

SEEING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

SUPPLEMENT FOR ORGANIZING CREATIVITY (3RD ED.)

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Daniel Wessel

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MECHANISM

A crucial element of creativity — the deliberate creation of something new and useful — is seeing things differently. It lets you come up with something new because it changes what becomes visible.

We never encounter a situation «*as it is*». A situation contains more detail, history, pressure, and hidden structure than we can consciously process. Perception is selective. We see through lenses, often without noticing them.

Our perspective is skewed by different lenses, including:

- **experience:** what previous situations make familiar or salient,
- **expertise:** what training lets us recognize quickly, while sometimes compressing too much detail,
- **role:** what our current responsibility makes relevant,
- **incentives:** what we are rewarded or punished for noticing,
- **norms and ideology:** what our environment treats as acceptable, valuable, or morally obvious,
- **identity:** what we prefer to see because it protects who we think we are.

These lenses reduce complexity and allow action. They also hide alternatives. Seeing things differently often starts by asking which lens you are already using — usually without noticing — and what would become visible through another one.

What we see, and how we think about it, is also captured by how things are usually used or done. For example, through:

- **functional fixedness:** the tendency to see an object, idea, tool, or procedure only in its usual function,
- **set effects:** the tendency to interact with objects, ideas, tools, or procedures as we have done before,
- **false constants:** the tendency to accept the social or cultural use of objects, ideas, tools, or procedures as fixed,
- **not seeing contingencies:** missing the conditions upon which something we take for granted depends.

This is a supplement to «*Organizing Creativity*» (3rd edition). It is not included in the book because it is more specific and focused, and therefore not relevant to all readers. If the topic is relevant to you, it provides additional information. It was developed with AI input.

More Information: <https://www.organizingcreativity.com/oc3>

These effects reduce friction. That is why they are so common. They help us interact with the world as it is. People who move through the world without friction usually have little reason to notice other uses.

Challenging these effects opens things up. For example:

- A notebook becomes a friction surface for capture, selection, and re-entry.
- A draft becomes a manipulable external object.
- A deadline becomes a coordination device, not only pressure.
- A studio becomes an affordance bundle — visible materials, reduced setup cost, social boundary, stored unfinished work.
- A rejection becomes market feedback, positioning data, and constraint information.

APPLICABILITY

This worksheet is useful when you want to sharpen your view of how things could be different. Use it when a stuck pattern, object, routine, assumption, or constraint may be narrowing the design space.

For example, use it when you:

- see things through preconceptions or are unsure what is missing: **Deliberate Lenses**
- see a thing only by its usual use: **Functional Fixedness**
- keep using an old procedure because it is fluent: **Set Effect**
- treat a practice as natural or required: **False Constants**
- do not see the conditions that make a system hold: **Contingency**

It also provides examples of seeing things differently.

This sheet is less useful when the current default already serves the work well, or when stability matters more than exploration.

INTERVENTION VARIABLES

Seeing things differently can happen at several points in the system.

You can change:

- which lens you apply,
- how you see a thing,
- how you perform a repeated procedure,
- how you notice a default,
- or how you identify the conditions that keep a pattern stable.

Deliberate Lenses

The lenses we use influence what we see. Unconscious lenses keep us from seeing a situation neutrally; we often need oppositional collaboration to get access to other perspectives (see □ Epistemic Humility and Viewpoint Diversity).

We can also choose lenses deliberately. A deliberate lens is a temporary inspection mode. It makes one aspect easier to see and pushes other aspects into the background.

Clarity Lens

- **Ask:** What is ambiguous, hidden, mixed together, or made unnecessarily complex?
- **Output:** One ambiguity to remove or one representation to improve.
- **Example:** Project notes are mixed with decisions, questions, and source material. Separate notes into «material», «open questions», and «decisions» for two weeks.

Precision Lens

- **Ask:** What exactly do the key words, categories, or criteria mean here?
- **Output:** One term, boundary, or criterion made more exact.
- **Example:** «Work on the chapter» is too vague to trigger action. Define each session by one concrete output: paragraph, outline change, source check, or decision.

Abstraction Lens

- **Ask:** Am I drowning in details? What is the larger pattern?
- **Output:** One simplified model, fewer categories, or a higher-level distinction.
- **Example:** Too many subcategories make capture slow. Reduce capture categories to three for one month.

External-observer Lens

- **Ask:** What would another person actually see, record, or measure?
- **Output:** One observable behavior, artifact, or data point.
- **Example:** There is no visible evidence that revision happened. Track only moved sections, deleted passages, and new claims during revision.

Evidence Lens

- **Ask:** Which parts are supported by evidence or argument, and which are assumptions?
- **Output:** One assumption to test or one claim to weaken.
- **Example:** The belief «I need more research» is not supported by a clear missing question. Before reading, write the exact question the source must answer.

Stability lens (see Contingencies)

- **Ask:** What does this pattern depend on? What would break it?
- **Output:** One dependency, condition, or contingency to vary.
- **Example:** Progress depends on uninterrupted quiet. Test a portable re-entry cue for short sessions in imperfect conditions.

Coherence Lens

- **Ask:** Do the parts fit together logically, behaviorally, and systemically?
- **Output:** One mismatch, contradiction, or friction point.
- **Example:** The system rewards collecting ideas but not selecting them. Add a weekly selection rule: choose one idea to develop or discard.

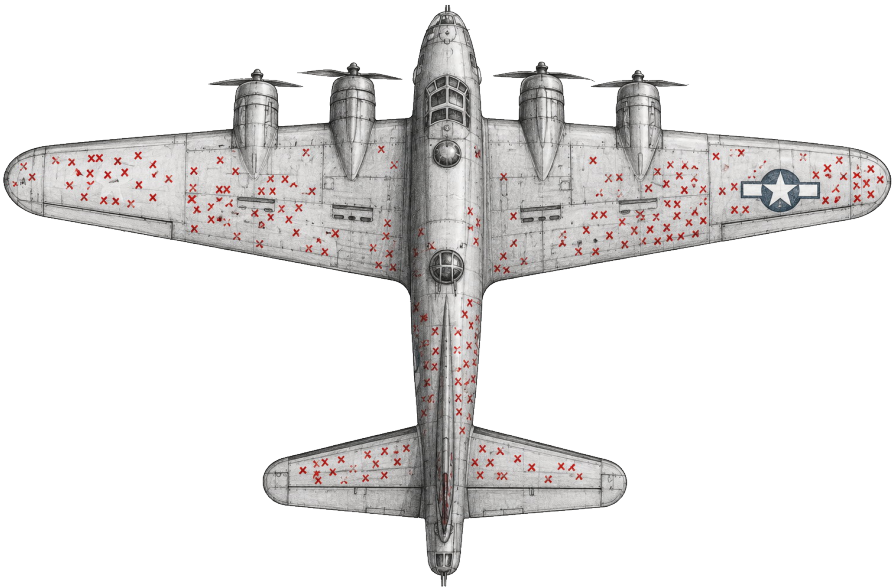
Non-event lens

- **Ask:** What is absent that should perhaps be present? What did not happen?
- **Output:** One missing event, signal, artifact, or reaction to investigate.
- **Example:** No one reacts to finished work because it is never shown. Send one rough artifact to one selected reader every Friday.

Note on Non-Events: Events draw attention. Non-events usually do not. Yet what does not happen can be decisive.

For example, no review happens, no selection happens, no feedback arrives, no artifact leaves the private system, no project gets killed, no one sees the work, no decision point exists, no re-entry cue is left, or no constraint forces completion.

A classic example is the bomber armor problem from World War II. The natural solution is to look at the places where returning bombers were hit and reinforce those areas. But those bombers returned. The armor had to go where no hits were registered, because bombers hit there did not make it home. That requires looking at the places where there are no hits — the non-events. This is also survivor bias.



Watch where your eyes go — the red «x» marks draw attention. The areas where armor is needed are the critical areas without «x» marks, because bombers hit there did not return.

A fictional example appears in «*Silver Blaze*» by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The important clue in that story is that the dog did not bark. Because it was a non-event, it did not draw attention.

Use the non-event lens by asking:

- What should perhaps be happening here, but is not?
- What signal is absent?
- What decision never occurs?
- What artifact is never produced?
- What reaction never arrives?
- What failure is hidden because the work never reaches exposure?
- Which «*dog*» is not barking?

As an example in creative work, «*No one gives feedback on my work*» might suggest that the problem is not feedback quality, but lack of exposure. A possible trial would be: For four weeks, send one unfinished artifact to one selected person every Friday and record whether any usable response occurs.

Functional Fixedness

Functional fixedness is the tendency to see an object, idea, tool, or procedure only in its usual function. A hammer is seen as something to drive in nails, not as a weight. A box is seen as a container, not as a pedestal.

This happens because a thing is a stabilized affordance — a chunk of the world arranged so that certain transformations become unusually easy. When one use becomes very easy, we associate the thing with that use case until other uses fade from view.

Names make this stronger. A name reduces friction by telling you what the thing is usually for. It also narrows the design space by making one use dominant and hiding other properties. Functional fixedness makes alternative uses harder to notice, even when they would solve the problem better.

In creative work, overcoming functional fixedness often means stop asking what the thing is called and ask what else it could do under the current constraints. Probably the best challenge to functional fixedness was said by Gene Kranz in «*Apollo 13*»: «*I don't care about what something was designed to do, I care about what it can do.*»

This means examining the thing as input → transformation → output.

Ask:

- What does this allow?
- What does it block?
- What does it change, transmit, reveal, store, stabilize, or make easier?
- What would still be true about it if nobody had named it?

A lighter, for example, is not only a localized heat-and-light generator or molecular-motion intensifier. It also has rigidity, size, edge, grip, pressure resistance, combustibility, fuel storage, and recognizability.

More formally, you can decompose things into causal primitives that shift attention from usual use to possible use.

Causal Primitives

Causal primitives are the smallest useful descriptions of what an object can do to a variable.

More abstractly, causal primitives are low-level action patterns by which something can change, constrain, transmit, reveal, or stabilize a state of the world. They are the verbs beneath object names — reusable verbs of material, energetic, informational, bodily, or social transformation.

For example:

- **matter:** contain, separate, compress, absorb, preserve, cut, mix
- **energy:** heat, cool, store, release, intensify, dampen, ignite, insulate, conduct, reflect
- **force:** transmit, redirect, amplify, brace, resist, concentrate, dampen
- **motion:** block, guide, accelerate, stabilize, repeat, rotate, oscillate
- **boundary:** seal, divide, expose, protect, filter, cover
- **surface:** hold, mark, display, scrape, grip, cushion, slide, polish
- **signal:** indicate, warn, authorize, attract, remind, identify, draw attention
- **time:** delay, preserve, sequence, trigger, pace, repeat
- **socially:** invite, exclude, rank, commit, reassure, threaten
- **cognitively:** focus, interrupt, frame, compare, remind, question

A cup is not just a cup. It can contain, separate, scoop, cover, measure, mold, displace, and protect. A lighter can ignite, heat, illuminate, press, lever, wedge, mark, and signal.

A causal primitive has a few features, see Table 1.

To be useful, the primitive must be abstract enough to escape the object's usual name, and concrete enough to suggest action.

Too concrete, and you remain bound by the original purpose. «*Open a beer bottle*» is too specific. It can be decomposed into grip, brace, lever, pry, deform, and detach.

Too abstract, and it stops helping. Calling a lighter «an arrangement of atoms mediating energy transfer through fields» breaks fixedness, but gives you little to do.

A good test is to go one or two steps beyond familiar human use.

For the cup, «*drink from*» is too bounded by human use. «*Contain*» is better. «*Resist dispersal under gravity*» might be even better.

The primitives then transfer across cases:

- You can **lever** with a lighter, spoon, screwdriver, key, ruler, stick, or counter-top edge.
- You can **contain** with a cup, shoe, bag, folded paper, hole in the ground, cupped hands, or a depression in a rock.
- You can **signal** with a flame, raised hand, sound, color, uniform, name, alarm, or silence.

For example, suppose the object is a draft:

Feature	Meaning	Example
Relational	It is not inside the object alone; it emerges between object, context, and target.	A lighter is a lever only against a bottle cap, hand, and fulcrum.
Transformative or constraining	It changes a state or limits possible changes.	A cup contains liquid; a wall blocks movement.
Lower than ordinary function	It sits beneath conventional uses.	«Open beer» decomposes into grip + lever + pry + cap deformation.
Reusable across objects	Many different things can instantiate the same primitive.	Knife, credit card, key, and fingernail can all scrape.
Scale-sensitive	It depends on size, strength, material, timing, and environment.	A chair supports a human, but not a car.
Not exhaustive	It is an analytical tool, not a final ontology.	«Separate» can be divided into cut, filter, sort, peel, shear.

Table 1: Features of Causal Primitives

- **Usual view:** This is bad writing that must be improved.
- **Causal primitives:**
 - stores unfinished thought,
 - exposes gaps,
 - allows rearrangement,
 - creates distance from memory,
 - makes structure visible,
 - allows feedback before final commitment.
- **De-scripted view:** This is externalized material that can be moved, cut, marked, tested, compared, and reorganized.

The object becomes: **geometry + material + scale + mobility + energy behavior + force behavior + boundary behavior + signal behavior + social meaning**. A property inventory plus causal primitives opens the object to creative use.

Table 2 and Table 3 shows examples of causal primitives.

Table 4 shows everyday objects decomposed into causal primitives.

Use this lens when:

- you seem to lack the right tool or resource,
- an object, document, room, method, or role feels too narrowly defined,
- you keep using something only in its standard way,
- you suspect the available material could do more than you currently see.

This is especially useful in constrained situations, where getting a new tool is slower than seeing an existing one differently.

One caveat when examining functions: Seeing things purely functionally can mislead you about value. The «doorman fallacy» by Rory Sutherland shows this with the example of a doorman. Functionally, a doorman seems to open the door and make small talk. On that view, an automated door opener could replace him. But the doorman also makes guests feel welcome, provides security, prevents unwelcome behavior, gets taxis, provides information, and elevates the status of the hotel. So when examining things, look beyond the obvious function.

Set Effects

Set effects happen when we have become so familiar with doing something that it has become automatic. We can do it without much attention, so it is easy to execute. It also usually works.

Primitive family	Core question	Examples of primitives
Support / load	What can bear weight or transfer force?	support, suspend, brace, counterweight, balance, stabilize
Motion / force	What movement/force can it transmit or modify?	push, pull, lever, strike, pry, twist, rotate, slide, wedge, clamp
Separation / cutting	What can it divide, pierce, scrape, or remove?	cut, puncture, scrape, abrade, peel, split, shear, detach
Containment / boundary	What can it keep in, keep out, or separate?	contain, cover, block, seal, filter, shield, partition, enclose
Attachment / constraint	What can it hold in relation to something else?	bind, fasten, hook, grip, tie, lock, latch, stick, compress
Flow / channeling	What can it guide, restrict, redirect, or meter?	channel, funnel, drain, pour, vent, dam, valve, diffuse
Surface interaction	What happens at contact?	grip, slip, lubricate, insulate, conduct, absorb, repel, polish
Energy / thermal	What energy state can it change?	heat, cool, ignite, insulate, store, release energy, dissipate
Light / visibility	What can it do to perception or radiation?	reflect, reveal, hide, magnify, shade, signal, illuminate, focus
Sound / vibration	What can it do acoustically or rhythmically?	amplify, dampen, resonate, strike, signal, muffle, vibrate
Information / marking	What can it encode, or change symbolically?	mark, label, measure, record, display, point, count, compare
Time / sequencing	What can it delay, preserve, pace, or coordinate?	slow, accelerate, schedule, trigger, defer, archive, repeat
Transformation	What state-change can it produce?	melt, dry, freeze, dissolve, harden, soften, mix, grind, fold

Table 2: Primitive families, core questions, and examples (1/2)

Primitive family	Core question	Examples of primitives
Biological / bodily	What can it do relative to bodies?	protect, cushion, warm, cool, clean, carry, restrain, feed
Social / institutional	What relation between people can it alter?	authorize, exclude, rank, commit, pay, threaten, identify
Cognitive / attentional	What mental operation can it induce?	remind, focus, distract, frame, question, categorize, compare

Table 3: Primitive families, core questions, and examples (2/2)

The problem appears when circumstances change and another method would fit better, but we still use the old one. We do not notice that another method might be easier because the familiar method arrives first.

Table 5 and Table 6 show examples of set effects in creative work.

Use this lens when:

- you keep starting the same way,
- your first move is automatic,
- the method works in simple cases but fails in current ones,
- you feel busy but the project does not advance,
- you notice phrases like «*I always do it this way*», «*this is just my process*», or «*I need to do X before I can do Y*».

False Constants

A false constant is a practice, expectation, arrangement, or rule that continues because it is familiar, socially accepted, administratively easy, or simply never questioned.

False constants are often the hardest things to see despite being right in front of us. We might do them every day, without questioning, just because «*we've always done it this way*» (Hopper). They are «*normal*», so we treat them as constants, even though they are variables. We do not see alternatives because we cannot imagine the thing being different.

Constants serve important functions. They reduce negotiation, allow scaling, and support coordination. Even false constants might be the best available behavior. But they are not the only option, and treating them as fixed can constrain the current creative work.

Object / De-Scripted	Causal primitives	Non-obvious uses
Lighter Small rigid handheld object with edge, fuel, ignition, flame	Heat, ignite, illuminate, lever, wedge, press, space, weigh, signal	Open bottle, seal rope ends, soften plastic, test airflow, make soot marks, prop small object, apply pressure
Knife Rigid handle plus thin hard edge/point	Separate, pierce, scrape, wedge, lever, mark, reflect, threaten	Screwdriver substitute, scraper, shim, food spatula, marking tool, splinter remover
Chair Rigid elevated frame with surfaces, legs, mass, voids	Support, elevate, block, brace, hook, weigh down, frame	Step stool, door blocker, drying rack, barricade, saw support, temporary table
Cup Hollow graspable concavity with rim and base	Contain, scoop, measure, cover, mold, displace, amplify, protect	Screw holder, plant pot, cookie cutter, sound amplifier, rain gauge, small-object trap
Law Codified rule backed by institutions	Permit, forbid, punish, standardize, coordinate, legitimize, threaten	Market-shaping tool, status weapon, boundary-maker, delay tactic, bargaining instrument
Name Repeatable symbolic handle	Point, summon, classify, track, invoke, blame, claim, compress	Branding device, disguise, alias, spell-like social trigger, memory hook, category weapon
Hammer Dense mass on a handle	Strike, crush, press, pry, weigh, anchor, extend reach	Doorstop, paperweight, stake puller, counterweight, ice breaker, persuasion-by-noise
Screw Small rigid helical fastener	Fasten, compress, wedge, space, adjust height, pierce, conduct	Makeshift hook, pivot point, spacer, scratch awl, adjustable foot, electrical contact
Rope Long flexible tensile body	Bind, pull, suspend, measure, transmit force, mark boundary, absorb shock	Belt, handle, tourniquet-like compression band, clothesline, trail marker, pulley system element

Table 4: Everyday objects decomposed into causal primitives

Creative work	Familiar method	Better-fitting method
Writing a complex book chapter	Linear outline It worked for essays and keeps the material in a familiar sequence.	Argument map, diagram, or modular structure showing dependencies between parts.
Designing a layout	Polished mockup It is fluent, professional-looking, and gives quick visual satisfaction.	Ugly paper sketches to test many layout variants fast.
Photography	Usual lens, framing, and light The style is practiced and reliably produces acceptable images.	Deliberately change visual grammar: different lens, distance, angle, light, or constraint.
Composing music	Start at the beginning and work forward Linear composition feels natural because the listener hears the piece in sequence.	Work directly on the unresolved transition, climax, ending, or motif relationship.
Research	Literature review first It feels scholarly, responsible, and reduces uncertainty.	Build a small dataset, interview three people, draw the causal model, or test a concrete case.
Painting	Usual color-mixing and full palette The hand knows the routine and preserves the painter's familiar look.	Limited palette, value studies, underpainting, or material constraint.
Fiction writing	Develop character through backstory Backstory feels rich and gives psychological control.	Put the character under pressure and reveal them through action, choice, and conflict.
Worldbuilding	Add more lore Lore expansion is enjoyable and keeps possibilities open.	Write a scene where the world forces a concrete decision or consequence.

Table 5: Set Effects in Creative Work (1/2)

Creative work	Familiar method	Better-fitting method
Product concepting	Brainstorm more features More features feel like more creativity.	Remove features until the core use case becomes visible.
Teaching	Verbal explanation The teacher is good at explaining and can improvise fluently.	Worked example, physical demonstration, counterexample, diagram, or student task.
Programming	Write code directly It is fast for small tools and gives immediate progress.	State diagram, interface sketch, data-flow map, or failure-case list before coding.

Table 6: Set Effects in Creative Work (2/2)

Table 7 and Table 8 show the engines behind them. Table 9 and Table 10 shows false constants in creativity and creative work. Appendix 1 to 10 show false constants in various areas of life. They were generated with ChatGPT, so expect a left-leaning bias. They serve as provocation lists. The alternatives are not automatically better, but they show that the «*constant*» is false. Taken together, they put a question mark behind the things we take for granted and can open the way to something new and useful.

When you look at the tables, ask:

- What do you notice?
- Where do similar unquestioned assumptions determine what you do?
- What do you do quickly, without effort and without thinking?
- Is that really the best way to do things?
- What might work better if done differently?

If you find something worth testing, write it down. It might become a trial.

Changing a false constant often creates social friction. Defaults coordinate expectations. They tell people what counts as normal, serious, polite, professional, safe, or legitimate. If you act differently, even for good reasons, others may read it as incompetence, disrespect, eccentricity, threat, or implicit criticism. This is especially likely when your alternative works, because it exposes that the old way was not inevitable and some people's egos are threatened. So ask whether the alternative works technically, what social expectations it violates, who has to adjust, and whether the improvement is worth the friction.

Use this lens when:

- something feels like «just how this is done»,
- you have never seriously considered an alternative,
- a routine is smooth but produces mediocre results,
- your environment channels you into the same behavior,
- the problem may be hidden in the setup rather than in effort.

Default / Habit	What Matters	How it Could Look
Control over Connection <i>Control feels safer than contact.</i> Nearly every «normal» pattern privileges control: over the body, space, time, and even emotion. Sitting still, dressing formally, scheduling every hour — all signal predictability. The cost is aliveness.	Connection — with one’s own body, with other people, with the environment.	Designs and norms that favor responsiveness — flexible work, breathable clothes, architecture that opens.
Appearance over Experience <i>Image management maintains hierarchy; it’s visible proof of belonging.</i> Society rewards how things look — clean, efficient, respectable — even when it contradicts how they feel. The «civilized» toilet, the pressed shirt, the perfect lawn all sacrifice function to image.	The felt experience of health, comfort, and authenticity.	Choose the sensory truth — what works for the body or the ecosystem — even if it looks «informal».
Standardization over Individual Rhythm <i>Uniformity is easier to govern and scale.</i> Industrial systems needed synchronization: same hours, same desks, same meals. We still obey that machinery long after it stopped serving us.	Personal rhythm — circadian, creative, social.	Flexible hours, adaptive schooling, work and rest tuned to energy instead of the clock.
Shame as Social Glue <i>Shame enforces norms without overt coercion.</i> From underwear to small talk, much of etiquette is about avoiding shame — not about truth or need. Politeness, modesty, busyness all signal compliance.	Dignity without repression; honesty without exhibitionism.	Cultures where directness is safe and vulnerability doesn’t invite ridicule.

Table 7: Underlying Reasons for False Constants (1/2)

Default / Habit	What Matters	How it Could Look
Abstraction over Embodiment <i>Abstraction scales; bodies are messy.</i> We inhabit mental models more than the physical world: work measured in data, relationships through screens, landscapes reduced to property lines.	Returning to sensory life — touch, breath, presence.	More manual craft, outdoor learning, in-person community.
Consumption as Identity <i>Economies depend on churn; insecurity drives spending.</i> Buying replaced being. Clothes, devices, even travel are used to display value instead of create it.	Creation, repair, stewardship.	Producing more than consuming; cultivating taste rather than trend-chasing.
Comfort as Sedation <i>Fear of uncertainty and fatigue.</i> Comfort became the moral goal — painless bodies, climate-controlled rooms, predictable routines. But permanent comfort dulls growth.	Alternating stress and recovery; growth through manageable challenge.	Deliberate exposure — cold water, physical work, honest conversation, risk with purpose.
Disconnection from Cycles <i>Capitalism and ego both fear limits.</i> Natural rhythms — day/night, season, hunger, aging — got flattened by technology and denial. Everything is expected to be on-demand and ageless.	Rise, rest, decay, renew.	Live seasonally, honor endings, plan for sabbaticals instead of pretending continuity.
Fear of Inconvenience <i>Friction feels like inefficiency.</i> Speed and frictionless design rule everything from food packaging to conversation. But convenience breeds dependency.	Agency — knowing how to do, fix, and endure.	Manual competence valued again; patience seen as power.
Separation as the Default <i>Separation is administratively clean.</i> Every design — walls, screens, cubicles, categories — divides what once was continuous: mind from body, work from life, human from nature.	Reintegration — the ability to move freely among domains.	Spaces and systems that blur boundaries instead of policing them.

Table 8: Underlying Reasons for False Constants (2/2)

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Every idea is kept. Discarding feels premature; old ideas sometimes become useful.	The system needs selection pressure, not just accumulation.	Keep a visible «develop / archive / discard» decision point.
Research comes before making. Research reduces uncertainty and feels responsible.	The work needs enough material to move, not infinite preparation.	Alternate research with rough output: read to answer a specific question generated by the work.
More sources are added when stuck. Stuckness feels like insufficient knowledge.	The blockage may be structural, decisional, or evaluative.	Before adding sources, write the exact missing question the source must answer.
Organization is mistaken for progress. Sorting, tagging, and redesigning feel controlled and useful.	Organization matters only if it improves retrieval, selection, or output.	Define one output that the organization must support, then stop organizing when it works.
Creative work waits for inspiration. Inspired work feels more authentic and alive.	Inspiration often appears during contact with materials.	Schedule contact with the work or materials; inspiration is allowed but not required.
New projects are started when old ones become difficult. Novelty restores energy and avoids the hard middle.	Creative development requires carrying some work through difficulty.	Protect exploration, but reserve the first part of each session for one selected unfinished piece.
Success is measured by effort. Effort is visible to the creator and feels morally defensible.	Creative work needs artifacts, decisions, learning, and external contact.	Track outputs and decisions, not only hours spent.

Table 9: False Constants in Creativity (1/2)

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Creative identity is used as method. «This is how I work» protects continuity and self-image.	Methods should fit the current task and constraints.	Treat process identity as provisional: test whether the method still serves this project.
Creative standards remain implicit. Implicit standards feel flexible and sophisticated.	Evaluation needs criteria clear enough to guide decisions.	Write the current standard in plain terms: what would make this version good enough to continue, revise, release, or stop?
The environment is treated as background. Attention stays on discipline, motivation, or talent.	Environment shapes friction, visibility, and re-entry.	Change placement, access, defaults, and cues before blaming effort.
Capturing, selecting, developing, and releasing are mixed together. Creative work feels like one continuous activity.	Different functions need different modes and criteria.	Separate the flow: capture freely, select deliberately, develop concretely, release under defined conditions.
Drafts are judged as bad final work. Finished quality is the implicit standard.	A draft is externalized material for manipulation.	Treat drafts as movable material: cut, rearrange, test, mark, and compare before polishing.
Revision starts with sentence-level improvement. Polishing gives immediate control and visible progress.	Revision should address the level where the problem exists.	First diagnose: structure, argument, examples, sequence, tone, or wording. Revise at that level.
Unfinished work is hidden away. Visible unfinished work creates discomfort.	Unfinished work needs re-entry cues and selection pressure.	Keep a small visible queue of active unfinished work with next actions attached.

Table 10: False Constants in Creativity (2/2)

Contingencies

A contingency is a condition that allows a pattern to hold. Systems can look natural or inevitable because their supporting conditions remain stable. They depend on specific social, historical, or psychological conditions to function. If those conditions changed, the system might not persist.

When we encounter a stable system that «*just works*» — an organization, a field, a school, a research practice, a creative culture — we usually do not see what it depends on. We assume something is inevitable, natural, self-evident, or «*just how reality is*». From the inside, we do not see it as one way of conducting research or being creative. We see it as research or creativity itself.

Much of reality is constructed, maintained, and stabilized by reinforcement. That makes it fragile once the reinforcement weakens. People on the outside often see what insiders do not: the pattern is perspective-bound, context-dependent, historically situated, and maintained by norms rather than necessity. Not anything goes. But other ways are possible because things depend on conditions, points of view, and reinforcement.

Contingencies are often pre-interpretive. They appear as perception, not thought. That makes them invisible until something violates them. Arguments usually do not reach them. Experience can.

A destructive, non-creative example is finding out that your parents' relationship is not as stable as it appeared, and that the family you thought was rock solid is much more fragile. That can shake the foundations of your worldview. It is visceral, even if you knew intellectually that it was possible.

A less destructive way is to see a stable, functioning alternative that does not share the same assumptions. Then something stops feeling like the way and starts to feel like a way. For example, you might think that a creative workspace must be wild and cluttered. That can change when you see highly creative people working in organized environments.

A useful question is «*If this belief, norm, or practice stopped being socially rewarded, would people still do it?*»

If yes, it might be grounded. If no, it may be contingent on social reinforcement. It works because:

- everyone agrees to it,
- people are playing along,
- it is held together by social reinforcement.

Crucially, it is not inevitable. It is not how things have to be. It breaks if conditions change.

Once you see what systems depend on, you cannot unsee it. You lose an innate but dangerous feeling of safety — «innocence» — and improve your ability to deal with the world.

For example, you might notice how much behavior is enforced by reward and fear of exclusion, how many claims rely on moral pressure rather than evidence, or how much «*consensus*» is actually coordination.

Noticing contingencies does not mean rejecting systems as false or hypocritical. Most systems are contingent. Seeing the contingency introduces possibility and thus choice. You can decide whether to preserve the system, strengthen it, remove it, or test an alternative.

In many domains — politics, ethics, academia, culture — almost everything is contingent on something: social agreement, institutional reinforcement, moral consensus, psychological alignment. Only a few things are truly non-contingent. These likely include physical laws such as gravity and thermodynamics, chemical regularities, biological constraints such as evolution by selection and mortality, and mathematical relations within given axioms. Even there, reality itself may be non-contingent while our descriptions of it remain contingent. Our access to reality is fallible and revisable.

The problem is assuming contingency does not exist. That assumption produces brittle systems and epistemic breakdowns once the contingency becomes apparent. Some people panic at the thought because they think contingency implies nihilism or «*anything goes*». It does not. Just because things depend on other things does not make them equally valuable or useful. They are not.

We can influence which world we live in. Given possibility and agency, contingency also implies responsibility. The arrangement is not guaranteed by nature. We are accountable for maintaining it and correcting it when it fails. That is more honest than moral certainty.

Use this lens when:

- a pattern feels inevitable,
- you cannot see why a behavior keeps repeating,
- a routine works only under narrow conditions,
- a project depends on mood, place, permission, approval, or timing,
- a creative practice collapses when one support disappears.

TRIAL DEFINITION

The trials described here deal with deliberate lenses, functional fixedness, set effects, false constants, and contingencies. If you are looking for a situational approach, see **Representational Shift** in the [□ Creativity Methods](#).

In general, you are trying to change automated ways of seeing or doing things. That is difficult because automation runs without attention. It is hard to notice, and changing it usually produces worse performance at first (see Note: Changing Automated Behavior).

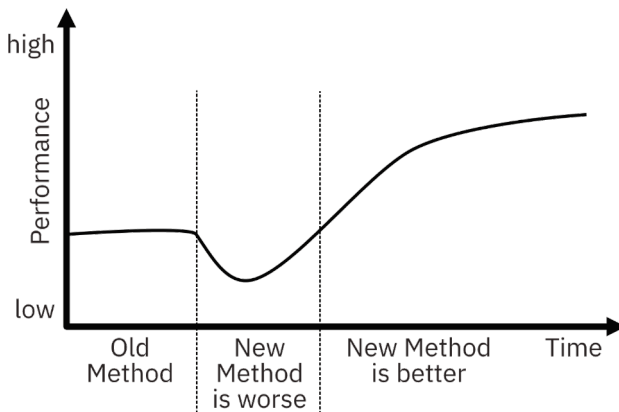
A reframing is worth trialing if it changes one of these:

- what you do — a different first action, sequence, or behavior
- what you stop doing — removing a default step or delay
- what you make easier — changing placement, setup, access, visibility
- what you make harder — adding friction, limits, or constraints
- what you measure — different success/stop criteria
- what you expose yourself to — feedback, examples, materials, contexts
- what you decide — a deadline, selection rule, or decision point

Note: Changing Automated Behavior

Automation usually makes alternative behaviors worse in the beginning because they now require attention. That early drop does not mean the change is wrong. Once the new behavior becomes familiar, it may perform at a much higher level.

The following figure illustrates that effect.



The phase in which the new method is worse is also the phase in which people often return to the old method. For example, you might type quite fast with two fingers. Learning machine writing — using all ten fingers — will reduce your typing speed for weeks or even months. But once you have learned to type with ten fingers, you are much faster than you ever were with two.

So whenever you change something, expect the drop first. Stay with it long enough to see whether the method actually is worse, or whether it improves after the transition.

Trial Example: Deliberate Lenses

Use the Deliberate Lenses on page 6 as a toolbox for your creative work for a while.

Define a trial in which you use one lens whenever you restart your work. Examine the current state of the work through that lens and write down what becomes visible.

Possible success criteria:

- at least 10 lens checks in two weeks,
- each check produces one written observation,
- at least three observations produce a concrete trial candidate, decision, or change in the work.

Trial Example: Functional Fixedness

Choose one thing in your creative system. It can be physical, digital, social, or procedural. For example: notebook, draft, calendar, studio, phone, deadline, critique session, unfinished project, rejected idea, or morning routine.

Then de-script it. Describe it as properties and transformations. Ignore the name (see Table 11 for examples).

Then ask which causal primitives are present. This should give you:

- one thing you normally see by name,
- a property or primitive inventory,
- at least three non-standard uses or interpretations,
- one possible change in behavior, environment, or evaluation.

You can look for different uses or approaches, for example:

- Use a notebook as a capture surface placed at leakage points instead of an archive.
- Use a deadline as a forced decision date instead of panic pressure.
- Use a draft as material to rearrange instead of text to polish.
- Use a studio as an exposure environment instead of a place for inspiration.
- Use rejection as positioning data to classify instead of a verdict.

Trial: Looking for Set Effects

Choose one repeated procedure in your creative work. For example: how you begin a writing session, collect research, process ideas, revise, prepare a studio session, decide what to work on, or respond to feedback.

Write the current sequence as observable actions.

Example: Open laptop → check notes → read previous material → look up missing references → adjust outline → edit old section → run out of time before writing new material.

Then identify the automatic part. You may not have written it down because you do not think about it while doing it. Check for «jumps» in the sequence, where something happened but was not recorded.

Ask:

Instead of	Describe as ...
notebook	portable capture surface, memory extension, sequencing device, re-entry point
draft	externalized thought, manipulable material, error surface, structure probe
calendar	attention allocator, scarcity display, coordination device, trigger system
deadline	constraint, synchronization point, prioritization device, pressure source
studio	reduced setup cost, visible material field, boundary from ordinary life
rejection	external signal, positioning data, constraint information, selection event

Table 11: Different Descriptions

- What do I always do first?
- Which step feels necessary but may only be familiar?
- Which step produces motion without progress?
- Which step protects me from the hard part?
- Which step made sense in an earlier phase but may not fit this phase?
- What would happen if I inverted, removed, delayed, or time-boxed this step?

Then create one alternative sequence.

For example, you realize that before writing, you read more. It persists because reading feels responsible. It reduces uncertainty. It gives the sense of progress. What actually matters might be that the project needs a decision about the argument, not more source material. So an alternative approach is to first write a rough claim in 150 words. Then read only to test or repair that claim. So you might go for a trial that for the next six writing sessions, the first 15 minutes must produce a rough claim before any reading is allowed.

Table 12 shows possible transformations. The alternative only has to be different enough to reveal whether the old set was constraining the work.

This should give you:

- one repeated procedure,
- the current sequence of actions,
- the step that may be overlearned,
- one altered sequence,
- one possible trial that tests the altered sequence.

Current set	Possible change
Research before writing	Write a rough claim before research
Polish before continuing	Add ugly continuation before polishing
Start with easiest task	Start with the blocking decision
Wait for full setup	Define a minimum viable setup
Collect more examples	Select one example and test it
Review all notes	Use only the three most relevant notes
Improve the system	Produce one artifact using the current system

Table 12: Possible Transformations

You can then trial the alternative. For example:

- For two weeks, write the claim before reading.
- For five sessions, continue the draft before editing earlier text.
- For three project reviews, decide the next action before reorganizing notes.
- For four studio sessions, work first on an unfinished piece before starting anything new.
- For one week, use the current system without improving it.

Trial: Questioning Things You Take for Granted

Choose one default in your creative system. For example: where you work, when you work, how you capture ideas, how you name files, how you decide what deserves attention, how you handle unfinished work, how you ask for feedback, how you store references, or how you define a «*real*» work session. Table 13 shows examples.

Ask:

- What do I do because it is familiar rather than necessary?
- What would look wrong but might work better?
- What arrangement makes the current behavior easy?
- What arrangement makes the desired behavior hard?
- What rule am I obeying without remembering who set it?
- What do I treat as a requirement that may only be a convention?
- Where am I optimizing appearance rather than function?

Aim for a concrete practice that might improve your creative work.

For example, you might think that you need a large uninterrupted block to make progress. It persists because large blocks have produced good work before and feel like the proper condition for serious work. What actually matters may be frequent re-entry and visible next actions. An alternative would be to end each session by writing the next concrete action, then use 25-minute fragments for continuation.

Possible intervention: For two weeks, every work session must end with a written re-entry cue. Any available 25-minute block can be used if the cue is clear.

After using this lens, you should have:

- one default you normally do not question,
- the reason it persists,
- what actually matters underneath it,

Default	What actually matters	Alternative to test
I only count long sessions as real work. Long sessions feel serious.	Repeated contact with the project.	Count 20-minute continuation sessions. Avoid replacing deep work entirely.
Ideas go into one central note system. Centralization feels orderly.	Capture before loss and later retrieval.	Put capture tools at leakage points. Avoid scattering beyond review.
Feedback happens near the end. Finished work feels safer to show.	Detecting structural problems early.	Ask for feedback on one unresolved decision. Avoid premature committee design.
Revision starts with sentence polish. Polishing gives immediate control.	Structural improvement.	Start revision by moving sections. Avoid neglecting final prose quality.
Work happens at the desk. Desk signals seriousness.	Access to the project with low friction.	Test one portable work mode. Avoid making setup too fragmented.

Table 13: Questioning things you take for granted

- one alternative arrangement,
- one risk or constraint that must remain protected.

Use the Integration Worksheet to trial the alternative. Examples:

- Treat short sessions as valid continuation work.
- Ask for feedback earlier, but only on one decision.
- Put capture tools where ideas appear, not where notes are supposed to live.
- Start revision structurally before polishing.
- Make unfinished work visible instead of storing it away.
- Use a project board as a decision surface, not as a productivity display.

Trial: Challenging Contingencies

Challenge contingencies by asking: «*What must remain true for this practice to keep working?*»

Look for social reinforcement, incentives, tools, roles, timing, access, permissions, norms, or physical conditions. Then decide whether to vary one of them for a while.

Choose one stable pattern. For example:

- I write only when the room is quiet.
- I share ideas only when they are already well-developed.
- I work on the project only after everything else is done.
- I need pressure before I finish.
- I avoid starting unless I can imagine the full result.
- I collect material but do not synthesize it.
- I keep improving the system instead of producing artifacts.

Then list what the pattern depends on. Possible categories, see Table 14.

Ask:

- Which condition is actually necessary?
- Which condition is only preferred?
- Which condition could be varied safely?
- Which condition, if removed, would break the pattern?
- Which condition, if added, might make the desired behavior easier?

Select one condition and change it.

Example: Deadline Pressure

Pattern: I only make progress when a deadline creates pressure.

Possible contingencies:

- **temporal:** deadline creates urgency,
- **social:** someone else expects delivery,
- **attentional:** pressure blocks competing options,
- **evaluative:** the deadline defines what «done» means,
- **emotional:** fear of disappointing someone overcomes avoidance.

Condition type	Question
Physical	What space, tools, materials, or bodily conditions does this depend on?
Temporal	What timing, duration, deadline, or rhythm does this depend on?
Social	What permission, audience, approval, privacy, or accountability does this depend on?
Informational	What clarity, feedback, examples, or missing knowledge does this depend on?
Emotional / attentional	What level of safety, pressure, interest, or focus does this depend on?
Institutional	What rules, roles, incentives, or obligations keep this pattern in place?

Table 14: Possible Categories for Challenging Contingencies

What actually matters: The project may need a forced decision point and an external recipient, not panic itself.

Alternative condition: Add a scheduled delivery point before the real deadline.

Possible intervention: For the next project phase, send a rough version to one selected reader every Friday by 16:00, even if incomplete. Success is not quality; success is delivery and resulting project movement.

Example: Desk-bound Writing

Pattern: I write well only at my desk.

Possible contingencies:

- **physical:** large screen, keyboard, notes nearby,
- **temporal:** desk work happens in longer blocks,
- **attentional:** the desk reduces competing cues,
- **symbolic:** sitting there marks «now I am working».

What actually matters: Re-entry cues and reduced setup cost.

Alternative condition: Create a portable re-entry kit.

Possible intervention: For two weeks, test whether a printed outline plus one index card with the next action allows useful 20-minute writing sessions away from the desk.

Output

After using this lens, you should have:

- one pattern that seems natural or inevitable,
- a list of conditions it depends on,
- one condition to preserve, weaken, remove, or replace,
- one possible intervention that changes only that condition.

You can then set up a trial. For example:

- Add an external recipient instead of relying on urgency.
- Make re-entry cues portable instead of relying on one workspace.
- Replace mood-dependence with a start ritual.
- Replace approval-dependence with a low-stakes feedback channel.
- Replace hidden expectations with explicit success criteria.
- Replace vague pressure with a visible decision date.

HAND-OFF

As Bertrand Russell said: *«In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted.»*

What is so automated, so used, so present that you no longer notice it? The things you notice least are often the places to look closest.

You should now have one possible change in behavior, environment, constraint, or evaluation. Take one candidate into the Integration Worksheet and see whether it works for you.

APPENDIX

Human Body

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Sitting in 90-degree chairs Chairs signal civilization and hierarchy; they entered homes from courts and churches as a marker of status.	The spine's natural curves and blood flow need dynamic movement, not static right angles.	Low, variable seating; floor cushions; standing desks; postures that shift through the day.
Tight, structured clothing «Discipline of the body» — control looks respectable; loose clothing reads as lazy or sensual.	Comfort, breath, freedom of movement.	Adjustable, breathable fabrics; socially acceptable looseness; clothes serving physiology, not optics.
Daily detergent showers Soap companies taught that «clean» means stripped of oils; marketing replaced moderation.	Skin's acid mantle and microbiota protect it; overwashing damages both.	Wash pits/groin/feet daily; rinse elsewhere; full wash as needed.
Hair removal as norm Youth and control aesthetics; marketing framed natural hair as shameful.	Hygiene and comfort, not conformity.	Choose by feel and context; neutrality toward visible hair.
Eating by the clock Factory work required synchronized breaks; family life copied it.	Energy needs fluctuate; hunger is the honest cue.	Flexible eating guided by appetite and rhythm, not schedule.
Ignoring movement urges Sitting still signals obedience and «focus.»	The body regulates mood and cognition through motion.	Integrate fidgeting, stretching, walking into work and study.
Stoic restraint of emotion Cultural ideal of rational mastery; emotions seen as weakness.	Emotions regulate physiology and signal needs.	Safe expression through breath, voice, movement; normalize visible feeling.
Medicalized childbirth Control, liability, and male-dominated medicine displaced midwives.	Safety and agency; physiology isn't pathology.	Midwife-led or hybrid models; movement and autonomy during labor.

Time and Work

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Five-day workweek, two-day weekend Industrial compromise between productivity and labor rights; became the unquestioned rhythm.	Human energy cycles aren't seven-day constructs; recovery and engagement vary individually.	Flexible or shorter workweeks, output-based schedules, periodic sabbaticals instead of burnout-recovery loops.
Eight-hour workday 19th-century factory standard meant to curb exploitation but now treated as efficiency ideal.	Cognitive work peaks for only a few hours; attention and rest must alternate.	4–6 focused hours plus autonomy to interleave rest, movement, or creative downtime.
Equating presence with productivity Visibility once proved effort; managers fear loss of control without it.	Value comes from results, not surveillance.	Trust-based cultures, asynchronous workflows, public results instead of seat time.
Rigid start and stop times Coordinated machinery and transport systems needed synchrony.	The brain's alertness follows chronotype and task type.	Staggered or personalized hours; morning for deep work, afternoon for collaboration.
Separating «work» and «life» Industrial capitalism carved private life as recovery from labor.	Integration of purpose and rest — the same organism does both.	Design work that nourishes learning, community, and autonomy instead of draining them.
Glorifying busyness Busyness signals importance; idleness evokes guilt.	Sustained creativity requires recovery and slack.	Normalize visible rest, reading, and reflection as part of work.
Single retirement cliff Pensions assumed linear careers; old age framed as withdrawal.	Purpose and contribution remain vital across lifespan.	Gradual reduction, mentoring roles, portfolio life mixing paid and voluntary work.

Education and Learning

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Age-segregated classrooms Industrial schooling mimicked factories — cohorts by production year are easy to manage.	Learning thrives in mixed ages where modeling and mentoring occur naturally.	Multi-age groups, project teams, peer teaching environments.
Everyone learning at the same pace Standardization simplifies testing and scheduling.	Curiosity and mastery unfold at different speeds.	Modular progression where students move on when ready, not when the calendar dictates.
Grades as proof of learning Bureaucracies need quantifiable sorting; numbers feel objective.	Understanding, application, and critical thought matter, not scores.	Narrative feedback, portfolios, or demonstrated competence replacing letters and ranks.
Passive listening while one person talks Originated from church sermons and military drills; efficient for control.	Engagement, questioning, and doing anchor retention.	Discussion-based, hands-on, or flipped models where learners drive exploration.
Learning indoors, cut off from physical world Buildings allow supervision, standard tools, and safety; outdoor learning seen as distraction.	Sensory experience anchors knowledge.	Outdoor classrooms, field projects, tactile materials, integration with real environments.
Standardized tests as gatekeepers Easy to administer and compare; institutional inertia.	Aptitude is multifaceted; tests reveal only compliance and memory.	Broader assessment — projects, interviews, creative synthesis.
Fragmented subjects Disciplinary silos reflect university structure, not how the world works.	Real-world problems are systems-based.	Interdisciplinary curricula, problem-centered learning.

Architecture and Space

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Homes divided into rigid, single-purpose rooms Industrial housing mirrored factory specialization; order felt efficient.	Humans need adaptable spaces that change with mood, season, or activity.	Movable partitions, modular furniture, open multi-use areas.
Beds as single flat rectangles Mass production standardized one geometry; easier to manufacture and market.	Rest requires variable positions for reading, intimacy, and recovery.	Adjustable or sectional sleeping surfaces; daybeds and mats that shift function.
Sharp indoor–outdoor separation Private property mentality and climate control created sealed boxes.	Connection to weather, light, and sound regulates circadian rhythm and emotion.	Transitional zones — verandas, courtyards, large sliding openings.
Offices designed for control, not comfort Layouts inherited from bureaucratic hierarchies.	Concentration, collaboration, and privacy need distinct zones.	Acoustic variety, natural light, flexible seating, small «quiet pods».
Lighting optimized for brightness only Electricity made daylight irrelevant; brightness signaled productivity.	Circadian alignment and visual warmth affect mood and alertness.	Tunable light spectra; bright cool light in morning, warm dim light after dusk.
Lawns as default yard Suburban status symbol of order and property; monoculture aesthetics.	Ecological health, biodiversity, and soil life.	Native plant gardens, edible landscaping, low-mow meadows.
Public spaces designed for surveillance Fear and control dominate planning; open visibility seems safer.	True safety comes from presence, engagement, and beauty.	Design for gathering — benches facing each other, shaded communal areas, art and play integrated.
Elevators replacing stairs for short distances Convenience and accessibility became universal default.	Low-intensity daily movement sustains metabolism.	Visible, pleasant stairways as design centerpiece; elevators for need, not habit.

Social and Emotional Life

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Smiling as social obligation Service culture and politeness codes equate friendliness with safety; women especially trained to perform it.	Authentic affect, not forced pleasantness, builds trust.	Let neutral or serious expressions exist without apology; smile when it's real.
Small talk as mandatory script Serves as ritual to signal harmlessness; prevents depth in casual contact.	Genuine curiosity and presence create connection faster than rehearsed chatter.	Skip filler or pivot naturally to substance; silence can coexist with warmth.
Pathologizing solitude Modern identity built on visibility and social proof; being alone reads as failure.	Solitude allows integration, creativity, and emotional regulation.	Normalize solo meals, walks, and travel; treat aloneness as skill.
Hiding tears or anger in public Emotional control equated with maturity and professionalism.	Visible emotion humanizes and prevents internalized stress.	Allow emotion to surface respectfully; teach repair after conflict rather than suppression.
Death and grief hidden away Denial of mortality sustains consumption and emotional control.	Grief integrates love and impermanence; public mourning heals.	Visible rituals, community remembrance, open conversation about death.
Therapy stigmatized as fixing brokenness Cultures fear introspection and label emotional work as weakness.	Everyone needs mental hygiene and reflection.	Normalize coaching, counseling, or peer dialogue as ongoing upkeep.
Busyness as importance Productivity as moral worth; stillness mistaken for idleness.	Value lies in intention and outcome, not motion.	Schedule slack time; display unhurriedness as strength, not weakness.

Technology and Media

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Notifications on by default Platforms are built for engagement, not peace; constant pings mean ad revenue.	Attention is a finite resource; interruptions fragment cognition.	Turn off all nonessential alerts; check messages in deliberate batches.
Digital presence as proof of existence Visibility equals relevance in social metrics; fear of disappearing.	Real connection and contribution, not constant signaling, define worth.	Curate small circles, use digital minimalism, reenter offline life deliberately.
Phones designed for reachability 24/7 Economic incentive to blur work–life boundary; dopamine economy.	Agency over when and how to engage.	«Do Not Disturb» by default, separate devices or modes for rest and leisure.
Mistaking information for knowledge Easy access creates illusion of mastery.	Integration, context, and reflection turn data into wisdom.	Read deeply, summarize, teach back what you consume.
Filling silence with content Fear of boredom; silence exposes anxiety and self-talk.	Empty space is where creativity and emotional digestion happen.	Reclaim quiet moments — drives, walks, meals — without media.
Outsourcing memory to devices Convenience erases recall; dependence breeds cognitive laziness.	Memory shapes identity and insight; retrieval strengthens thinking.	Use external storage selectively; rehearse, summarize, or journal key ideas.
Trading privacy for convenience «Free» services monetize data; users underestimate cost.	Autonomy and security over personal data.	Pay for ethical tech, use privacy tools, value friction as protection.

Economy and Consumption

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Working to buy time-saving devices that create more work Productivity culture sells convenience as freedom; new tools bring new chores.	Time reclaimed should serve rest or meaning, not more production.	Buy less, maintain better, design days around purpose not efficiency.
Disposable packaging and single-use goods Convenience economics and hygiene theater.	Waste reduction and resource cycles sustain the planet.	Reuse systems, bulk buying, refill stations, compostable materials.
Brand loyalty as identity Marketing sells belonging through logos.	Identity should grow from values and relationships.	Buy for utility and ethics; remove logos; repair and customize.
Fashion cycles as moral duty Industry thrives on obsolescence and social comparison.	Expression and function, not trend compliance.	Timeless design, personal style, visible mending, slow fashion.
Debt as inevitability Consumer credit normalized to drive spending and GDP.	Financial resilience and freedom.	Save first, borrow only for assets, teach financial literacy early.
Growth as unquestioned good GDP fetish replaces wellbeing; politicians fear stagnation.	Ecological balance and human flourishing.	Measure success with wellbeing, sustainability, and equity indices.
Price mistaken for worth Market ideology equates cost with quality and status.	True value = durability, ethics, satisfaction.	Pay fair prices for good work, not inflated prices for image.
Year-round fruit and veg Supermarket abundance signals progress and choice.	Our biology evolved with seasonal nutrient cycles.	Relearn seasonal eating; preserve and ferment to bridge gaps.

Morality and Identity

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Life as linear progress Industrial and religious narratives prize advancement and redemption arcs.	Growth is cyclical — creation, decay, renewal.	See life as seasons: times to build, rest, reinvent.
Success as solitary achievement Hero myths and capitalist competition glorify the individual.	All achievement rests on networks of help, teaching, and luck.	Celebrate collaboration; credit the invisible scaffolding of others.
Kindness equated with avoiding conflict Social harmony prized over truth; politeness mistaken for virtue.	Integrity sometimes demands discomfort.	Practice compassionate honesty — soft voice, hard truth.
Morality as obedience Religious and bureaucratic systems reward compliance.	Ethics comes from empathy and consequence awareness.	Teach moral reasoning, not rule-following.
Rest framed as laziness Productivity culture moralizes activity.	Rest restores judgment, creativity, and sanity.	Treat rest as discipline; design schedules around recovery.
Adulthood as seriousness Work culture and aging anxiety define play as immaturity.	Play keeps creativity, flexibility, and learning alive.	Integrate humor, curiosity, experimentation into adult life.
Comfort as supreme goal Consumer society equates comfort with happiness.	Growth requires friction; discomfort signals learning.	Seek balance — comfort for recovery, discomfort for evolution.
Fixed self-identity Predictability feels safe; institutions rely on stable categories.	Humans are adaptive and multifaceted.	Allow self-concept to evolve; treat identity as verb, not noun.

Clothes

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Wearing clothes constantly Cultural modesty, fear of vulnerability, and status signaling.	Temperature regulation, comfort, and social context — not perpetual covering.	Normalize partial or full nudity at home or in safe communal settings; dress by need, not reflex.
Appearance over comfort/function Social hierarchy: looking «put together» signals competence.	Mobility, breathability, and genuine self-expression.	Fabrics and cuts guided by climate and movement; aesthetics growing from practicality.
Tight waistbands, bras, restrictive cuts Control and «slimness» symbolize discipline.	Circulation, digestion, and full breath need space.	Elastic or adjustable garments; relaxed tailoring seen as elegance, not sloppiness.
Suits and ties as professionalism Origin in military and aristocratic uniforms; respectability through conformity.	Competence, hygiene, and respect don't require discomfort.	Redefine «formal» as neat, comfortable, context-appropriate attire.
Logos as identity Branding replaces individuality with affiliation.	Self-definition through values and behavior.	Unbranded clothing; customization through craft and symbolism.
Treating visible wear as shameful Newness equated with status and hygiene.	Longevity shows care and sustainability.	Visible mending, patina as aesthetic of authenticity.
Washing everything after one wear Marketing of «freshness» and fear of odor.	True cleanliness = absence of dirt, not detergent smell.	Wash underwear/socks each wear; air out outer layers; launder by need.

Nature and Environment

Default / Habit	What Actually Matters	How it Could Look
Seeing «nature» as separate from humans Western dualism (culture vs. wilderness) framed control as progress.	Humans are an ecological process, not its exception.	Design and live as part of ecosystems — regenerative farming, green cities.
Manicured parks instead of wildness Order feels safe; control looks civilized.	Biodiversity and resilience thrive in messy systems.	Urban rewilding, edible landscapes, tolerance for natural disorder.
Flooding interiors with artificial light Electricity equated with prosperity; bright spaces feel productive.	Circadian rhythm and darkness cycles govern hormones and sleep.	Layered lighting — daylight first, warm dim light after sunset.
Weather treated as inconvenience Urban life insulates from natural variability.	Exposure builds resilience and sensory awareness.	Dress and plan for weather rather than fighting it; accept flux.
Valuing scenery over ecology Nature seen as backdrop for human enjoyment.	Health of soil, water, and species outweighs visual prettiness.	Ecological stewardship as beauty — thriving systems, not trimmed views.
Noise and scent sterilization Modern design prioritizes silence and «neutral» air.	Natural soundscapes and smells regulate mood and orientation.	Open windows, natural materials, sensory variety.
Treating wilderness as recreation venue Tourism commodifies nature as experience.	Reciprocity — taking care of the places that host us.	Conservation funding, leave-no-trace ethics, local stewardship.
Constant climate control indoors Comfort culture and cheap energy normalized uniform temperature.	Body benefits from adaptation and mild thermal stress.	Wider comfort bands, passive cooling, natural ventilation.

