

Finding your own conditions

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Most research about how people work describes what is true on average. That often cannot tell one particular person which change would help them. These questions are about that gap.

There is no score, no type, and no result page. Answer them for yourself. A week will not prove anything. It is long enough to give you a record of what actually happened, which is more than you have now.

Three questions to start with

1. Where were you when your last unusually good idea arrived, and what happened in the day before it?

2. What environment reliably makes you worse at something you are normally good at?

3. What have you been told to work on that turns out to be useful somewhere else?

Before you start a longer stretch

Five minutes, once. The questions have to fit your life or you will stop answering them by week two.

Is the next month roughly normal, or is something big changing? A move, a new job, a wedding, someone ill. Notes taken across one of those cannot be read, because everything moved at once.

What will one entry cover? For most people, a day. For a nurse, a shift or a day off, which are different animals. Pick the piece of your life you will write one entry about.

What kinds of day do you actually have? If two kinds of day are different animals, give them different pages rather than forcing one page to cover both.

What can you actually change? List it honestly. The experiment at the end can only ever point at this list.

Every day, under a minute

First, the conditions. Circle or tick, do not write. Roughly how you slept and when you woke. Whether you went out, saw someone in person, moved, ate properly. What the day mostly was. Whether it felt like enough.

Then one real question, in writing. Keep a short bank and answer whichever you have something to say about. Some days that is one, some days three, some days none. Which ones you keep choosing is itself worth noticing.

- When did today start feeling like yours?
 - Was there a moment today that felt like your actual life?
 - What did you want to do and not do? What got in the way?
 - Who made today easier or harder, and what did they actually do?
 - What did you put off again today?
 - If today repeated tomorrow, what one thing would you change?
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Four things that will bend your notes

Do not rate yourself out of ten. Where you sit on a scale limits how much you can appear to move on it, so numbers invent patterns out of the shape of the scale rather than out of your life.

Answer what happened, not what you are like. When researchers compared what people believed about their own consistency against what their repeated reports actually showed, the two barely matched.

Do not read your own theory into the questions. If you build your sheet around what you already suspect, the month will return your suspicion to you.

Writing it down changes it a little. That is not a reason to stop. It is a reason not to treat one month of notes as proof of anything.

After a month

Read the whole thing in one sitting. Compare like with like. Then look only at what was around the days that stand out at both ends.

Then change one thing. One. Watch for a few more weeks. Changing three things at once tells you nothing.

Free to use, copy and hand to anyone. No diagnosis, no score. Your notes stay yours unless you decide to share them, or what you found, with me.

A version built around your actual week works better than this one. Email leahgerber@outlook.com with the shape of your weeks and what you can actually change, and I will draft your questions.

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