

The Bad-Day Protocol

You only have to do **one** box. Do it badly. Then stop. **That counts.**

Can you stand up right now?

NO → Fix One Gauge Ch 8 — Slept? Moved? Eaten? Water? Fix only the lowest: a glass of water, a piece of toast, five minutes outside, or twenty minutes lying down with a timer.

YES ↓ Do you know what the task is?

NO → The One-Box Day Ch 3 — Draw one box. Write one thing in it. Put it where you'll trip over it. Everything else is parked until tomorrow.

YES ↓ Is it too big to start?

YES → One Rung Ch 2 — Write the task. Under it, the single dumbest first thing. Do it. Cross it out with a fat pen.

NO → The 30-Second Rule Ch 1 — Nearest doorway: open the email and type their name; run the hot tap and put one thing in the sink; put the form on the table. Thirty-second timer. When it rings you may stop.

Still stuck? One at a time:

Change One Thing Ch 5 — not the task, the room: stand up, a different chair, one song on, in the car, as a voice note.

Narrate It Ch 6 — say out loud what your hands are doing, second person, five minutes.

Race the Kettle Ch 4 — kettle on; do anything on the task until it clicks off. Winner: you.

A bad stretch, not a bad day?

The Amnesty Line Ch 7 — “Everything before today is forgiven. Today's one thing is:”

Do its doorway. Nothing else counts today.

One box. Then stop. That counts.

Doorway Card (example)

Task

the school newsletter email

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

open it and scroll to the bottom

Cue (when I...)

sit down with the first coffee

This card lives

sticky note on the laptop lid

Doorway Card

Task

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

Cue (when I...)

This card lives

Doorway Card 1

Task

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

Cue (when I...)

This card lives

Doorway Card 2

Task

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

Cue (when I...)

This card lives

Doorway Card 3

Task

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

Cue (when I...)

This card lives

Doorway Card 4

Task

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

Cue (when I...)

This card lives

Doorway Card 5

Task

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

Cue (when I...)

This card lives

Doorway Card 6

Task

Doorway (physical, under two minutes, no decisions)

Cue (when I...)

This card lives

Ladder

Chapter 2 • example

Cut it until you say "I could". Do the bottom rung only.

Task

*the boys' room, which had reached the stage where you
can't see the floor*

Rung 1

sort the whole room (no)

Rung 2

do the floor (still no)

Rung 3

*pick up everything that's clothing and put it on the bed
(maybe)*

Rung 4

*pick up one armful of clothing and put it on the bed
(nearly)*

The stupid one

*stand in the doorway and pick up the one sock nearest
my foot*

Ladder 1

Chapter 2

Cut it until you say "I could". Do the bottom rung only.

Task

Rung 1

Rung 2

Rung 3

Rung 4

The stupid one

Ladder 2

Chapter 2

Cut it until you say "I could". Do the bottom rung only.

Task

Rung 1

Rung 2

Rung 3

Rung 4

The stupid one

Ladder 3

Chapter 2

Cut it until you say "I could". Do the bottom rung only.

Task

Rung 1

Rung 2

Rung 3

Rung 4

The stupid one

Landing Strip

Chapter 3 • example

One Must. Three Would Be Goods. Park the rest. Fuel Gauge first.

☐ Slept? ☐ Moved? ☐ Eaten? ☐ Water?

Date

Tuesday

MUST (one)

ring the mechanic and book the car in

WOULD BE GOOD (up to three)

reply to the school email

put the washing on

find the library book

PARKED (everything else; read it only when writing tomorrow's page)

dentist for both kids · tax folder · the leaking tap ·

birthday present for Mum · sort the photos · cancel the

streaming thing · that form for work · the garage · call

Dad back · look at the insurance renewal · the boys' room

again · ask about the fence

Lives

under the kettle

Landing Strip

Chapter 3

One Must. Three Would Be Goods. Park the rest. Fuel Gauge first.

☐ Slept? ☐ Moved? ☐ Eaten? ☐ Water?

Date

MUST (one)

WOULD BE GOOD (up to three)

PARKED (everything else; read it only when writing tomorrow's page)

Lives

Landing Strip

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Date

MUST (one)

WOULD BE GOOD (up to three)

PARKED (everything else; read it only when writing tomorrow's page)

Lives

Urgency Dial

Chapter 4 • example

Finish line, block, visible clock, consequence.

Task

*the pile of school forms that has been on the bench since
term started*

Finish line (what “done for now” looks like)

every form is either signed and in a bag, or in the bin

Block (shorter than seems reasonable)

10 minutes

Visible clock

the oven timer, which I can see from the bench

Consequence (what happens when the block ends)

*the school run leaves at 8.20; I start at 8.05 and
whatever isn't done goes in the bin*

Notes

☐ **DONE FOR NOW**

Urgency Dial 1

Chapter 4

Finish line, block, visible clock, consequence.

Task

Finish line (what “done for now” looks like)

Block (shorter than seems reasonable)

Visible clock

Consequence (what happens when the block ends)

Notes

☐ **DONE FOR NOW**

Urgency Dial 2

Chapter 4

Finish line, block, visible clock, consequence.

Task

Finish line (what “done for now” looks like)

Block (shorter than seems reasonable)

Visible clock

Consequence (what happens when the block ends)

Notes

☐ **DONE FOR NOW**

Interest Menu

Chapter 5 • example

Five categories. Don't censor.

INTEREST

true-crime podcasts · reading about houses · talking to

Ana · a specific fizzy drink · 90s music, loud

NOVELTY

the café by the school · standing at the bench · a new pen (embarrassing

but true) · doing it in the car outside · first thing, before anyone's up

CHALLENGE

beat yesterday's time · do it in one go, no breaks · fewer

than five emails · no phone for the whole block

URGENCY

the school run · bins, Tuesday · someone waiting for a text

· the kettle

PASSION

the kids not inheriting my paperwork · not being the one

who forgot · the garden

Interest Menu

Chapter 5

Five categories. Don't censor.

INTEREST

NOVELTY

CHALLENGE

URGENCY

PASSION

Matching

Chapter 5 • example

One ingredient per task. During, never after.

Match 1

Task

the insurance renewal

Ingredient

true-crime podcast

How (during, not after)

only allowed to listen to the new episode while doing

the renewal

Match 2

Task

Ingredient

How (during, not after)

Matching

Chapter 5

One ingredient per task. During, never after.

Match 1

Task

Ingredient

How (during, not after)

Match 2

Task

Ingredient

How (during, not after)

Matching

Chapter 5

One ingredient per task. During, never after.

Match 3

Task

Ingredient

How (during, not after)

Match 4

Task

Ingredient

How (during, not after)

Body-Double Ladder

Chapter 6 • example

Five rungs, most presence to least. Take the highest one you can reach today.

Rung 1 — someone in the room, doing their own thing

*I, when he's working from home. The kids at the table
after school, weirdly.*

Rung 2 — someone on a call, cameras on, no talking

Ana, Wednesday mornings, we both hate admin

Rung 3 — a text to one person: "starting X now, will text when done"

my sister; she never replies and it still works

Rung 4 — a recording of myself narrating the task

the "sorting the school bags" one on my phone

Rung 5 — narrating out loud to nobody

me, in the kitchen, sounding ridiculous

Body-Double Ladder

Chapter 6

Five rungs, most presence to least. Take the highest one you can reach today.

Rung 1 – someone in the room, doing their own thing

Rung 2 – someone on a call, cameras on, no talking

Rung 3 – a text to one person: “starting X now, will text when done”

Rung 4 – a recording of myself narrating the task

Rung 5 – narrating out loud to nobody

Clean Restart

Chapter 7 • example

Dates only. Amnesty. Rescue. One doorway. One sentence to the next one.

The stretch (dates only)

Thu 4 to Mon 15

Amnesty (dropped, for good)

the birthday dinner I didn't organise · replying to the group

chat about the thing · the Landing Strips for those eleven

days · the Wednesday call I skipped twice · the library fine

(I'll just pay it, I'm not going to argue it) · reading the school

newsletter for that fortnight · the gym

Rescue (still matters, still possible)

1. *the car, which is now overdue for its warrant*

2. *texting Mum back*

3. *the form for J's work thing, which has a real deadline Friday*

Doorway for rescue 1

find the mechanic's number and write it on a sticky note on the kettle

To the next one

It was eleven days and it ended. The car got booked on

day twelve. Nobody at the school noticed the newsletters.

Clean Restart 1

Chapter 7

Dates only. Amnesty. Rescue. One doorway. One sentence to the next one.

The stretch (dates only)

Amnesty (dropped, for good)

Rescue (still matters, still possible)

1.

2.

3.

Doorway for rescue 1

To the next one

Clean Restart 2

Chapter 7

Dates only. Amnesty. Rescue. One doorway. One sentence to the next one.

The stretch (dates only)

Amnesty (dropped, for good)

Rescue (still matters, still possible)

1.

2.

3.

Doorway for rescue 1

To the next one

Clean Restart 3

Chapter 7

Dates only. Amnesty. Rescue. One doorway. One sentence to the next one.

The stretch (dates only)

Amnesty (dropped, for good)

Rescue (still matters, still possible)

1.

2.

3.

Doorway for rescue 1

To the next one

Fuel Gauge + MVD

Chapter 8 • example

Gauge first. Then three to five items, each with a doorway.

☐ Slept? ☐ Moved? ☐ Eaten? ☐ Water?

Any "no" is a probable cause. Fix the lowest one, then try again.

Item 1

meds, with the first coffee

Doorway

the box lives next to the kettle, not the bathroom

Item 2

one real meal

Doorway

toast counts; put the bread on the bench the night before

Item 3

shower

Doorway

turn it on, then decide

Item 4

five minutes outside

Doorway

shoes by the back door; stand on the step, that's enough

Item 5

kids fed and at school

Doorway

lunchboxes are a Ladder on the fridge; rung 1 is "get the boxes out"

Where the printed list lives

Fuel Gauge + MVD

Chapter 8

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Item 1

Doorway

Item 2

Doorway

Item 3

Doorway

Item 4

Doorway

Item 5

Doorway

Where the printed list lives

Fuel Gauge + MVD

Chapter 8

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Item 1

Doorway

Item 2

Doorway

Item 3

Doorway

Item 4

Doorway

Item 5

Doorway

Where the printed list lives

My Bad-Day Protocol

30-Day Plan, Day 30

Only the boxes that worked for you. Three is common.

Box 1 — name

What I do

Box 2 — name

What I do

Box 3 — name

What I do

Box 4 — name

What I do

30-Day Gentle Plan

days 1–10

One line a day. Rest days shaded. No catching up.

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3 — rest

☐

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7 — rest

☐

Day 8

Day 9

Day 10 — rest

☐

30-Day Gentle Plan

days 11–20

Day 11

Day 12

Day 13

Day 14 — rest

☐

Day 15

Day 16

Day 17 — rest

☐

Day 18

Day 19

Day 20

30-Day Gentle Plan

days 21–30

Day 21 — rest

☐

Day 22

Day 23

Day 24 — rest

☐

Day 25

Day 26

Day 27

Day 28 — rest

☐

Day 29 — tick the Protocol

Day 30 — write your own

☐ Days skipped

Restarted on day