

TINY EXPERIMENTS

*How to Live Freely
in a Goal-Obsessed World*

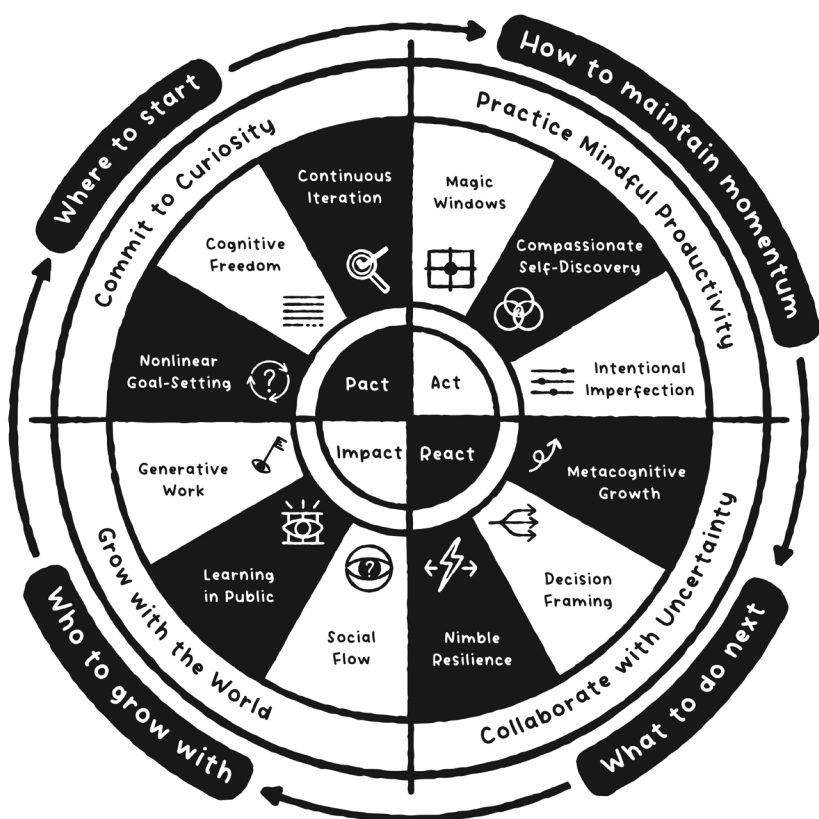
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*Experimentalist Toolkit,
Reflection Guide, Glossary,
and Acknowledgments*

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Experimentalist Toolkit

This is a quick-access reference guide for approaching any challenge with curiosity and finding success without a road map. In true scientific fashion, ask yourself how each tool can apply to your life and feel free to tailor them to fit your specific situation.



Just start by selecting the question that best describes your current situation and go to the corresponding quadrant in the toolkit.

- **Where** can I start?
- **How** can I maintain momentum?
- **What** can I do next?
- **Who** can I keep growing with?

Once you have identified your question, use the tools you discovered in this book to navigate the situation:

Pact: Commit to Curiosity



Adopt an experimental mindset with the Three Mental Shifts.



Challenge cognitive scripts with Field Notes.



Design small iterative experiments with a Pact.

Act: Practice Mindful Productivity



Open magic windows with a Kairos Ritual.



Listen to procrastination with the Triple Check.



Leverage imperfection with the Ambition Dials.

React: Collaborate with Uncertainty



Create metacognitive growth loops with Plus Minus Next.



Broaden the decision frame with the Steering Sheet.



Dance with disruption with the Two-Step Reset.

Impact: Grow with the World



Unlock social flow with a Curiosity Circle.



Learn in public with the Public Pillars.



Do generative work with the Five Keys.

You can download a printable version of this toolkit at <https://nesslabs.com/toolkit>.



Reflection Guide

The following prompts are simple tools for self-discovery. Answering each question will deepen your understanding of the themes discussed in each chapter of the book. You can reflect on these prompts at the end of the corresponding chapter or address them all at once as part of a more comprehensive reflection exercise.

1. Reflect on a time when setting a goal felt limiting rather than motivating. What benefits might have come from a more fluid, open-ended approach?
2. Think about the pressure to find a singular purpose in your professional or personal life. How has this affected your choices?
3. Recall a recent source of doubt or fear. How could you turn this into a small iterative experiment to learn and grow, rather than a barrier?
4. How do you currently manage your time? Reflect on how shifting from a focus on efficiency to a focus on the quality of your experiences might impact your daily life.
5. Consider a recent instance of procrastination. What might it have been signaling, and how could you address the underlying issue constructively?
6. Identify an area in your life where perfectionism holds you back. How could embracing intentional

imperfection help you move forward while still being satisfied with your work?

7. Reflect on a time when you learned from trial and error. How did this metacognitive process contribute to your growth, and how could you apply it more deliberately in the future?
8. Think about a significant decision you've made in the past. Did you choose to persist, pause, or pivot? What did you learn from the outcome?
9. Describe a disruption you recently faced. How did you react, and what steps could you take to better navigate and learn from such disruptions in the future?
10. Consider your communities and their alignment with your interests. To what degree are they supporting your growth—and if they're not, what steps can you take to change that?
11. Recall an example of when you learned something new in a public setting. How did this openness affect your learning process and the support you received?
12. Think about the impact you want to have right now, rather than your long-term legacy. What small, meaningful actions could you take today to contribute to your community in a generative way?

Whether you're journaling on your own, working with a coach, or participating in a book club discussion, use these twelve questions to explore your thoughts and challenge your assumptions, and develop an experimental mindset.

To make the most of the prompts, you might find these guidelines helpful:

- **Take your time:** Allow yourself the space to give each question careful thought. There are no right or wrong answers—only your personal experience.
- **Be honest:** Only genuine self-reflection can unlock actionable insights. Express what truly comes to mind, even if it's unexpected or feels uncomfortable.
- **Reflect regularly:** Consistent reflection can help you understand and observe your growth over time. Consider adding these prompts to your regular metacognitive practice.
- **Discuss openly:** If you're in a book club or coaching setting, share your reflections with others. Radical transparency can enrich your perspective and strengthen the connection with your peers.



GLOSSARY

ADAPTABILITY: The ability to adjust to new conditions and modify strategies accordingly.

ALIGNED ALIVENESS: A harmonious state where one's thoughts, emotions, and actions are in alignment, making tasks feel appropriate, exciting, and doable.

ANALYSIS PARALYSIS: Overthinking a situation to the point that a decision or action is never taken.

CAREER LADDER: The traditional linear progression of career advancement within an organization or field, often contrasted with nonlinear portfolio careers.

COGNITIVE SCRIPTS: Subconscious mental frameworks that guide individuals' perceptions and actions based on past experiences and societal norms.

COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE: The group intelligence that emerges from the collaboration of many individuals, enhancing problem-solving and innovation.

COMMITMENT DEVICE: A method used to bind oneself to a plan of action that might otherwise be difficult to accomplish.

COMMUNITY ARCHITECT: Individual who shapes and builds communities, fostering generative environments for meaningful connection, shared learning, and collective growth.

CONE OF UNCERTAINTY: A visual mental model that illustrates the increasing range of possible outcomes over time, reflecting the inherent uncertainty in predicting future events.

CONSEQUENCE CASCADE: The series of outcomes that result from a single action or decision.

CREATIVE CONSTRAINTS: Limitations or challenges that fuel innovation and problem-solving.

CROWDPLEASER SCRIPT: A cognitive script that guides actions based on the desire to please or gain approval from others.

CURIOSITY CIRCLE: A community centered around genuine connection and peer learning, where participation is based on curiosity rather than expertise.

DECISION FRAME: The context and perspective through which choices are evaluated and made, including the assumptions, objectives, and boundaries that shape decision-making processes.

DISRUPTION: Significant change or interruption that challenges the status quo.

EMOTIONAL AGILITY: The ability to fluidly adapt and respond to emotional experiences, enhancing overall well-being and performance.

EPIC SCRIPT: A cognitive script that drives actions based on the pursuit of grand or heroic achievements.

EUSTRESS: Positive stress that motivates and enhances performance, as opposed to distress, which is negative and paralyzing.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION: Cognitive processes that enable planning, focusing attention, remembering instructions, and managing multiple tasks successfully.

EXPERIMENTAL MINDSET: An attitude of openness and curiosity, focused on learning from each experience rather than achieving a specific outcome.

FLOW STATE: A mental state of deep immersion and engagement in an activity, often leading to high levels of creativity and productivity.

FREE-FLOATING ANXIETY: Persistent worry that is not tied to any specific threat or situation.

GENERATIVITY: Using personal growth to positively impact the world, focusing on meaningful contributions in the present rather than long-term legacy.

GOOD MISTAKES: Errors or undesired outcomes that prompt reflection, leading to growth and learning.

GROWTH LOOPS: Cycles of trial, error, and learning that contribute to continuous improvement and development.

INTENTIONAL IMPERFECTION: Deliberately choosing to be temporarily mediocre in some areas of life and work to excel in others, thus prioritizing long-term excellence over short-term perfection.

ITERATIVE PROCESS: A method involving repeated cycles of testing, feedback, and refinement.

KAIROS RITUAL: Small, repeatable action designed to quickly shift one's mood, reconnect to the body, or provide a chance to check in with oneself.

LATERAL SKILLS: Diverse skills acquired across different fields, enabling innovative problem-solving and interdisciplinary contributions.

LEARNING IN PUBLIC: The process of acquiring knowledge and skills in a community or open setting, sharing progress, mistakes, and lessons learned.

LIMINALITY: The transitional phase between two stages or conditions, often characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty.

LINEAR GOALS: Goals that follow a predetermined, step-by-step path toward a specific end.

MAGIC WINDOWS: Periods of peak creativity and productivity that occur when fully immersed in an activity that captures complete attention.

MAXIMALIST BRAIN: The tendency to want to always go with the bigger option or engage in too many activities simultaneously, leading to difficulty in prioritizing and completing tasks.

METACOGNITION: Curiosity directed at one's inner world—thoughts, emotions, and beliefs—to gain greater insights and improve decision-making and emotional regulation.

MINDFUL PRODUCTIVITY: The practice of being present and fully engaged in the task at hand, rather than merely focusing on efficiency.

MULTIPOTENTIALITE: An individual with diverse interests and creative pursuits, often excelling in multiple fields.

NONLINEAR PATH: A journey that does not follow a straight, predictable trajectory, but involves unexpected changes, detours, and experiences.

OPEN SCIENCE: The practice of openly documenting the research process, including missteps and exploratory paths, to invite collaboration and accelerate discovery.

PACT: A pledge to engage in a particular activity for a predetermined period, driven by curiosity rather than outcome.

PERCEPTION-ACTION CYCLE: The ongoing interaction between the brain's perception of the environment and subsequent actions, guiding decisions based on continuous and often subconscious feedback.

PERSONAL EXPERIMENT: A self-designed, time-bound commitment to a repeatable action based on a pact aimed at learning and growth.

PLANNING FALLACY: The tendency to underestimate the time, costs, and risks of future actions while overestimating the benefits, often leading to overly optimistic plans.

PLUS MINUS NEXT: A metacognitive tool to celebrate accomplishments, evaluate outcomes, and adapt decisions, fostering continuous improvement.

POOLING EFFECT: The benefit of accessing a community's collective knowledge, skills, and resources, enabling meaningful progress beyond an individual's capacity.

PORTFOLIO CAREER: A career path that involves multiple roles or projects simultaneously, rather than a single long-term job.

PROCRASTINATION: The act of delaying or postponing tasks, which can signal underlying needs or conflicts.

PROOF OF WORK: Demonstrating abilities through tangible outputs rather than relying on titles or credentials.

PROVENANCE: The context and history associated with a work of art, including its creation and ownership.

QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE: The subjective value and satisfaction derived from how time is spent, rather than the quantity of tasks completed.

RADICAL TRANSPARENCY: The practice of openly sharing processes, decisions, and mistakes to invite collaboration and build trust.

RESILIENCE: The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and adapt to change.

RESPONSE 1: An automatic reaction characterized by discomfort, fear, and anxiety in the face of uncertainty, triggering a fight/flight/freeze response.

RESPONSE 2: An autonomous reaction characterized by delight, calm, and curiosity in the face of uncertainty, triggering an engage/explore/experiment response.

RIPPLE EFFECT: The impact that one action or event can have on a larger system, spreading and influencing other areas beyond the initial focus.

SAFETY EFFECT: The emotional and practical support provided by a community, enhancing individual resilience and stability.

SALON: A gathering where like-minded individuals exchange ideas, often leading to significant creative and intellectual growth.

SELF-ANTHROPOLOGY: The practice of observing and analyzing one's own behaviors, habits, and patterns to gain insights and design better experiments.

SELF-COMPLEXITY: The degree to which an individual's sense of identity is differentiated and compartmentalized, influencing resilience and emotional stability.

SELF-CONSISTENCY FALLACY: The mistaken belief that one must always act consistently with past behaviors or decisions, potentially limiting growth and adaptability.

SEQUEL SCRIPT: A cognitive script that limits future actions based on past events and outcomes.

SEQUENTIAL FOCUS: The practice of concentrating on one task at a time, moving on to the next task only after the first one is completed.

SOCIAL FLOW: The enhanced collective experience and mindful productivity achieved through group collaboration.

STEERING SHEET: A framework for making decisions by broadening the decision frame and considering both internal and external factors.

SUNK COST FALLACY: The cognitive bias that leads one to continue a commitment based on previously invested resources

(time, money, effort) even when it would be more rational to abandon it.

SYSTEMATIC CURIOSITY: Living a life of curiosity where external uncertainty is embraced and inner resistance is viewed as a useful source of information.

TOXIC PRODUCTIVITY: An obsession with efficiency that leads to burnout, stress, and a neglect of well-being and personal fulfillment.

TRANSACTIVE MEMORY: A shared system for encoding, storing, and retrieving information within a group, where individuals rely on one another for different areas of expertise.

TRIPLE CHECK: A tool for listening to procrastination signals by considering rational (head), emotional (heart), and practical (hand) factors.

TYRANNY OF PURPOSE: The pressure to find a single overarching purpose in life or career.

UNDERLYING NEEDS: Fundamental psychological or emotional drives that influence behavior and decision-making.



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