



GUIDE 10

The Long *Game*

Chapter 10 of the book: The Mind, Fear and the Long Game (with the Appendix: the causes of failure, the annual self-review, the alibi list)

WALT

"You've all read me your aims. You haven't heard mine."

BEFORE YOU WATCH

Read Chapter 10 and skim the three lists in the appendix. Do not do the lists yet; they take most of a day, and this guide will have you block that day.

Have the book open to the Fear inventory. Bring your calendar. You will leave with a day on it.

THE SCENE

It is the last Tuesday. Walt Kessler, seventy-four, unfolds a page and reads his own aim to the table for the first time: one more table every winter for as long as he is able, and the 1964 sailboat in his garage finished with his grandson before the boy is sixteen. The boy is thirteen.

The table goes through the list of six fears. Carla finds poverty: some weeks there was a paycheck in her house and some weeks there was not, and she still counts the register twice. Hal finds aging; he apologizes to customers for his knees. Dez finds criticism, obviously. Dev says none of them, really, and Walt asks him to read the second one out loud. Dev reads the line about inferiority disguised as bravado and says, "Okay."

Walt says the last one is his. He would like three more winters, and he would rather not spend them counting.

Dev flips to the back of the book, to the pages of checkboxes, and asks which one he should do first. He wants to be done with this thing. Walt asks about the Tuesday after that.

THE IDEA

The *idea*

You have absolute control over exactly one thing. Not your circumstances, not other people, not outcomes. Your thoughts.

Most of what your mind does, it does without you. Every thought you repeat gets filed deeper. The background mind takes what it is given and works on it, day and night, and it does not care whether what it was given was useful. Feed it fear and it works on fear. Feed it a clear aim, charged with feeling and repeated daily, and it works on that. If you do not deliberately give it something, it will feed on whatever drifts in. A thought with emotion attached gets filed and acted on. A cold thought gets filed and forgotten.

Some of what it files comes back as a hunch: the background mind reporting on patterns it has seen a thousand times and you never counted.

Before any of this can work, three enemies have to be cleared out: indecision, doubt and fear. Indecision becomes doubt, and the two together become fear. Fear hides, and most people who say they fear nothing are simply unaware of their own. There are six basic fears: poverty, criticism, ill health, loss of love, aging and death. Everyone carries some combination.

THE PAGE, IN THE EPISODE



Chapter 10: The Mind, Fear and the Long Game

Poverty. ☒ 5

Criticism. ☒ 5-4

Ill health. ☐ 1

Loss of love. ☐ 4

Aging. ☒ 4

Death. ☒ 5

The decision: _____

INVENTORY DAY
Again: Sept 26

positive outlook	sound health	good relationships	freedom from fear	hope for what's ahead	belief to act on
willingness to share	work you'd do anyway	an open mind	self-discipline	understanding people	financial security



Worry is fear in slow motion. It is sustained fear caused by indecision, which means it can be ended by decision. You stop worrying about a thing the moment you decide what you are going to do about it, including the decision to accept what cannot be changed.

Beyond the six fears there is a seventh enemy, more often fatal: susceptibility to the negative influence of other people and of your own negative habits of mind. The defense is to use your will until it builds immunity, to seek the company of people who make you think for yourself, and to stop expecting trouble, since trouble rarely disappoints.

None of this is a one-time fix. You are not going to read this workbook and be finished. You are going to use it, and come back to it. The last thing the book asks of you is a schedule.

THE MEMO

MEMO

THE PATTERN, NAMED

SUBJECT

The Alibi

CC

One account executive, twenty-six. One book, ten chapters, three inventories in the back.

MOVES

Ask which one to do first, want to be finished, find the reason it was never going to work anyway, "If I'd started ten years ago," close the book.

OUTCOME

The book goes on the shelf, finished, and nothing changes.

The pattern is tempting because finishing feels like a grade, and Dev has been good at grades all his life. The alibi is tempting for a different reason: it is a little bit true. He would be further along if he had started at sixteen. Everyone's alibi is a little bit true, which is what makes the list in the back of the book so long. But excuses do not spend. The world asks only one question: did you do it?

THE REWIND



Walt tells Dev there is a sheet on the door. Dev writes his alibi in the margin, "If I'd started ten years ago," looks at it, and draws one line through it. Then nobody picks which inventory to do first. Each of them writes the one line the chapter puts under the list of fears, the decision that ends the worry. Hal: "I'll get along on what we've got, and I'll say so to Bev." Carla: "I'll get along on what one salon makes. And I'll know the number, every week, on a spreadsheet." Dez: "I'll let them say it. I fix the finish when they're right, and I leave it when they're not." Dev: "I tell one person the number. Out loud. This week." Walt: "Three winters or thirty. The boat gets built either way." Each picks this week's cue, each cuts one feed, and each puts an inventory day on the calendar in the next two weeks, with a date to repeat it. On the way out, four of them sign next winter's sheet.

What it cost: Dev does not get to be done.

GO CHECK

The book names its sources so you can look them up. The episode does not; this box does.

Two systems: Daniel Kahneman's description of the mind as a fast, automatic system that runs on pattern and feeling and a slow, effortful one that reasons. The book's "background mind" is the fast system. Memories with emotional charge are stored differently and more durably.

Sleep and problem-solving: memory consolidation during sleep is well established, as is the finding that people who load a problem before bed are more likely to see the solution in the morning.

When to trust a hunch: Daniel Kahneman and Gary Klein, a joint paper in 2009. Intuition is reliable in environments with real regularities and prompt, clear feedback, after enough practice to learn them. A firefighter's gut about a building, a chess master's gut about a position, an experienced salesperson's gut about a buyer: trustworthy. A gut feeling about the stock market or a stranger's character: not, because the environment does not teach.

Neuroplasticity: the brain's ability to rewire itself in response to practice continues through life.

Growth mindset: Carol Dweck's work on growth versus fixed mindset. Large-scale replications since have found the effect to be real but modest, strongest for people who were struggling.

Negativity bias: Roy Baumeister and colleagues, "Bad Is Stronger Than Good." The mind over-weights threat by design.

Terror management theory: Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon and Tom Pyszczynski. Reminders of mortality push people toward their deepest values and commitments, the scientific version of the last-day exercise in Chapter 2.

Worry: decades of work confirming that worry is rumination without a decision attached, and that the most effective treatments all involve converting it into either an action or an acceptance.

Social contagion and the information diet: the Christakis and Fowler findings from Chapter 9 apply directly, and there is a modern channel the old writers never faced. Guarding against negative influence now means deciding what you let onto your screen.

The Stoics, who said two thousand years ago that your thoughts are the one thing you control.

NEXT TUESDAY

There is no next Tuesday in the book. Walt's table meets again next January, and there is a sign-up sheet on the door.

Yours meets whenever you call it. The date that matters now is the repeat date you wrote under The schedule: that is the Tuesday after that.

THE PAGE

The Page

Five of the chapter's exercises, condensed, then the three lists for inventory day. Write in the book or in your notebook.

Fear inventory. For each fear, check the symptoms you recognize in yourself. Then rate how much the fear operates in your life, 1 (barely) to 5 (constantly).

☐	Poverty (indifference, indecision, doubt, worry, over-caution, procrastination)
☐	Criticism (self-consciousness, lack of poise, a lack of firmness in opinions, inferiority disguised as bravado, spending to impress, lack of initiative, lack of ambition)
☐	Ill health (looking for symptoms, talking constantly about illness, avoiding exercise, using sickness as an excuse, using substances to dull discomfort)
☐	Loss of love (jealousy, fault-finding, reckless risk-taking to buy affection)
☐	Aging (slowing down and apologizing for one's age, killing off initiative by believing oneself too old, dressing and acting younger to hide it)
☐	Death (thinking about dying instead of making the most of living, usually from lack of purpose or occupation)

Which is strongest? Where do you think it came from?

The decision. Worry ends with a decision. For your strongest fear, write the decision that ends it. The old remedies still work: decide to get along with whatever wealth you can build without worry; decide not to worry about what other people think, do or say; decide to treat aging as the accumulation of wisdom rather than a loss; decide to forget symptoms; decide you can get along without a given person's love if you have to; decide to accept death as the one certain event and stop spending life on it.

MY DECISION:

Thought stops. Choose a cue. Any time you notice or perform it, stop and take a brief inventory: what was I thinking just before this, what was the feeling behind it, and what was around me (place, people, screens, sounds). Cues that work: hands to face, doorways, door handles, faucets, switching hands, crossed arms or legs, sitting down, standing up, taking a drink, touching another person, touching an animal, unlocking your phone (this one alone will tell you more than the rest combined). Change the cue every week. Cues wear out. When you catch a negative thought, do not condemn yourself for it. Use the reset statement from Chapter 4 and redirect.

This week's cue: _____

Information diet. List every source of information you consume in a normal day: apps, feeds, shows, podcasts, group chats, news. Next to each, write whether it leaves you more capable or less. Cross out the ones that leave you less. Then actually remove them.

The schedule. Choose a day in the next two weeks and block the whole of it for the three inventories below. Write it here and put it in your calendar now. Then choose the date you will repeat them. Not more often than monthly. Not less often than yearly. Keep the results. They are the measure of what this workbook did.

Inventory day: _____

Repeat date: _____

Inventory day, list one: the causes of failure (Appendix A)

Read through, check the ones that apply, and if you can, have someone who knows you well go through it with you. You cannot see your own blind spots. Every item is correctable. The list is reproduced here as the book has it.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ 1. No clear purpose. | ☐ 2. No ambition beyond getting by. |
| ☐ 3. Insufficient education. (Education is knowledge applied, persistently. People are paid for what they do with what they know.) | ☐ 4. Lack of self-discipline. |
| ☐ 5. Poor health. (Much of it is within your control: what you eat, whether you move, whether you sleep, what you let yourself think about, how you use substances to cope.) | ☐ 6. A bad start. (The only item on the list that cannot be changed, so the only use of it is to know what you are compensating for.) |
| ☐ 7. Procrastination. (The most common of all. The time will never be right. Start where you stand with what you have.) | ☐ 8. Lack of persistence. |
| ☐ 9. A negative personality. | ☐ 10. Unchanneled drive. (Strong emotion that is not aimed at something productive will find a destructive outlet.) |
| ☐ 11. Wanting something for nothing. (The gambling instinct, in all its forms.) | ☐ 12. Indecision. (People who succeed decide promptly and change slowly.) |
| ☐ 13. One or more of the six fears. | ☐ 14. The wrong partner. (Your closest relationship either feeds your aim or drains it. There is no neutral.) |
| ☐ 15. Over-caution. (Under-caution is as bad. Both are extremes.) | ☐ 16. The wrong associates. (We become like the people we spend time with.) |
| ☐ 17. Superstition and prejudice. (Both are forms of fear and both are signs that you have stopped learning.) | ☐ 18. The wrong work. (Nobody succeeds at something they do not like.) |
| ☐ 19. Scattered effort. (Concentrate on one chief aim.) | ☐ 20. Careless spending. (Save a fixed percentage.) |
| ☐ 21. Lack of enthusiasm. | ☐ 22. Intolerance. (A closed mind on any subject means you have stopped acquiring knowledge. The most damaging forms concern religion, race and politics.) |
| ☐ 23. Excess. (In eating, drinking, substances, screens, or anything else.) | ☐ 24. Inability to cooperate. |
| ☐ 25. Unearned power or money. (Quick riches are more dangerous than poverty.) | ☐ 26. Dishonesty. |
| ☐ 27. Ego and vanity. | ☐ 28. Guessing instead of thinking. |
| ☐ 29. Lack of capital. (Common among people starting a business for the first time without enough reserve to absorb their mistakes.) | ☐ 30. Comparison. (Measuring your life against the polished highlights of strangers, hourly, through a screen.) |

Write the three you checked that you think do the most damage, and what you will do about each.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Inventory day, list two: the annual self-review (Appendix B)

Businesses take inventory once a year to find out what is actually on the shelves rather than what the records say. You should do the same. The review has three sections in the appendix: Performance (twenty-eight questions, starting with whether you reached the goal you set for this year), Influences (twelve questions about the people and inputs around you), and Habits of mind (forty-seven questions, ending with how much time you spent on the questions). Write your answers on separate paper, date them, and keep them to compare with next year. Have someone who will not let you fool yourself check your answers. The full list is Appendix B. Do it there; it is too long to reproduce here and too useful to shorten.

Inventory day, list three: the alibi list (Appendix C)

People who do not succeed know all the reasons for failure, and they have what they consider airtight excuses for their own lack of achievement. Some are clever. A few are even justified by the facts. But excuses do not spend. The world asks only one question: did you do it? Check the ones you have used. Condensed here; the full list of fifty-eight is Appendix C.

IF I had money	☐	IF I only had time	☐
IF I had the right connections	☐	IF I had a better education	☐
IF I had my health	☐	IF other people understood me	☐
IF I didn't care what they'd say	☐	IF I had been given a chance	☐
IF I were younger	☐	IF I'd taken the opportunities I had	☐
IF I didn't have the house and the kids to look after	☐	IF I could just get started	☐
IF I had a different personality	☐	IF people knew what I could do	☐
IF I could get out of debt	☐	IF I hadn't failed	☐
IF I knew how	☐	IF I didn't have so many worries	☐
IF I were sure of myself	☐	IF luck weren't against me	☐
IF I didn't have a past	☐	IF the algorithm would show my work	☐
IF I'd started ten years ago	☐	IF the market weren't so saturated	☐
IF I had the right tools	☐		

And the greatest of them all, as the book has it: IF I had the courage to see myself as I really am, I would find out what is wrong with me and fix it. Then I might have a chance to learn from my mistakes and from other people's. Because I know there is something wrong with me, or I would be where I would have been IF I had spent more time studying my weaknesses and less time building alibis to cover them.

The full set is in Chapter 10 and the Appendix. Do those too.

THIS WEEK
This Week

- 1

This week's cue. Pick one: doorways, a faucet, your hands on your face, unlocking your phone. Every time you catch it, stop: what was I thinking, what was the feeling, what was around me. Next week, change it.
- 2

The decision that ends your strongest worry. Find your fear on the list of six and rate it. Then write the decision, one sentence, in ink. Accepting what cannot change counts as a decision.
- 3

Inventory day. Block a day in the next two weeks for the three lists above. Then write the date you will repeat it, and keep the results.

DAY	DID IT	ONE LINE ABOUT IT
1	☐	
2	☐	
3	☐	
4	☐	
5	☐	
6	☐	
7	☐	