhrfeind and Pennebaker, 1994).

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02 STAGE 01 · WORKSHEET

The Handover Letter

What you inherit from me is …

Watch out for …

I was proud of …

I'm leaving behind …

What I take with me is …

I wish you …

NOTES

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03

STAGE 01 · ENDINGS & AWARENESS

Keep, Change, Drop

40 MINUTES | LOSS RECOGNITION

WHY THIS EXERCISE

The old role leaves habits behind: routines, rules and expectations that once made sense and now run on autopilot. This exercise sorts them, so you keep what still helps, adjust what half fits and drop what only belonged to the old role. It frees time and energy for what comes next.

WHEN TO USE IT

After #01 and #02, before you commit to anything new. Also months later, when the old role still pulls at you.

BEST FOR

Threshold Crosser, Holder

TAKE CARE

Holders: if this turns into pressure to throw everything away.

SKIP IT IF

You have not yet named what ended (#01).

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Write the role or chapter at the top.
2. In the left column, list what you still carry from it: habits, routines, rules you follow, objects, memberships, expectations of yourself. One per line. For example: checking email before breakfast, the email signature with the old title, always having an answer ready in meetings, dressing for an office you no longer go to.
3. For each line, ask one question: does this still serve where I am going? Then tick one box: keep, change or drop.
4. For everything you marked change, write how in the last column: smaller, different, on your own terms.
5. Choose one drop and act on it this week: delete the old email signature, return the badge, cancel the subscription you only needed for the role.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Habits that still decide things for you without good reason. The drop column is the practical output. Kaihō (解放), the Japanese word for release, also means being freed: once you have named what you are letting go of, look at what the space makes possible.

IF NOTHING COMES

Take one ordinary working day. Go through it hour by hour and ask what you still do the old way.

WATCH FOR

Dropping everything to make a clean break.

Instead: Keep is a valid answer.

NOTES

LINEAGE Author-developed, a simplified form of the Release Ledger from the Liminal Fluency endings work. Kaihō comes from my essay on letting go.

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03 | STAGE 01 · WORKSHEET

Keep, Change, Drop

ROLE OR CHAPTER _____

WHAT I STILL CARRY	KEEP	CHANGE	DROP	IF CHANGE: HOW
Example: email signature with my old title	☐	☐	☑	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

NOTES

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MOVEMENT TWO · NAVIGATE

Operating without a map

Three stages and nineteen exercises: staying steady in the fog, working through your own record and testing what you find in small, cheap experiments.



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02 Entering the Threshold

NAVIGATE · EARLY NEUTRAL ZONE

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE | EMOTIONAL GROUNDING

The old chapter has closed and nothing new has taken shape. Many people here feel overwhelmed, exhausted, ashamed or stuck in overthinking. That is normal for this stage. The work is staying steady without grabbing the first exit and knowing how long your money will last.

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

01 *What's still steady? Family, a routine, a walk, a value: what holds when the roles don't?*

02 *Is this fear telling me something true, or is it just the panic alarm going off?*

03 *What am I doing to stay busy that is really about escaping the uneasy feelings? What is underneath them and what is one small step towards facing it?*

04 *How long can I afford to live without a clear answer about what comes next? How do I protect that time?*

05 *Instead of "how do I get out of this?", how do I move through it? What is this space showing me that the old version of me could not see?*

06 *What are the worst things that could realistically happen? What would I do then and how can I prepare for each?*

IN THIS STAGE

04 Before You Continue CORE p. 18

05 The Signal Journal CORE p. 19

06 The Dual Process Calendar p. 21

07 A Bounded Unanswered Question p. 22

08 Runway and Obligations Agreement CORE p. 23

09 The Answer for Now p. 25

WHO IS USUALLY HERE

The Wanderer, in the fog. The Drifter, moving fast to avoid it.

ONE MOVE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS STAGE

Write your runway date and your answer for now. Say the answer to someone once.

Done on _____

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04

STAGE 02 · ENTERING THE THRESHOLD

Before You Continue

2 TO 5 MINUTES | EMOTIONAL GROUNDING | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Some exercises in this guide stir up strong feelings. This short routine calms body and mind within a few minutes, so you can carry on or stop safely. Filling in the card once, in advance, means it is ready when you need it.

WHEN TO USE IT

Before any exercise that stirs things up. Also any time your head is spinning or your chest is tight. You will be sent back here from other pages too.

BEST FOR

Everyone

TAKE CARE

Anyone whose distress rises when they focus inwards.

SKIP IT IF

You have already filled in the card and feel steady today.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Stop. Put both feet on the floor and notice the chair holding you.
2. Look around and name five things you can see, four you can hear and three you can touch.
3. Breathe out for longer than you breathe in, six times: in for four, out for six.
4. Say to yourself: "This is what not-knowing feels like right now. And that's okay."
5. Ask: am I steady enough to continue now? If yes, continue. If not yet, walk, drink some water and come back later. Both answers are fine.
6. Fill in the card below, so you do not have to think about it next time.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

The practice that brings you back fastest. People differ: some settle through the body, others by looking outwards or moving.

IF NOTHING COMES

Go outside and walk for ten minutes without your phone. Movement works for many people when sitting still does not.

WATCH FOR

Turning grounding into another task you can fail at.

Instead: If focusing on the breath makes things worse, keep your eyes open and look outward instead. If distress stays high for days, speak to your doctor or a therapist. This guide does not replace that.

WORKSHEET

✂

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE · MY CARD

MY WAY BACK _____

_____

WHEN I USE IT _____

WHO I CAN CALL _____

LINEAGE General grounding practice. Used here only to steady yourself before and after difficult exercises, with no claims about the nervous system.

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05

STAGE 02 · ENTERING THE THRESHOLD

The Signal Journal

2 MINUTES A DAY, PLUS 20 MINUTES ONCE A WEEK

EMOTIONAL GROUNDING (RUNS THROUGH STAGES 02 TO 04) CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Your first reaction to an event often knows something before your reasoning does. This journal captures those reactions while they are fresh, so that over a few weeks you can see what really draws you and what you keep talking yourself out of.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. One line per entry, in the moment or the same evening: the date, what happened, your first reaction before thinking (relief, disappointment, envy, excitement) and what you told yourself afterwards.
2. What to log: any contact about a job, project or role you are pursuing (call, email, offer, silence); any moment you quickly rule out an option; anything you wanted that was blocked or delayed; envy of someone else's work or life; daydreams about the future; chance encounters that surprised you; topics or news that interest you enough to dig deeper.
3. During the week, do not reread it and do not tidy it up.
4. Once a week, 20 minutes: which first reactions repeat? Where did your first reaction and your later explanation disagree?
5. Pick one line from "What I then told myself" and write it again in two ways: once starting with "I am having the thought that …" and once as you would say it to a respected colleague in your position.

WHEN TO USE IT

From the moment you are in the in-between until you commit. Most useful once real options appear: calls, interviews, offers, silence.

BEST FOR

Wanderer, Holder, Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Anyone who already distrusts their own reactions.

SKIP IT IF

You are only looking for a mood diary. This records reactions to real events.

> *"Watch out for your gut feelings: the inner voice telling you something important before your rational brain argues it away. Write these feelings down. They are usually the signals that tell you more than your rational brain ever can."*
>
> CHRISTIAN OHM

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Two things. First, what makes you feel good or interests you and what does not. Second, the gap between the first reaction and the explanation that follows: the explanation comes from your rational self. Give the first reaction more weight than you usually do. Over several weeks the first reactions form a pattern that reasoning alone does not show.

IF NOTHING COMES

Log only two moments a day: when you felt most like yourself and when you felt least like yourself.

WATCH FOR

Treating a gut reaction as a verdict. Something new can feel threatening and still be right. Something familiar can feel like relief and still be the old trap.

Instead: Use the journal alongside the evidence from the other exercises. Write on paper: a spreadsheet invites you to analyse too early.

NOTES

LINEAGE Developed and tested in Liminal Fluency client work. The weekly rewrite uses defusion from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Kristin Neff's research on self-compassion.

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05 STAGE 02 · WORKSHEET

The Signal Journal

DATE	WHAT HAPPENED	FIRST REACTION AND FEELING, BEFORE THINKING	WHAT I THEN TOLD MYSELF

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06

STAGE 02 · ENTERING THE THRESHOLD

The Dual Process Calendar

20 MINUTES TO PLAN, 15 MINUTES TO REVIEW EACH WEEK | EMOTIONAL GROUNDING

WHY THIS EXERCISE

People adapt to a loss by moving back and forth between facing it and getting on with ordinary life. Doing only one of the two keeps you stuck. This calendar plans both on purpose, so you give time to the loss and to ordinary life.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Look at next week. Mark two short slots for facing the loss (30 to 45 minutes each): writing about what ended, going through old files, talking to someone about it.
2. Mark two or three slots for rebuilding: a conversation, a small experiment, a course session, sport, time outdoors.
3. Keep one slot at the end of the week for review: what did each kind of time do to me?
4. Adjust the balance for the following week. If you avoid loss time, make it shorter but keep it. If you avoid rebuilding time, start with the smallest possible task.

WHEN TO USE IT

When you are either stuck in the loss or rushing past it. Most useful in stages 01 and 02.

BEST FOR

Drifter, Holder

TAKE CARE

Wanderers: if the plan becomes one more thing to feel behind on.

SKIP IT IF

You already move between the two naturally and it works.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

A weekly rhythm that swings between the loss and ordinary life. Both kinds of time count as progress.

IF NOTHING COMES

If you cannot think of anything for loss time, use the Handover Letter (#02). If you cannot think of anything for rebuilding time, take a walk with someone you like.

WATCH FOR

Two traps: endless processing without movement and busy reinvention without mourning.

Instead: Let the calendar show you which one you lean towards, then give more room to the other.

WORKSHEET

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Facing the loss							
Rebuilding							
Review							

REVIEW: WHAT DID EACH KIND OF TIME DO TO ME?

LINEAGE Based on Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut's Dual Process Model of coping with bereavement (1999), applied here to the loss of a role.

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07

STAGE 02 · ENTERING THE THRESHOLD

A Bounded Unanswered Question

15 MINUTES TO SET UP, 3 TO 7 DAYS TO WATCH, 15 MINUTES TO REVIEW

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Many decisions in a transition feel urgent when they are not. This exercise trains you to leave one open question unanswered for a set time and to watch what actually happens, so that you practise waiting on purpose and see what it actually costs.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Sort what you are unsure about into three columns: known (facts you have), unknown (you could find out) and unknowable (nobody can know yet).
2. Pick one question from the unknowable column that has no hard deadline. Write it down.
3. Decide how long you will stop trying to settle it, for example three days or one week. Write the date.
4. Predict what will happen if you do not answer it ("I won't sleep", "I'll lose the chance").
5. On the date, compare. What actually happened? What did not answering make you want to do?

WHEN TO USE IT

When you feel pushed to decide now and the decision could actually wait.

BEST FOR

Experimenter; anyone rushing to decide

TAKE CARE

Drifters: if it becomes a way to avoid decisions.

SKIP IT IF

The question has a real deadline: legal, financial, health or an application date. Those get decided on time.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

The difference between your prediction and what happened. Most people find that waiting cost less than they predicted and that some questions look different after a week.

IF NOTHING COMES

Start smaller: leave one email that makes you anxious unanswered for 24 hours, if it has no deadline.

WATCH FOR

Using the exercise to dodge a decision that needs making.

Instead: If the waiting makes you steadily more anxious for several days, shorten the window or decide. Distress that keeps rising is a signal to stop.

WORKSHEET

KNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWABLE

THE QUESTION I WILL LEAVE OPEN, UNTIL (DATE)	MY PREDICTION

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED	WHAT NOT ANSWERING MADE ME WANT TO DO

LINEAGE Adapted from Sit With One Question in the Liminal Fluency coaching practice, using the behavioural experiment method from cognitive therapy for intolerance of uncertainty.

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08

STAGE 02 · ENTERING THE THRESHOLD

Runway and Obligations Agreement

60 TO 90 MINUTES | UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE, COMMITMENT DESIGN | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Worry about money and family makes clear thinking almost impossible. This exercise turns that vague worry into numbers, a date and a plan for the worst case. Knowing how much time you can afford tells you how much room you have to explore and when you need to switch to earning.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Write your real numbers: monthly fixed costs, savings or severance and any income that continues. Calculate your runway in months. Use conservative figures.
2. List your obligations: the people who depend on you, fixed dates (notice periods, contract ends, school changes) and commitments you will not break.
3. Choose your mode. North Star mode: you have real freedom to choose. Runway mode: you need income by a certain date and will take a bridge. Both are legitimate. Write the date on which you would switch from one to the other.
4. Work through the worst case: what is the worst that can realistically happen? How likely is it? What would I do then? Who would be able to help?
5. Set your experiment budget: how much time and money you can spend on trying things without putting your obligations at risk. Share the agreement with the people it affects, if they are willing to discuss it.

WHEN TO USE IT

Before any experimenting and as soon as money or family is part of the pressure. Revisit it at every big decision.

BEST FOR

Drifter, Experimenter, Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Holders: if the numbers become a reason to do nothing at all.

DON'T SKIP THIS

Everyone needs this, even with a comfortable cushion.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

A number, a date and a mode. Written down, the worst case is usually smaller and more manageable than the version in your head at three in the morning.

IF NOTHING COMES

If you do not know your numbers, spend this session getting them: bank statements from the last three months are enough.

WATCH FOR

Optimistic figures and a budget with no real time or money in it.

Instead: Use conservative numbers and set a real budget, however small. My own rule from my transition: "I may temporarily trade fit for security. I will not trade direction for comfort indefinitely."

NOTES

LINEAGE Builds on Saras Sarasvathy's affordable loss principle (effectuation) and Nancy Schlossberg's 4S model. The worst-case step follows the Stoic practice of thinking the worst through in advance. Author-developed.

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08 STAGE 02 · WORKSHEET

Runway and Obligations Agreement

MY NUMBERS

Monthly fixed costs _____

Savings or severance _____

Income that continues (per month) _____

Runway in months _____

OBLIGATIONS: PEOPLE, FIXED DATES, COMMITMENTS I WILL NOT BREAK

MY MODE

☐ North Star mode: real freedom to choose ☐ Runway mode: I need income by a date

I switch to runway mode on (date) _____

THE WORST THAT CAN REALISTICALLY HAPPEN

HOW LIKELY IS IT?

WHAT I WOULD DO THEN

WHO WOULD HELP

EXPERIMENT BUDGET: TIME PER WEEK, UNTIL (DATE)

EXPERIMENT BUDGET: MONEY IN TOTAL

SHARED WITH (NAME) AND WHAT THEY SAID

NOTES

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09

STAGE 02 · ENTERING THE THRESHOLD

The Answer for Now

20 MINUTES | EMOTIONAL GROUNDING

WHY THIS EXERCISE

"What do you do?" is one of the hardest questions in the in-between. This exercise gives you a short, true answer, so social situations stop draining you and people can start helping you.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Write down what you currently say when someone asks "What do you do these days?", word for word. Then write what it costs you to say it.
2. Write a two-sentence answer that is true today: what ended plus what you are doing now. Example: "I left my role at X in the spring. I'm taking a few months to work out what comes next and I'm talking to people in education and consulting."
3. Write a one-sentence version for people you do not want to discuss it with.
4. Decide who gets which version. Write two or three names or groups of people for the longer one.
5. Say it out loud three times, then use it this week.

WHEN TO USE IT

When "so, what are you up to?" makes you freeze, waffle or give a different answer every time.

BEST FOR

Silent One, Wanderer, Drifter

TAKE CARE

Silent Ones: if the short version turns into hiding.

SKIP IT IF

You already have an answer that is true and easy to say.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

A sentence you can say without panic that is still true. It will change as you move. That is expected.

IF NOTHING COMES

Borrow one to start with: "I'm between chapters and taking the time to choose the next one properly." Then change it until it sounds like you.

WATCH FOR

An answer that sounds more certain than you are ("I'm launching a consultancy") when you are only exploring. It creates pressure to live up to it.

Instead: Describe what you are doing this month. What you might become can wait. Use the longer version with at least one person and keep the short one for conversations you want to keep brief.

NOTES

LINEAGE Author-developed, from the Liminal Fluency writing on the narrative void. It grows into A Story You Can Stand Behind (#25).

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09 STAGE 02 · WORKSHEET

The Answer for Now

WHAT I SAY NOW, WORD FOR WORD

WHAT IT COSTS ME TO SAY IT

MY ANSWER FOR NOW (TWO SENTENCES)

THE SHORT VERSION (ONE SENTENCE)

WHO GETS THE LONGER VERSION

NOTES

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03 Inquiry & Deconstruction

NAVIGATE · DEEP NEUTRAL ZONE

UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION

Everything you believed about work, worth and ambition is open to question. Instead of thinking harder, you look at evidence: what you actually did, what people actually asked you for, what you rebuilt after losing it.

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

01 *What remains true about me, even as roles, titles or functions shift?*

02 *What did I keep doing when nobody asked me to? What made me so curious about it and how did I go about it?*

03 *What have I done in three completely different settings that had nothing else in common?*

04 *What did I rebuild after losing it: a role, a habit, a group?*

05 *Which setting pushed me hardest to be someone else? What showed through anyway?*

06 *What did I avoid or lose interest in, even when I was responsible for it?*

IN THIS STAGE

10 Two Portraits CORE p. 28

11 Archival Witness Harvest CORE p. 30

12 The Energy Audit CORE p. 32

13 Constants and Constructs Test CORE p. 34

14 Graveyard Comparison p. 37

15 Values You Have Paid For p. 39

16 My Signature on One Page CORE p. 41

WHO IS USUALLY HERE

The Wanderer, often for longer than necessary. Time-box this stage: the Core exercises are #10, #11, #12, #13 and #16.

WHY THIS STAGE MATTERS

Most career tools ask what you want or what you are passionate about. This stage asks what your working life has already shown: what drew you in, what drained you, what you avoided, how you went about things when nobody was checking, what you finished and what you dropped. All of it, the good and the uncomfortable, shows where your energy really goes. That tells you where to put your focus next and what to stop saying yes to. Evidence from what you did is harder to argue with than what you think you should want. It all ends in your one-page Signature (#16), which everything in stage 04 builds on.

ONE MOVE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS STAGE

Fill in your one-page Signature (#16) and show it to one person who knows your work.

Done on _____

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10

STAGE 03 · INQUIRY & DECONSTRUCTION

Two Portraits

10 MINUTES, THEN 20 MINUTES ON ANOTHER DAY | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

How you describe yourself has often been polished over years. Writing a fast, raw version and a polished version and comparing them shows where your public story has drifted from how you actually work. In Japanese, honne (本音) is what you truly feel and tatemae (建前) the face you show in public: the two portraits put them side by side. The gaps are clues for the constants you look for later in this stage.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. First sitting: set a timer for ten minutes. Write about yourself fast, with no audience in mind. What are you like, what do you care about, how do you work? Do not edit and do not stop.
2. Put it away. Do not reread it.
3. Second sitting, on another day: write the introduction a PR professional would draft for you. Polished, professional, ready to publish.
4. Put the two side by side. Underline every place where they disagree: words in one that are missing from the other, claims one makes and the other does not.
5. Write down the two or three strongest differences.

WHEN TO USE IT

At the start of this stage, or whenever your self-description feels rehearsed.

BEST FOR

Everyone

TAKE CARE

Wanderers: if the PR version becomes the one you believe.

SKIP IT IF

You wrote a professional profile in the last week. Wait a few days so it does not leak into the raw portrait.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

The differences. In the first test of this method (on myself), the raw portrait said "my own tempo, fast or slow" where the polished one said "speed". That small gap pointed to a real working condition the professional profile had hidden for years.

IF NOTHING COMES

Compare word lists instead: circle the ten most important words in each portrait and see which appear in only one.

WATCH FOR

Doing both portraits in one sitting.

Instead: Keep at least a day between them. If you can still remember the first portrait, the second one copies it and the differences disappear.

NOTES

LINEAGE Author-developed, from the Signature work. Tested on myself first.

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10 STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET

Two Portraits

PORTRAIT 1: RAW, FAST, FOR NO ONE

PORTRAIT 2: THE PR VERSION

THE STRONGEST DIFFERENCES

NOTES

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11

STAGE 03 · INQUIRY & DECONSTRUCTION

Archival Witness Harvest

TWO 30-MINUTE SEARCHES, PLUS 45 MINUTES TO SORT

IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION, NARRATIVE COHERENCE **CORE**

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Other people often see your strengths more clearly than you do. Old emails, thank-you notes and reviews record what they saw at the time, before you knew you would need it. This exercise collects that evidence and shows what people have repeatedly come to you for: the most reliable outside view you can get without asking anyone yet.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. List where your records are and which ones you may still lawfully use: your own inbox and files, LinkedIn recommendations, appraisals you were given, farewell cards, references, thank-you messages. Never export data from a former employer's systems.
2. Search for phrases like "thank you for", "I really appreciated", "could you help" and "you're the person to ask". Collect 20 to 40 items.
3. For each item note who, when, the context and what you actually did.
4. Sort them. What do people repeatedly thank you for? What do they repeatedly ask you for? Count sources, not messages: ten notes from one manager are one source.
5. Then check with three people from different parts of your life (one personal, one professional, one from an earlier era): "What do you actually come to me for?" Ask for the less flattering answer too.

WHEN TO USE IT

Before you ask anyone for broader feedback. After Two Portraits (#10).

BEST FOR

Silent One, Wanderer

TAKE CARE

Holders: if old praise freezes the old identity in place.

SKIP IT IF

You cannot reach any old records. Use the no-archive route under "If nothing comes" instead.

WORKING WITH AI

Once you have collected the items, remove names and private details and paste them in: "Here are messages, notes and reviews people have written to or about me over the years. Group them into recurring themes. For each theme, list what people thanked me for or came to me for, with two short quotes as evidence. Then list what appears only once." Check every theme against your own memory.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Patterns that appear across different people and contexts. Note also what people ask you for that you would rather they did not: that belongs on the constructs side of #13.

IF NOTHING COMES

Search your sent mail for what you offered to do without being asked. No-archive route: reconstruct episodes from memory with dates, use work samples you own and ask five people instead of three.

WATCH FOR

Collecting only the flattering items and reading missing praise as missing ability.

Instead: Include neutral requests and criticism. Many roles produce almost no written thanks, so absence of evidence means little here.

NOTES

LINEAGE Author-developed Identity Archaeology method. Asking for less flattering evidence too is based on research using feedback from many sources, not only praise (Spreitzer, Stephens and Sweetman, 2009).

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11 STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET

Archival Witness Harvest

SOURCE (WHO)	WHEN	CONTEXT	WHAT I ACTUALLY DID	THEME

THEMES THAT RECUR ACROSS DIFFERENT SOURCES

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12

STAGE 03 · INQUIRY & DECONSTRUCTION

The Energy Audit

2 MINUTES A DAY FOR TWO WEEKS, PLUS 20 MINUTES ONCE A WEEK

IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION (RUNS THROUGH STAGES 03 AND 04) CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

This is one of the most important exercises in the guide. It tracks what gives you energy and under which conditions, so you can build more of it into your next work and reduce what drains you. Two weeks of entries are enough to show a pattern.

WHEN TO USE IT

When you know in general what drains you but not why. Runs alongside the other stage 03 and 04 exercises.

BEST FOR

Drifter, Wanderer, Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Anyone who is exhausted, ill or sleeping badly.

SKIP IT IF

You have no activities to rate at all. Then start with the Signal Journal (#05).

THE INSTRUCTION

1. At the end of each day, up to three entries: what stood out. Rate each entry from -3 (emptied, needed to recover) to +3 (absorbed, did not want to stop).
2. Note the conditions: who was there, where, what constrained you, whether anyone was waiting.
3. Note who wanted it (me, my manager, the company, nobody in particular) and whether it was your own choice, a duty or paid.
4. Once a week, 20 minutes: which minuses repeat? Is it the same activity or the same conditions? Which pluses happened when nobody had asked?
5. Two more questions for the weekly pass: what is in the minus column that you are known for being good at? Which single condition, if it changed, would change the most ratings? If two activities with the same label (two "market entry" projects, say) felt completely different, the label is not what matters: note what differed.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

The difference between "I do not like this work" and "I do not like this work under these terms". They lead to different decisions. Pluses that happened when nobody asked deserve the most attention.

IF NOTHING COMES

Rate just one activity a day, the most memorable one.

WATCH FOR

Mistaking tiredness for dislike of the work and letting one bad day colour the week.

Instead: Note your general state in the margin and compare like with like. Rate each day on that day, not on Friday for the whole week.

NOTES

LINEAGE Developed and tested in Liminal Fluency client work. Related to the Good Time Journal in Burnett and Evans, Designing Your Life (2016), with added columns for conditions and choice.

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12 | STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET

The Energy Audit

DATE	WHAT I WAS DOING	CONDITIONS: WHO, WHERE, WHAT CONSTRAINT	−3 TO +3	WHO WANTED IT	CHOICE, DUTY OR PAID

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13

STAGE 03 · INQUIRY & DECONSTRUCTION

Constants and Constructs Test

90 MINUTES, IN TWO SITTINGS | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Constants are what has stayed true about you across roles, places and years: how you work and what draws you in, whoever was paying. Constructs are what a particular context needed from you: a title, a skill the job demanded, a way of behaving that fitted one company. Constructs can be useful and well paid, but they are poor guides to what comes next.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Collect candidates from #10, #11, #12 and the prompts on the worksheet. Write down every pattern that seems to be you. Hold at least three open and do not pick a winner yet.
2. Run each candidate through five tests. Three contexts: does it appear in at least three unrelated settings (decades, industries, on and off duty)? Rebuilt: when you lost it, did you try to get it back? Off duty: does it show up unpaid, with nobody asking? Seen by others: does it appear in the witness evidence? Outlasted the context: did it continue after the setting that rewarded it ended?
3. Four or five yes answers: a constant. Three: keep it open and look for more evidence. Two or fewer: probably a construct, something the context needed from you.
4. For each constant, write its conditions (what it needs to work: tempo, people, freedom) and its costs (what it repeatedly makes you pay).
5. List your constructs too. Some will hurt to see written down, such as a title or a status. That is normal.

WHEN TO USE IT

After Two Portraits (#10) and the Archival Witness Harvest (#11), ideally with two weeks of the Energy Audit (#12). This is the core of stage 03.

BEST FOR

Holder, Wanderer, Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Anyone who wants a single answer quickly.

SKIP IT IF

You are in acute distress. Do the Release work first: looking for patterns while you are in crisis gives poor results.

WORKING WITH AI

Paste your candidates and the evidence from #10, #11 and #12: “Here are patterns I think describe me and the evidence for each. Check each one against five tests: three unrelated contexts, rebuilt after loss, shows up unpaid, seen by others, outlasted the context. Say which pass and why. Point out which ones are probably constructs, things one job needed from me. Ask me questions where the evidence is thin.” You decide. The AI only checks.

WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR

Two to four constants in your own words, each with its evidence, conditions and costs, plus a list of constructs. Constants are patterns in what you did. They show a direction and they can shift slowly over the years.

IF NOTHING COMES

Use the replay test: take the strength people mention most and describe one real instance, step by step. If you cannot, treat it as a label for now and keep looking.

WATCH FOR

Two traps: picking a winner too early and mistaking a skill for a constant. “Project management” is usually what a role needed.

Instead: Hold three candidates until all tests are done. For a skill, ask what you were actually doing when you did it well.

LINEAGE The five tests come from the Signature design, which borrows from forensic and archival methods. Tested on myself first.

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13 | STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET

Constants and Constructs Test

PROMPTS TO FIND CANDIDATES

- *Before any career: what did you repeatedly do that nobody asked for and nobody graded?*
- *What do family and oldest friends pull you into when something goes wrong?*
- *Which setting most pressured you to be someone else? What showed through anyway?*
- *Right after your biggest loss, what did you find yourself rebuilding first?*
- *Describe one moment when you used this strength: the first two minutes, what you did.*
- *Imagine you are 80, looking back at you now: what was always there? What did you waste energy pretending to be?*
- *Write two lines about yourself the way a biographer with only your records would.*
- *Finish the sentence "I am someone who has always …" three times.*
- *How did you do things? What did you always check, prepare or improve before handing something over? Someone who always checked the data first is data-driven, even if they never called it that.*
- *What did you avoid or lose interest in, even when you were responsible for it?*

THE FIVE TESTS: ANSWER YES OR NO

3 contexts: it shows up in at least three unrelated settings · **Rebuilt:** when you lost it, you tried to get it back · **Off duty:** it shows up unpaid, with nobody asking · **Seen:** other people mention it (#11) · **Outlasted:** it continued after the setting that rewarded it ended. **Four or five yes:** a constant, what has stayed true about you. **Three:** keep looking. **Two or fewer:** probably a construct, what one context needed from you.

CANDIDATE PATTERN	3 CONTEXTS	REBUILT	OFF DUTY	SEEN	OUTLASTED	CONSTANT?	SOURCE

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13 | STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET, CONTINUED

Constants and Constructs Test

REMINDER

Constant: what has stayed true about you across settings and years, with four or five yes answers. **Construct:** what one context needed from you: a title, a skill the job demanded, a way of behaving that fitted one company.

MY CONSTANTS

CONSTANT, IN MY WORDS	CONDITIONS: WHAT IT NEEDS	COSTS: WHAT IT MAKES ME PAY

CONSTRUCTS: WHAT THE CONTEXT NEEDED FROM ME

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14

STAGE 03 · INQUIRY & DECONSTRUCTION

Graveyard Comparison

45 MINUTES | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Your abandoned projects hold as much information as your finished ones. Side by side, they show what has to be in place for you to finish and what you should stop starting.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. In the left column, list things or projects you started and abandoned, from any area of life. Aim for eight to ten.
2. In the third column, list things or projects (big and small) you started and completed.
3. For each item, note the conditions: was anyone else involved or watching? Was there a date? Did you choose it? Was it paid? How long did it run?
4. Compare the columns. What was present in the completed column and missing from the other one?
5. Write the difference as a condition: "I finish things when …".

WHEN TO USE IT

When you cannot see your own pattern or when "I never finish anything" keeps coming up.

BEST FOR

Experimenter; anyone who says "I never finish anything"

TAKE CARE

Anyone who uses it as evidence against themselves.

SKIP IT IF

You cannot think of anything you started and abandoned. Then look at #12 instead.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

The conditions under which you finish. In the first test of this method, the difference was an audience: projects with a witnessed start and a date got finished, private ones more often faded. In my own testing this became the witness rule in stage 04 (#21): a project with a named witness and a date is finished more often.

IF NOTHING COMES

Look for anything you have kept doing for more than two years. What keeps it alive?

WATCH FOR

Turning this into a character audit.

Instead: Look only at conditions. And include wise exits: some things you rightly stopped and some things you completed that should have been stopped.

NOTES

LINEAGE From the Liminal Fluency coaching practice and the Signature design, where it was the sharpest single exercise in testing.

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14 STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET

Graveyard Comparison

STARTED AND ABANDONED	CONDITIONS: WITNESS, DATE, CHOICE, PAID, HOW LONG	STARTED AND COMPLETED	CONDITIONS

I FINISH THINGS WHEN …

NOTES

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15

STAGE 03 · INQUIRY & DECONSTRUCTION

Values You Have Paid For

60 MINUTES | COMMITMENT DESIGN

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Everyone says they value freedom, family or honesty. This exercise separates the values you say you hold from the ones you have actually paid for, because those will shape your next move whether you plan for them or not. The price can also explain a sore point: feeling "not successful enough" by conventional standards, or having once turned down a great job offer, is often the price of a value you chose, such as freedom paid for with status.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. From the list on the worksheet, tick up to ten values that matter most to you now, not the ones you think you should choose. Add your own.
2. Rank your top five.
3. For each of the five, find a time you paid a price to keep it: you gave up money, a title, status, comfort or a relationship. For example, someone who values freedom may have turned down a promotion that came with more control from above.
4. Did you pay that price more than once? A value you have paid for repeatedly is one you can build on.
5. Note the times you acted against a value. Was it a constraint (you had no real choice) or a choice? Keep the values you have paid for more than once. Put the rest on a separate list: aspirations to test in stage 04.

WHEN TO USE IT

In stage 03, before your Signature page (#16) and well before you compare real options in stage 06.

BEST FOR

Wanderer, Experimenter, Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Silent Ones: if a constraint gets relabelled as a free choice.

SKIP IT IF

You are in the middle of an acute ending. Values work goes better once you are steadier.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Three to five values with a price you have paid more than once. Those are the ones to keep.

IF NOTHING COMES

Start from the other side: what have you refused, even when refusing cost you? Name the value behind the refusal.

WATCH FOR

Choosing the socially approved values (family, honesty, hard work) because they sound right.

Instead: Ask: if nobody would ever know, would I still choose this? If a sacrifice was forced on you, write it down as a constraint and leave it off the values list.

NOTES

LINEAGE Adapts the Personal Values Card Sort by W. R. Miller, J. C'de Baca, D. B. Matthews and P. L. Wilbourne (2001), which its authors placed in the public domain. The price step comes from the Signature design.

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15 | STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET

Values You Have Paid For

TICK UP TO TEN. ADD YOUR OWN IN THE BLANK BOXES.

- ☐ Achievement
- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ Autonomy
- ☐ Beauty
- ☐ Belonging
- ☐ Challenge
- ☐ Community
- ☐ Competence
- ☐ Contribution
- ☐ Craft
- ☐ Creativity
- ☐ Curiosity
- ☐ Fairness
- ☐ Family
- ☐ Freedom
- ☐ Friendship
- ☐ Growth
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Honesty
- ☐ Humour
- ☐ Independence
- ☐ Influence
- ☐ Justice
- ☐ Knowledge
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Learning
- ☐ Loyalty
- ☐ Meaning
- ☐ Nature
- ☐ Order
- ☐ Pleasure
- ☐ Recognition
- ☐ Responsibility
- ☐ Security
- ☐ Simplicity
- ☐ Spirituality
- ☐ Status
- ☐ Tempo
- ☐ Tradition
- ☐ Wealth
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

MY TOP FIVE, RANKED	THE PRICE I PAID FOR IT (MONEY, TITLE, STATUS, COMFORT, RELATIONSHIP)	MORE THAN ONCE?	WHEN I ACTED AGAINST IT: CONSTRAINT OR CHOICE?

VALUES WITHOUT A PRICE YET: ASPIRATIONS TO TEST IN STAGE 04

NOTES

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16

STAGE 03 · INQUIRY & DECONSTRUCTION

My Signature on One Page

60 MINUTES | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Stages 01 to 03 produce a lot of material. This page puts it in one place, so stage 04 works from the whole picture. If something does not fit on the page, leave it out for now.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Collect your results so far: constants (#13), what gives you energy and what drains you (#12), when you finish things (#14), the values you have paid for (#15). Use short phrases. It has to fit on one page.
2. Write each constant as a sentence that starts "I am at my best when I …". Use verbs other people can see: find out, explain, build, calm, organise, teach. Leave out job titles, industries and company names.
3. Add what you are drawn to: topics you read about without being asked and problems you would work on for free. Then the lottery question: if you won enough never to work again, what would you really do? Think it through in stages: the first weeks, one to three years, five years or more. The later answers are the useful ones.
4. Add what you do not want: work you avoided or lost interest in even when you were responsible for it. Add the conditions that drained you in 'What drains me'.
5. Finish with the conditions you need (tempo, people, freedom, place) and one sentence that pulls it together: "I fit best where …".

WHEN TO USE IT

At the end of stage 03, once you have done #13 and at least one of #12, #14 or #15. This page is the bridge into stage 04: everything there works from it.

BEST FOR

Everyone

TAKE CARE

Holders: if the old job title keeps sneaking back in.

DON'T SKIP THIS

Stage 04 builds on this page. If you have time for only one more exercise after #13, make it this one.

WORKING WITH AI

Paste your notes from #12 to #15 and ask: "Sort these notes under these headings: [copy the ten headings from the worksheet]. Use my words, keep it to one page and point out anything that contradicts itself." Then ask a second question: "What do these notes say about where I do my best work? Name three kinds of situations, not job titles." Check every line against your own evidence. The AI only sorts and suggests.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

One page you could hand to a friend that says how you work, what you need and what to leave out. It is the input for the Territory Map (#18).

IF NOTHING COMES

Ask two people who know your work: "When you've seen me at my best, what was I doing?" Write down their verbs.

WATCH FOR

The old job coming back in ("I lead marketing teams").

Instead: Ask what you were actually doing when you led marketing teams well. That verb is the one you need.

NOTES

LINEAGE Author-developed. The one-page Signature comes from the Signature design, first built and tested on the author's own transition.

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16 STAGE 03 · WORKSHEET

My Signature on One Page

EXAMPLE

I am at my best when I make sense of a messy situation and explain it so others can act.

I am at my best when I build something from scratch and hand it over once it runs.

I fit best where something new is starting, I can set my own pace and I have access to the people who decide.

I AM AT MY BEST WHEN I …

WHAT GIVES ME ENERGY (#12)

WHAT DRAINS ME (#12)

TOPICS AND PROBLEMS I KEEP RETURNING TO

VALUES I HAVE PAID FOR (#15)

WHAT I DON'T WANT, EVEN IF I'M GOOD AT IT

CONDITIONS I NEED: TEMPO, PEOPLE, FREEDOM, PLACE

I FINISH THINGS WHEN … (#14)

IF MONEY DID NOT MATTER, I WOULD … (FIRST WEEKS, 1–3 YEARS, 5+ YEARS)

I FIT BEST WHERE …

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04 Experimentation & Prototyping

NAVIGATE · LATE NEUTRAL ZONE

IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION

You learn who you might become by trying, in small and cheap steps. The exercises here run as a chain: from your one-page Signature (#16) and what you have, to where it could be used, to what must be true, to the people who know and the experiments that test it.

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

01 *Given who I am and what I have access to, what becomes possible?*

02 *What is the smallest version of that I could test in two weeks?*

03 *What would this experiment have to show me for it to count as a real answer?*

04 *Which option asks me to become someone different? Which one only asks me to do the same thing in a new building?*

05 *Which one am I drawn to and which one am I relieved by?*

IN THIS STAGE

17 What's in Your Hand p. 44

18 The Territory Map CORE p. 46

19 What Has to Be True CORE p. 49

20 Who to Talk To CORE p. 51

21 The Experiment Ladder CORE p. 53

22 Experiment Evidence Review CORE p. 55

WHO IS USUALLY HERE

The Experimenter. The trap is running more experiments instead of reading the ones already run.

ONE MOVE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS STAGE Run one experiment with a date and a witness.

Done on _____

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STAGE 04 · EXPERIMENTATION & PROTOTYPING

What's in Your Hand

45 MINUTES | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION

WHY THIS EXERCISE

You start from what you already have. The people list matters most and it works against intuition: those closest to you know you as you were and move in the same circles as you, so they rarely see a new direction for you. New directions often open through people at the edge of your network or beyond it. These second- and third-degree contacts are also often more willing to help than you expect.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Who I am: copy the "at my best" sentences from your Signature page (#16).
2. What I know: domains, languages, markets, methods, tools. Include what you know from outside work.
3. Whom I know: list 30 people in three circles. Close: family, close friends, former colleagues you still see. Wider: people you know a little, such as former clients, alumni, neighbours, people from associations. New: people you do not know yet but could reach through someone. At least ten names should come from the wider and new circles.
4. Mark what each person could do: advise you, introduce you, hire or buy from you, join you.
5. What else I have: time and money for experiments (#08), a space, an audience, a reputation somewhere. Then ask: given all this, what could I start this month without anyone's permission? Write three answers.

WHEN TO USE IT

At the start of stage 04, before you look at options.

BEST FOR

Drifter, Wanderer

TAKE CARE

Holders: if every resource on the list belongs to the old role.

SKIP IT IF

You are still in acute loss. Come back when you can think about next steps.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Starting material. Most people find more than they expected, especially among the people they know only a little.

IF NOTHING COMES

For the wider circle, go through your phone contacts from A to Z and your LinkedIn connections filtered by the places you have worked. For the new circle, ask two people in your wider circle: "Who should I meet?"

WATCH FOR

A list where everyone comes from the old industry or the close circle.

Instead: Add at least five people from outside your old industry and your close circle before you move on. They are the ones who will show you territories you cannot see from the inside.

NOTES

LINEAGE Based on the bird-in-hand principle from Saras Sarasvathy's research on effectuation (2001), Mark Granovetter's strength of weak ties (1973) and Herminia Ibarra's advice to shift connections (Working Identity, 2003).

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17 STAGE 04 · WORKSHEET

What’s in Your Hand

WHO I AM (FROM #16)

WHAT I KNOW

WHAT ELSE I HAVE

WHAT I COULD START THIS MONTH

WHOM I KNOW: 30 PEOPLE. CIRCLE: CLOSE, WIDER OR NEW. TICK WHAT EACH COULD DO.

NAME	CIRCLE C / W / N	ADVISE	INTRO	HIRE / BUY	JOIN

NAME	CIRCLE C / W / N	ADVISE	INTRO	HIRE / BUY	JOIN

NOTES

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STAGE 04 · EXPERIMENTATION & PROTOTYPING

The Territory Map

90 MINUTES | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Most people only look for work next to their old job title. This exercise uses your Signature to search much wider, in employed roles, client work, teaching and unexpected places, then narrows the results to a short list you can test. It is how you find options you would never have thought of on your own.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Take your Signature page (#16): the "at my best" sentences, what gives you energy and the topics you keep returning to. You will search with them.
2. Search in four ways. AI: give an assistant your Signature page and the prompt on the worksheet. Occupation databases: type the verbs from your "at my best" sentences (not job titles) into platforms such as ESCO (esco.ec.europa.eu) or O*NET (onetonline.org) and note the occupations and their neighbours. Job ads: search for your verbs, ignore the titles and read the task lists. People: search LinkedIn for profiles that describe your combination and look at what those people are called.
3. Write every territory you find into one of four lanes: inside an organisation (employed), for clients (freelance, interim, consulting), teach or explain it (education, content, products) or wild card. Aim for eight or more, at least one in each lane. Do not filter yet.
4. Mark the ones where your energy rises when you picture an ordinary Tuesday there. Check each marked one against your Signature page: would your strengths matter there, could your conditions be met, could you test it within your budget (#08)?
5. Keep three to five, always including the wild card if it passed. For each, write who decides there: who hires or buys this kind of work? You will need these in #20.

WHEN TO USE IT

After your Signature page (#16) and What's in Your Hand (#17).

BEST FOR

Wanderer, Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Holders: if you keep only what looks like the old job.

SKIP IT IF

You already have three to five concrete directions you want to test. Go to #19.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Range first, then a shortlist. The search shows where the same strengths are needed under names you would never have thought of.

IF NOTHING COMES

Take one "at my best" sentence and ask five people: "Where have you seen someone paid to do this?"

WATCH FOR

Narrowing too early.

Instead: Keep the wild card on the shortlist until you know your riskiest assumptions (#19). It costs nothing to keep it there and it widens what you test.

NOTES

LINEAGE Author-developed, including the Possibility Portfolio (Liminal Fluency). Uses Herminia Ibarra's sources of possible selves (Working Identity, 2003) and the diverge-then-converge principle from design practice (the Design Council's Double Diamond).

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18 | STAGE 04 · WORKSHEET

The Territory Map

WORKING WITH AI: A PROMPT TO COPY

"Here is a one-page summary of how I work, what gives me energy, what drains me, the topics I keep returning to and the conditions I need: [paste]. Suggest 15 roles, functions, types of organisation or fields where this combination is valued, in four groups: employed roles, client work (freelance, interim, consulting), teaching or products and two unexpected ones. For each, say why it fits, which of my conditions it might break, who usually hires or buys it and what search terms people use for it. Leave out anything close to my last job title, which was [title]." Treat the answer as a list of leads to check.

EXAMPLE

Signature: I am at my best when I bring order to chaos, train new people and solve problems on the spot. Drawn to sustainability and how cities work. I need variety, a team around me and visible results.

Inside an organisation: operations lead in a growing company, programme manager in a public agency.

For clients: interim operations manager, process consultant for small manufacturers.

Teach or explain: trainer for a professional association, an online course on running a small team.

Wild card: operations role in a renewable energy cooperative.

Training and the energy sector had not come up in years of thinking about the next job. A search with the right words found them.

NOTES

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The Territory Map

VERBS FROM MY “AT MY BEST” SENTENCES (#16)

DO IT INSIDE AN ORGANISATION

employed

DO IT FOR CLIENTS

freelance, interim, consulting

TEACH OR EXPLAIN IT

education, content, products

WILD CARD

the one you would defend but never put on a CV

Mark with ★ the territories where your energy rises when you picture an ordinary Tuesday there. Aim for eight or more, then copy your shortlist below.

SHORTLIST: TERRITORY	STRENGTHS MATTER?	CONDITIONS MET?	TESTABLE NOW?	WHO DECIDES THERE: HIRES OR BUYS IT

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STAGE 04 · EXPERIMENTATION & PROTOTYPING

What Has to Be True

30 MINUTES | UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Every direction rests on a few assumptions: that the problem is real, that you would enjoy the work, that you could get in, that someone would pay. Most people check the pleasant one first and find out about the others too late. This exercise finds the one that would end the option, so you test that one first.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Write your top three territories from #18 at the top of the three columns on the worksheet.
2. For each, answer four questions with sure, unsure or no idea. Real: does anyone actually have this problem today, or am I assuming it? Want: would I still like this in week three, not only on day one? Can: could I get in and do the work with what I have? Paid: would someone pay enough to cover my monthly costs (#08)?
3. Add one personal question: if I did this, what am I afraid it would say about me?
4. In each column, circle the answer you are least sure of that would end the option if it turned out wrong. That is your riskiest assumption. Your conversations (#20) and your first experiment (#21) test that one.

WHEN TO USE IT

After the Territory Map (#18), before you talk to people or design an experiment.

BEST FOR

Experimenter, Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Anyone who tests only the comfortable assumptions.

SKIP IT IF

You have no shortlist yet (#18).

EXAMPLE

Territory: trainer for a professional association. Real: unsure. Want: sure. Can: unsure, no training record. Paid: no idea.

Riskiest assumption: an association would pay an outside trainer without a formal qualification.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

One riskiest assumption per territory, usually the uncomfortable one ("will anyone pay?") rather than the pleasant one ("would I enjoy it?").

IF NOTHING COMES

Imagine the option failed after a year. What was the reason? That reason is an assumption you can test.

WATCH FOR

Skipping the personal question.

Instead: If the answer is "that I failed" or "that I am no longer a real professional", it will quietly steer your experiments. Name it. For a deeper look, see Immunity to Change on the "Worth your time elsewhere" pages at the back.

NOTES

LINEAGE Simplified from assumption mapping in product development (David Bland and Alexander Osterwalder, Testing Business Ideas, 2019), using the desirable, feasible and viable lens from design thinking.

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19 | STAGE 04 · WORKSHEET

What Has to Be True

WRITE THE TERRITORY NAMES IN THE HEADER. ANSWER SURE, UNSURE OR NO IDEA AND ADD WHY.

	TERRITORY 1	TERRITORY 2	TERRITORY 3
Real: does anyone actually have this problem today?			
Want: would I still like this in week three?			
Can: could I get in and do the work?			
Paid: would someone pay enough?			
Personal: what I'm afraid this would say about me …			

RISKIEST ASSUMPTION, TERRITORY 1	RISKIEST ASSUMPTION, TERRITORY 2	RISKIEST ASSUMPTION, TERRITORY 3

NOTES

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STAGE 04 · EXPERIMENTATION & PROTOTYPING

Who to Talk To

30 MINUTES TO PLAN, THEN CONVERSATIONS OF 20 MINUTES | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION

CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Talk to people who know the work: they tell you what the work is really like, what it pays and who decides. Most new directions open through them. This exercise turns your shortlist into a map of names.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. For each territory on your shortlist, fill one row of the map: someone doing the work now, someone who decides (hires or buys it), someone who left it and a place where these people meet: an association, a conference, an online community.
2. Find names, not job titles: LinkedIn search by role and type of organisation, then check shared connections; speaker lists of conferences; staff pages of universities and companies; alumni groups. Ask your wider and new circles from #17 for introductions.
3. Ask for 20 minutes: "I'm exploring whether [territory] could be a direction for me. You know it from the inside. Could I ask you three or four questions? I'm not asking about a job."
4. Ask about an ordinary week, what people underestimate, what it pays and how people get hired or bought. One question must test your riskiest assumption (#19). End with: "Who else should I talk to?"
5. Within 24 hours, write down three things you learned and one that surprised you. Send a short thank-you.

WHEN TO USE IT

Once you know the riskiest assumption for each territory on your shortlist (#19).

BEST FOR

Everyone

TAKE CARE

Silent Ones: if cold contact feels impossible. Start with one person you already trust.

SKIP IT IF

You already know people in all three positions and a place where they meet, for each territory. Go straight to step 3.

EXAMPLE

Renewable energy cooperatives. Doing it: operations staff at a cooperative. Decides: managing directors and boards. Left it: a former cooperative manager. Meets at: regional network events for energy cooperatives.

Training. Doing it: freelance trainers. Decides: training coordinators at professional associations.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Real names instead of categories, plus information you cannot get from the outside: what the work is really like, what it pays and whether people like you get in.

IF NOTHING COMES

If nobody answers, ask two people you know for an introduction, or write to five more with a shorter message. A warm introduction gets answered far more often than a cold message.

WATCH FOR

Turning the conversation into a job request, or staying in your close circle.

Instead: Keep to the questions you promised. If they offer something, you can follow up later. Make sure at least half of the people you talk to come from outside your close circle.

NOTES

LINEAGE Uses prototype conversations from Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, Designing Your Life (2016), Herminia Ibarra's advice to shift connections (Working Identity, 2003) and Mark Granovetter's strength of weak ties (1973).

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20 | STAGE 04 · WORKSHEET

Who to Talk To

WORKING WITH AI: A PROMPT TO COPY

"For [territory], which kinds of organisations hire or buy this work, which job titles do the people who decide usually have, which associations, conferences or online communities bring them together and which search terms would find them on LinkedIn?" Then find the real people yourself and write your first message in your own words.

MY MAP: NAMES, NOT JOB TITLES

TERRITORY	DOING IT NOW	DECIDES: HIRES OR BUYS IT	LEFT IT	WHERE THEY MEET

AFTER EACH CONVERSATION, WITHIN 24 HOURS

WHO, WHEN · THREE THINGS I LEARNED

ONE THING THAT SURPRISED ME · NEXT NAME TO CONTACT

WHO, WHEN · THREE THINGS I LEARNED

ONE THING THAT SURPRISED ME · NEXT NAME TO CONTACT

NOTES

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STAGE 04 · EXPERIMENTATION & PROTOTYPING

The Experiment Ladder

30 MINUTES TO DESIGN, 1 TO 4 WEEKS TO RUN | IDENTITY EXPERIMENTATION | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

An experiment is a small, cheap step that produces evidence. The ladder keeps the steps small: start at the lowest level that can test your assumption and go up one level only after it has worked twice.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Pick the lowest level that could test your riskiest assumption. The six levels, from small to big: talk to someone who does it; watch the work (sit in on a lecture, shadow a day); make a sample (one short guide, one 45-minute session); offer it small (a post or one-page offer, then count the replies); run a paid pilot (one client, one course); take a part-time or project role.
2. Write your prediction: what you expect to happen.
3. Write what would prove you wrong, as a number you can count: "If fewer than two of ten people reply with interest, my assumption is probably wrong."
4. Set a date and a witness: someone who knows about the experiment and will ask you how it went.
5. Keep the cost inside your budget (#08). Run two to four experiments at once, no more. Still employed? The lower levels often fit inside your current role: a new project, a different task, an internal session you teach.

WHEN TO USE IT

After What Has to Be True (#19) and ideally a few conversations (#20), for your top two or three territories.

BEST FOR

Experimenter, Wanderer

TAKE CARE

Experimenters: if one more experiment replaces a decision.

SKIP IT IF

You have not identified a riskiest assumption yet (#19).

EXAMPLE

Assumption: association members want a practical session on running small teams. Level 3, make a sample: one free 45-minute session at a local chapter.

Prediction: at least 15 people come and three ask for more. Wrong if: fewer than eight come or nobody asks a follow-up question. Date: 20 November. Witness: Anna.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Evidence you did not have before.

IF NOTHING COMES

Go down a level. If an offer feels too big, make a sample. If a sample feels too big, watch someone do the work.

WATCH FOR

Experiments that are really more reading, private experiments nobody knows about and free work with no learning attached.

Instead: Every experiment gets a date and a witness. In my own testing, private starts died quietly and the ones with a witness got done. If you work for free, agree in advance what you will learn and when it ends.

NOTES

LINEAGE Builds on Herminia Ibarra's provisional selves (1999), Alberto Savoia's pretotyping (The Right It, 2019) and the witness rule from the Signature design. The employed variant uses job crafting research (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

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21 | STAGE 04 · WORKSHEET

The Experiment Ladder

THE SIX LEVELS: START LOW, GO UP ONE LEVEL ONCE THE LEVEL BELOW HAS WORKED TWICE

Level 1
Talk
someone who does it

Level 2
Watch
sit in, shadow a day

Level 3
Make a sample
one guide, one session

Level 4
Offer it small
a post or one-page offer

Level 5
Paid pilot
one client, one course

Level 6
Part-time or project role
the real thing, bounded

EXPERIMENT CARD

Territory and the assumption I am testing _____

Level _____

My prediction _____

I am wrong if (a number I can count) _____

Date _____

Witness _____

Cost: time and money _____

EXPERIMENT CARD

Territory and the assumption I am testing _____

Level _____

My prediction _____

I am wrong if (a number I can count) _____

Date _____

Witness _____

Cost: time and money _____

NOTES

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STAGE 04 · EXPERIMENTATION & PROTOTYPING

Experiment Evidence Review

30 MINUTES PER EXPERIMENT | COMMITMENT DESIGN | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

An experiment only helps if you read its result honestly. This review makes sure each experiment leads to a clear next step: continue, adapt, combine or stop.

WHEN TO USE IT

When an experiment ends, or on its date.

BEST FOR

Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Anyone who stops after one disappointing result.

SKIP IT IF

The experiment is still running. Wait for the date.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. What did you predict and what happened? Did the result cross the line you set in advance?
2. Could something else explain it: timing, the particular person, luck, a bad day?
3. Read the result on three axes. Traction: did anything move without you pushing it? Energy: did the doing give or take? Payment: did anyone pay, or come close?
4. Choose one of four: continue, adapt (change one variable and run it again), combine (two partial results that work better together) or stop. Stop or scale only after the same answer twice. Write the next step and its date and add what you learned to your Territory Map (#18).

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

One decision per experiment. A single result rarely settles anything: look for the same answer twice before you stop or expand.

IF NOTHING COMES

If you cannot say what you learned, the experiment had no clear prediction. Rewrite it with one and run it again.

WATCH FOR

Treating one bad day as a verdict about yourself, or one compliment as proof of demand.

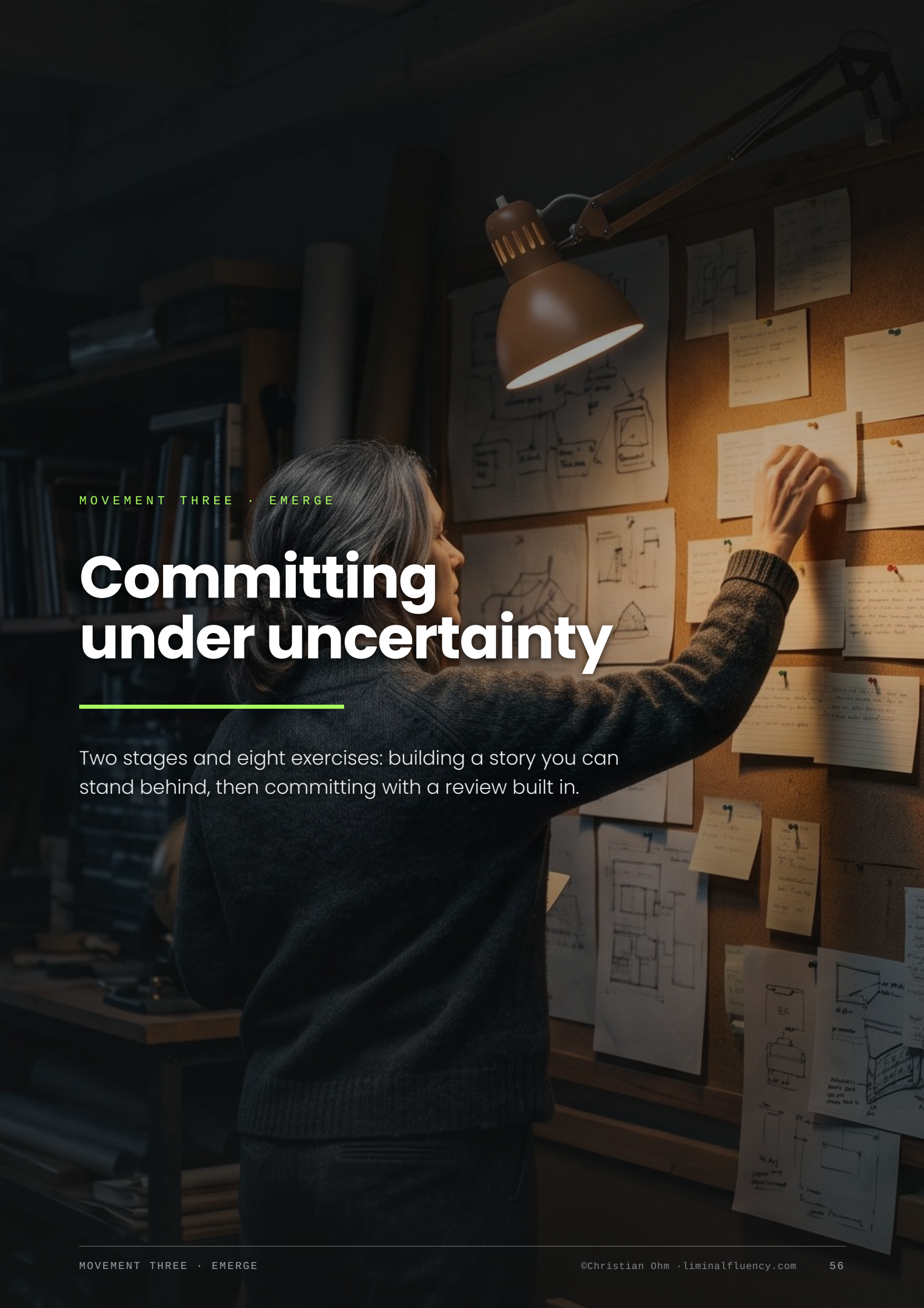
Instead: Before you act on one result, run the same test once more with a different person or on a different date.

WORKSHEET

	EXPERIMENT 1	EXPERIMENT 2	EXPERIMENT 3
Experiment			
What I predicted			
What happened			
Did it cross my line? Y / N			
Other explanations			
Traction / energy / payment			
Continue, adapt, combine or stop			
Next step and date			

LINEAGE After-action review practice and the build, measure, learn loop (Eric Ries, The Lean Startup, 2011). Author-developed worksheet.

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MOVEMENT THREE · EMERGE

Committing under uncertainty

Two stages and eight exercises: building a story you can stand behind, then committing with a review built in.

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05 Narrative Integration

EMERGE · BRIDGE / EARLY NEW BEGINNING

NARRATIVE COHERENCE

Something new is taking shape. The work here is building a story from what you have actually lived, with the old role carried forward instead of erased.

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

01 *What possibilities are emerging, even if I can't describe them yet?*

02 *If I titled the chapters of my working life so far, what would this one be called? And the next?*

03 *When someone asks what I do, what do I say now and what does it cost me to say it?*

04 *What in the old story is still true and worth carrying?*

05 *Who reflected something back to me that I hadn't seen?*

IN THIS STAGE

23 Life Chapters p. 58

24 The Ex-Role Line p. 60

25 A Story You Can Stand Behind CORE p. 62

WHO IS USUALLY HERE

The Threshold Crosser and anyone whose experiments have started to point in one direction.

ONE MOVE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS STAGE

Tell your story out loud to two people and note where you hesitated.

Done on _____

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STAGE 05 · NARRATIVE INTEGRATION

Life Chapters

45 MINUTES | NARRATIVE COHERENCE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Stage 03 collected evidence about you. This exercise looks at the story you have told about yourself. The answer to "What do you do?" changes with every chapter. Seeing the answers side by side shows what has always been there and makes it easier to find an honest answer for the next chapter.

WHEN TO USE IT

In stage 05, when you need to connect what was with what is emerging.

BEST FOR

Silent One, Wanderer, Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Holders: if the current chapter is pushed towards a happy ending.

SKIP IT IF

You have few experiments behind you yet. The story needs material from stage 04.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Draw a line from your first job, or earlier, to today. Divide it into four to six chapters.
2. Give each chapter a title, the way a book would: "The Tokyo years", "Building from zero".
3. Under each chapter, write how you answered when people asked "What do you do?" at that time.
4. Then write how you answer that question today and how you would like to answer it in your next role.
5. Look along the line: what stays the same in your answers, even when the job titles change?

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

What connects the chapters. The way you work usually runs through all of them, while job titles and industries change.

IF NOTHING COMES

Start from the turning points and work backwards: list five moments when your working life changed direction.

WATCH FOR

A CV in chapter form.

Instead: If the titles are job titles, rewrite them as what the chapter was about. The current chapter may stay unfinished.

NOTES

LINEAGE The chapter device comes from Dan McAdams' research on narrative identity.

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23 STAGE 05 · WORKSHEET

Life Chapters

CHAPTER 1 · TITLE

WHEN ASKED WHAT I DO, I SAID …

CHAPTER 2 · TITLE

WHEN ASKED WHAT I DO, I SAID …

CHAPTER 3 · TITLE

WHEN ASKED WHAT I DO, I SAID …

CHAPTER 4 · TITLE

WHEN ASKED WHAT I DO, I SAID …

CHAPTER 5 · TITLE

WHEN ASKED WHAT I DO, I SAID …

CHAPTER 6 · TITLE

WHEN ASKED WHAT I DO, I SAID …

TODAY, WHEN ASKED WHAT I DO, I SAY …

IN MY NEXT ROLE, I WANT TO SAY …

WHAT STAYS THE SAME IN MY ANSWERS

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STAGE 05 · NARRATIVE INTEGRATION

The Ex-Role Line

30 MINUTES | NARRATIVE COHERENCE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

People will keep seeing you through your old role for a while. This exercise turns that role into something useful: a short line that tells others what you bring now because of where you have been.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Write: “I am no longer [old role].”
2. Then: “I am an ex-[old role] who …” and finish the sentence with something useful you bring now. Write three versions.
3. Test each one: does it tell someone what you bring now?
4. Choose one and use it in a conversation this week.
5. Then try a provisional line for where you are heading, in small words first: “someone who teaches” before “a teacher”.

WHEN TO USE IT

When the old role still defines how people see you, or how you see yourself.

BEST FOR

Holder, Silent One, Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Anyone for whom the old role still hurts too much to name.

SKIP IT IF

You have not yet let go of the old role. Do Keep, Change, Drop (#03) first.

EXAMPLES

I am an ex-founder who understands the emotional cost of building.

I am an ex-corporate leader who knows how large organisations work and can use that in independent work.

I am an ex-tax specialist who can explain complex rules to people without the training.

WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR

A way to carry the old role forward as an asset. The sociologist Helen Ebaugh showed that people who leave a role keep an identity as its former holder. The question is whether that identity helps you.

IF NOTHING COMES

Ask: what do I understand now that people still in that role cannot see?

WATCH FOR

A line that is really a lament (“I am an ex-director who used to matter”).

Instead: If that is what comes out, go back to Keep, Change, Drop (#03) first and return here later.

NOTES

LINEAGE Author-developed, from the Liminal Fluency endings work. Draws on Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, Becoming an Ex (1988).

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24 | STAGE 05 · WORKSHEET

The Ex-Role Line

I am no longer _____

I am an ex- _____ who _____

_____

I am no longer _____

I am an ex- _____ who _____

_____

I am no longer _____

I am an ex- _____ who _____

_____

WHERE I AM HEADING, IN SMALL WORDS: SOMEONE WHO …

NOTES

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STAGE 05 · NARRATIVE INTEGRATION

A Story You Can Stand Behind

45 MINUTES | NARRATIVE COHERENCE | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

You and the people around you need a short, true account of where you are heading. Narrative research finds that people who can tell how a difficult episode led to something worthwhile tend to report higher well-being.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Pick three scenes from your working life: a high point, a low point and a turning point. Write two or three sentences on each: what happened and what it showed you.
2. Write your story in three parts, one or two sentences each: what ended, what has stayed true about me (with one piece of evidence) and what I am moving towards.
3. Add one honest line: “What I don’t know yet is …”
4. Say it out loud to two people. Note where you hesitate or overstate, adjust it and keep a short version for introductions.

WHEN TO USE IT

When you need to explain your direction to others: conversations, interviews, pitches, family.

BEST FOR

Silent One, Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Anyone under pressure to sound more certain than they are.

SKIP IT IF

You have not run any experiments yet. A story without evidence will not hold.

WORKING WITH AI

Paste your story and ask: “Where do I claim more than the evidence shows? Which sentence would a sceptical listener question first?” Keep the words your own.

WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR

A story you can say out loud without overstating anything. The unfinished line shows you are not overselling, which makes the rest more credible.

IF NOTHING COMES

Start from your Answer for Now (#09) and ask what has changed since you wrote it.

WATCH FOR

A heroic comeback story, or claims stronger than your record.

Instead: If you would feel uneasy when someone asks “how do you know?”, go back to the evidence and adjust the claim.

NOTES

LINEAGE The three scenes come from the key scenes of Dan McAdams’ Life Story Interview; the evidence step from re-authoring in narrative therapy (Michael White and David Epston, 1990). Author-developed worksheet.

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25 STAGE 05 · WORKSHEET

A Story You Can Stand Behind

HIGH POINT

LOW POINT

TURNING POINT

WHAT ENDED

WHAT HAS STAYED TRUE ABOUT ME, WITH ONE PIECE OF EVIDENCE

WHAT I AM MOVING TOWARDS

WHAT I DON’T KNOW YET IS …

SHORT VERSION FOR INTRODUCTIONS

NOTES

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06 Emergence & Design Forward

EMERGE · NEW BEGINNING

COMMITMENT DESIGN

Commitment, re-entry and the deliberate design of what comes next. You commit to something you can afford to lose and set a date to review it. Certainty does not arrive first.

QUESTIONS TO SIT WITH

01 *What am I willing to commit to before I'm certain?*

02 *What is my own definition of this working: not the market's, not my old employer's?*

03 *If I take this, how do I enter it as a chosen experiment rather than as relief?*

04 *What will I do when the doubt comes back? It will.*

05 *How would I know at the first checkpoint whether this is the right fit or the old trap again?*

IN THIS STAGE

26 Non-Negotiables CORE p. 65

27 What Decides It p. 67

28 The Pre-Mortem p. 69

29 The Exit Rule CORE p. 71

30 Early Re-Entry Review p. 73

WHO IS USUALLY HERE

The Threshold Crosser. Unfinished grief often comes back here, which is normal.

ONE MOVE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS STAGE

Put your first checkpoint in the calendar and tell one person the date.

Done on _____

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STAGE 06 · EMERGENCE & DESIGN FORWARD

Non-Negotiables

30 MINUTES | COMMITMENT DESIGN | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Once an attractive offer is on the table, it is easy to give up things that matter to you. Writing your non-negotiables before any offer arrives gives you a fixed reference point, so you can say no with confidence when an option breaks one of them.

WHEN TO USE IT

Before you have an offer in front of you. Once an offer exists, we tend to adjust our conditions to fit it and explain the choice afterwards.

BEST FOR

Threshold Crosser, Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Anyone who lists more than five.

DON'T SKIP THIS

Write this even if no offer is in sight.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Warm up: finish the sentence "I know I don't want …" five times (to manage people again, to work 60-hour weeks, to pretend to agree, etc.).
2. Turn the strongest into three to five non-negotiables, in order of priority. Each one is either kept or broken, no scoring.
3. Phrase them as rules you can check: "I will not trade X for Y." For example: "I will not trade evenings with my family for a bigger title."
4. For each one, write how you would check it before signing: whom you would ask, what you would look at.
5. Keep the list where you will see it on the day an offer arrives.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

A short list that decides. If any non-negotiable is missing on the day the offer arrives, the answer is no, whatever else is at stake.

IF NOTHING COMES

Look at the drains on your Signature page (#16) and at your Graveyard Comparison (#14): which conditions ended things before?

WATCH FOR

Too many non-negotiables.

Instead: Keep it to five at most. A longer list will not rule anything out.

NOTES

LINEAGE Developed and tested in Liminal Fluency client work. The rule format comes from the constraint catalogue in the Signature design.

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26 STAGE 06 · WORKSHEET

Non-Negotiables

I KNOW I DON'T WANT …

RULE: I WILL NOT TRADE … FOR …	HOW I WOULD CHECK IT BEFORE SIGNING	KEPT? Y / N

NOTES

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STAGE 06 · EMERGENCE & DESIGN FORWARD

What Decides It

45 MINUTES, IN TWO SITTINGS | COMMITMENT DESIGN

WHY THIS EXERCISE

When an attractive option arrives, it is easy to overlook the one thing that will make it fail. Setting your deciding questions before you look at the options stops a single deal-breaker from hiding behind a list of attractions.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Before you look at any option, pick up to four deciding questions from the prompts on this page or write your own. These are the questions that would make you say no.
2. In a second sitting, answer every deciding question for each option with yes, unclear or no. One no rules the option out, however good the rest looks.
3. For each unclear, write who could tell you: the hiring manager, someone who works there, someone who left.
4. Ask each option: would this require me to become someone different, or to do the same thing in a new building?
5. Last: which option am I drawn to and which one am I relieved by? They are often different.

WHEN TO USE IT

When you have real options to compare, or to prepare for them.

BEST FOR

Threshold Crosser, Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Wanderers: if there are no live options yet. Use it to prepare.

SKIP IT IF

You have only one option and your non-negotiables (#26) already decide it.

PROMPTS

- *How much is actually mine to decide?*
- *Do I want to be shaped by this manager?*
- *Who is already there and how long have they stayed?*
- *Will I have to sell things I do not believe in?*
- *Will I build something new or maintain something built?*
- *Enough human contact, of the right kind?*
- *Hours, travel, boundaries?*
- *Do I decide how the work is done?*
- *Can I learn and progress?*
- *Last: does it feel right?*

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

The question that decides.

IF NOTHING COMES

Use this question: "What does someone in this role have to stop doing to succeed here?"

WATCH FOR

Changing the deciding questions after you have seen the options so that your favourite wins.

Instead: Write the deciding questions first, in a separate sitting, before you look at any option.

LINEAGE Developed and tested in Liminal Fluency client work, including the 'structure that holds me or limits me' question from the coaching practice. Designed as a simpler alternative to weighted scoring tables.

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27 | STAGE 06 · WORKSHEET

What Decides It

ANSWER YES, UNCLEAR OR NO. ONE NO RULES THE OPTION OUT.

DECIDING QUESTION	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3

FOR EACH OPTION	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Who could clear up the unclear answers?			
Someone different, or the same thing in a new building?			
Drawn to or relieved by?			

NOTES

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STAGE 06 · EMERGENCE & DESIGN FORWARD

The Pre-Mortem

45 MINUTES | COMMITMENT DESIGN, UNCERTAINTY TOLERANCE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Imagining that a decision has already failed is a well-tested way to spot risks you would otherwise overlook. It also shows whether you are about to repeat a failure you have lived through before, so you can prevent it or choose differently.

WHEN TO USE IT

Before you sign or commit.

BEST FOR

Threshold Crosser, Experimenter

TAKE CARE

Wanderers: if it turns into a long list of fears.

SKIP IT IF

You have no concrete option to test.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Imagine it is 18 months from now and the option did not work. For your two leading options, write a paragraph on why it failed. Be specific and honest.
2. List the early warning signs that would show this happening.
3. For each sign, write one thing you could do early.
4. Then the useful question: is the failure you just described the same one you have already lived through, or a new one?

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

If the failure you describe is the one you already lived through, treat it as a warning. A new kind of risk can be acceptable.

IF NOTHING COMES

Use your Graveyard Comparison (#14) and What Actually Ended (#01): what went wrong last time?

WATCH FOR

Catastrophising: a long list of fears with no sense of how likely they are.

Instead: Keep to the three most likely reasons per option.

NOTES

LINEAGE Adapted from Gary Klein's project premortem (Harvard Business Review, 2007). The repeat question was developed in Liminal Fluency client work.

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28 STAGE 06 · WORKSHEET

The Pre-Mortem

OPTION 1: HOW THIS GOES WRONG IN 18 MONTHS

OPTION 2: HOW THIS GOES WRONG IN 18 MONTHS

EARLY WARNING SIGNS AND WHAT I WOULD DO

EARLY WARNING SIGNS AND WHAT I WOULD DO

SAME FAILURE AS LAST TIME, OR A NEW ONE?

NOTES

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STAGE 06 · EMERGENCE & DESIGN FORWARD

The Exit Rule

30 MINUTES | COMMITMENT DESIGN | CORE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

Committing is easier when you know you will review the decision. The exit rule sets the signals and the date for that review in advance, so you can commit fully now and judge later on the evidence you named.

WHEN TO USE IT

Before you start, not after problems appear.

BEST FOR

Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Anyone who wants to keep every door open indefinitely.

DON'T SKIP THIS

If you are about to commit to something, write it first.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. In one or two paragraphs, in your own words: what would have to be true (and by when) for me to know this is working? Which specific signals would tell me it is going the way the last one went? At what point and under which conditions would I end this and what would I need in place by then?
2. Set the first checkpoint. Six months is usually right. Put it in your calendar now, or at the latest before you sign.
3. Write your first steps as if-then plans: "If it is Monday at nine, then I …". Up to three.
4. Name one person who will know about the checkpoint.
5. Store the rule with the signed contract.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

A commitment with a review built in.

IF NOTHING COMES

Use your non-negotiables (#26): which one would break first?

WATCH FOR

Moving the goalposts at the checkpoint ("give it another six months") without new evidence.

Instead: Decide today which evidence would justify an extension.

NOTES

LINEAGE Developed in Liminal Fluency client work. If-then plans follow Peter Gollwitzer's research on implementation intentions (1999).

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29 STAGE 06 · WORKSHEET

The Exit Rule

THIS IS WORKING IF … BY …

SIGNALS THAT IT IS GOING THE WAY THE LAST ONE WENT

I WOULD END THIS WHEN … AND I WOULD NEED IN PLACE …

FIRST CHECKPOINT (DATE)

WHO WILL KNOW

IF … THEN I …

NOTES

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STAGE 06 · EMERGENCE & DESIGN FORWARD

Early Re-Entry Review

20 MINUTES IN WEEK TWO, 20 MINUTES IN WEEK SIX

EMOTIONAL GROUNDING, NARRATIVE COHERENCE

WHY THIS EXERCISE

The first weeks in something new are often harder than expected. This review helps you tell normal start-up strain and leftover grief apart from a real mismatch, so you can act early on a real problem and stay calm about the rest.

THE INSTRUCTION

1. Compare what was promised with what is actually happening: hours, scope, decisions, people.
2. Check your non-negotiables (#26): kept or broken?
3. Name what still hurts from the old role. Leftover loss is normal after a new start and says little about whether the decision was right.
4. Separate three things: ordinary learning strain, leftover grief and a mismatch you can show with facts. Only the third is a reason to act now.
5. Write one request for support or one change you will ask for.
6. Enter as a beginner: write three questions you would ask if you did not have to know the answer already. Zen Buddhism calls this shoshin (初心), beginner's mind.

WHEN TO USE IT

After you have started the new role, project or venture.

BEST FOR

Threshold Crosser

TAKE CARE

Anyone who reads every doubt as proof of a wrong decision.

SKIP IT IF

You have not started yet. Do the Exit Rule (#29) first.

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

A clear label for what you are feeling: strain, grief or mismatch.

IF NOTHING COMES

Ask a colleague you trust: "What do people here find hardest in their first months?"

WATCH FOR

Treating renewed grief as a verdict, or explaining away a broken non-negotiable.

Instead: Check against your Exit Rule (#29) and let the evidence decide.

NOTES

LINEAGE Builds on Nancy Schlossberg's transition model (4S) and after-action review practice. Author-developed.

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30 STAGE 06 · WORKSHEET

Early Re-Entry Review

	WEEK TWO	WEEK SIX
Promised vs actual: hours, scope, decisions, people		
Non-negotiables: kept or broken?		
What still hurts from the old role		
Learning strain, leftover grief or a mismatch I can show with facts?		
One request or change I will ask for		
Three beginner's questions		

NOTES

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One line a day between the bigger pieces.

These are field notes. Pick one prompt for the movement you are in and answer it in one line, most evenings. Keep it to one line so it stays quick.

Two exercises in this guide run in the background for weeks: the Signal Journal (#05) and the Energy Audit (#12). If you keep only one habit going, keep one of those. The prompts on this page are the lighter option for weeks when even two minutes feels like too much.

Read back once a month, not more often. Look for lines that repeat. They tend to point to the stage where the weight still sits.

MY LINES THIS MONTH

RELEASE

- *What did I do today that only made sense in the old role?*
- *What did I miss today that I wouldn't admit to missing?*
- *Where did I catch myself performing a version of me that has already gone?*
- *What ended this week that nobody marked?*
- *Which version of myself am I letting go of?*

NAVIGATE

- *What did I notice today that I would normally have ignored?*
- *When did I feel most like myself this week and what was I doing?*
- *What did I reach for when the not-knowing got loud?*
- *What small thing gave me energy, with no strategic reason attached?*
- *Where am I clinging to certainty when I could stay curious?*
- *How could I see this space as an invitation instead of a threat?*

EMERGE

- *What did I say out loud this week that felt true when I said it?*
- *What is one sentence of the new story I could actually defend?*
- *Who reflected something back to me that I hadn't seen?*
- *Which new role could I try on in words first: "someone who teaches" before "a teacher"?*

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Good tools this guide does not reproduce.

There are some great exercises in the field that can be useful to you as well, but they belong to other people. They are named here with their authors and where to find them, so you can use them next to the exercises in this guide.

Immunity to Change

ROBERT KEGAN AND LISA LAHEY, 2009

Finds the hidden commitment behind a change you keep promising and not making, plus the big assumption that holds it in place. Strong for the Holder.

Use it with #19, the personal line · Book: Immunity to Change. Training: Minds at Work.

WOOP

GABRIELE OETTINGEN

Wish, outcome, obstacle, plan. A short, well-researched routine for following through on one action you have already chosen.

Use it with #29, the Exit Rule · Free app and guide: woopmylife.org

Designing Your Life

BILL BURNETT AND DAVE EVANS, 2016

Design thinking for your working life. Odyssey Plans sketch three quite different five-year lives; the Good Time Journal tracks engagement and energy.

Use it with #12 and #18 · Book and workbook

Working Identity

HERMINIA IBARRA, UPDATED EDITION 2023

The research behind acting your way into a new professional identity, with many case studies of mid-career change.

Use it with all of stage 04 · Book

Transitions

WILLIAM BRIDGES, 1980

The classic on endings, the neutral zone and new beginnings. The source of the distinction between change and transition.

Use it with stages 01 and 02 · Book

And four more.

Self-compassion practices

KRISTIN NEFF

Short guided practices for meeting a setback without attacking yourself. It has a large research base.

Use it with #05 and #22 · Free: self-compassion.org

Reflected Best Self Exercise

CENTER FOR POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

A structured way to collect stories from people who know you about when you were at your best. Useful alongside the Witness Harvest, which adds the less flattering evidence.

Use it with #11 · Licensed tool, fee per person

Never Search Alone

PHYL TERRY, 2022

Job Search Councils: small peer groups that meet regularly and give a search a witnessed arena. Fits my own observation that private starts more often fade.

Use it with #21 · Book; free council guide online

Planned Happenstance

JOHN KRUMBOLTZ AND AL LEVIN, 2004

How chance shapes careers and how to make it more likely: curiosity, persistence, flexibility and small actions that put you where opportunities turn up. A good companion when the next step will come through people you have not met yet.

Use it with #17 and #20 · Book: Luck Is No Accident

Why these are not in the guide. Several are protected by copyright or licence. Copying them under a new name would be poor practice. Others need a trained facilitator. All of them are good, which is why they are here.

The exercises work alone. They work faster with a witness.

Most people get stuck in the same place: doing stage 04 work while the unfinished business still sits in stage 01.

That is where a second pair of eyes helps most. Someone who has not lived your career can see which stage the weight is really in, which of your constants hold up and which experiment is worth running first. The guided version of this work goes deeper than any page can, because someone can ask the follow-up question you would skip.

If you work through this guide on your own, keep one rule from it: every experiment gets a date and at least one person who knows about it.

Liminality was always available. For some reason we assumed we could do without it.

CHRISTIAN OHM

THE WORK, STEP BY STEP

01 **The Diagnostic**

Free. Five minutes. Your profile and your dominant movement, with the reasoning behind it.

02 **The Transition Map**

Field Guide 01. How a career transition actually works, the six stages and the six profiles in full.

03 **The Transition Map Session**

One conversation. Your map, your patterns and the next moves that fit where you actually are.

04 **The Foundation Programme · four sessions**

Locating you, working the ending, going through your record and building the first real experiments. A longer Deep Dive Programme goes further, for transitions that need it.

EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE

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> *It's not the uncertainty that scares me. It's that I don't know who I am in it.*
>
> A LIMINALIST READER

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Where the exercises come from.

Exercises marked author-developed come from the Liminal Fluency coaching practice, the endings work and the Signature design (Identity Archaeology), tested in client work and in the author's own transition. The research below is where some of the underlying ideas come from; it does not mean this guide's versions have been tested in the same way.

William Bridges, *Transitions* (1980): change versus transition; the neutral zone.

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Saras Sarasvathy, "Causation and Effectuation", *Academy of Management Review* (2001): the bird-in-hand and affordable loss principles.

Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology* (1973).

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David Bland and Alexander Osterwalder, *Testing Business Ideas* (2019).

Design Council, the Double Diamond (2005).

Occupation databases in #18: ESCO, the European Commission's classification of skills and occupations; O*NET, US Department of Labor.

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