

The 30 Practices Companion

A workbook for 30 Days of Timeless Wisdom

OWLCHEMY PRESS

How to use this workbook

This is the companion to *30 Days of Timeless Wisdom*. Each page holds one day's practice — a single thing you can finish in about fifteen minutes — and one question to answer in your own words.

Do one a day. Read the day's chapter first if you have the book, then come here and actually do the practice and write your answer. Print it, or fill it in on screen. The point isn't to read thirty pages — it's to end up with thirty things you actually did.

Keep the pages you fill in. Read them back at the end. That record — not the book — is the thing worth having.

DAY 1

Perseverance — Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

Take one defeat from the last two years that you still file under "failure" — a job you didn't get, a pitch that died, a venture that folded. Spend fifteen minutes writing down, as concretely as you can, what it *built*: the specific skill you only developed because you tried, the relationship that exists because you reached out, the clarity you now have about what you actually want. Name at least three things the loss gave you that a clean win never would have.

WHAT I DID

What am I currently treating as a dead end that is actually a hearing?

DAY 2

Beginning in the Dark — Helen Keller (1880–1968)

Pick one skill you started and abandoned in the "silent" phase — where you put in effort, felt no traction, and quit. Spend fifteen minutes doing one small, concrete rep of it right now: ten sentences, one small function, fifteen minutes of scales. Do it badly on purpose. The goal is not progress today; it is to re-enter the silence deliberately instead of fleeing it.

WHAT I DID

Where in my life right now am I mistaking silence for failure?

DAY 3

Forgiveness as Strategy — Nelson Mandela (1918–2013)

Name one grudge you are currently carrying. Spend fifteen minutes writing two columns: what holding it protects or gives you, and what it actually costs you in time, mood, and relationships. Be honest about both. Most grudges lose their grip the moment the ledger is visible.

WHAT I DID

What am I still paying for that I could choose to set down?

DAY 4

The Courage to Question — Socrates (c. 470–399 BC)

Write down one belief you hold that quietly governs a current decision (about money, work, or what you're "not the type" to do). Spend fifteen minutes interrogating it in writing: Where did it come from? What is the actual evidence? What would change if it were wrong? Follow the questions even when they get uncomfortable.

WHAT I DID

What am I treating as a fact that is really just an old assumption?

DAY 5

The Discipline of Nonviolence — Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)

Think of a current conflict where you have been tempted to retaliate. Draft two responses: the one that hits back, and the one that stays calm, factual, and refuses the other person's terms. Spend fifteen minutes on the second until it is genuinely strong — not weak politeness, but controlled force. Notice which one would actually work better.

WHAT I DID

Where am I being baited into a fight on someone else's terms?

DAY 6

The Long Work — Marie Curie (1867–1934)

Identify the single most important skill or problem in your work — the one with the highest leverage on where you want to go. Block ninety minutes for it this week, phone in another room, one task only, no switching. Spend fifteen minutes now just scheduling it and writing down the one specific thing you'll work on in that block.

WHAT I DID

What is my radium — the one thing worth staying in the shed for?

DAY 7

Resolve Before the Crowd Agrees — Winston Churchill (1874–1965)

Think of a decision you're currently facing where the safe, popular option and the option you believe in have split apart. Spend fifteen minutes writing the case for your conviction as clearly as Churchill would have to — the actual reasons, so you could defend it to a frightened room. Bank the argument now, before you need it.

WHAT I DID

What line have I not yet drawn that I'll wish I had when the pressure comes?

DAY 8

Failure as Data — Thomas Edison (1847–1931)

Take one thing that recently "failed" for you. Spend fifteen minutes writing it up as an experiment, not a verdict: What exactly did you try? What did the result actually rule out? What's the single next variation worth testing? Turn the flop into a line in a lab notebook.

WHAT I DID

What failure have I been reading as a verdict when it was really just data?

DAY 9

Standing Up When It Costs You — Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968)

Identify one thing you currently stay silent about because speaking up would be uncomfortable or costly. Spend fifteen minutes writing what you would actually say, to whom, and how — the specific words, kept fair and calm. You don't have to send it today. You have to stop pretending the silence is neutral.

WHAT I DID

Where is my silence a decision I've been treating as no decision at all?

DAY 10

The Cost of Wanting to Know Everything — Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)

List your current open "curiosities" — the tabs, courses, half-projects. Spend fifteen minutes sorting each into one of two piles: *feeds my main work* or *pure tangent*. You don't have to kill the tangents. You do have to see clearly which is which, and name the one central thing they're all supposed to serve.

WHAT I DID

What is the main work that all my curiosity is supposed to feed — and does it?

DAY 11

The Person in Front of You — Mother Teresa (1910–1997)

Pick one person you'll interact with today — a colleague, a family member, someone you'd normally half-attend to. Give them fifteen minutes of complete presence: phone away, fully listening, no rushing to your own point. Notice how rare and how noticeable that is.

WHAT I DID

Who in my life am I processing when I should be attending to them?

DAY 12

Follow the Structure, Not the Surface — Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Take one frustrating behavior you keep seeing — at work, in a market, in your own life. Spend fifteen minutes mapping the structure underneath it: What is actually being rewarded here? What's being punished? Who benefits from the current setup? Look for the incentive, not the villain.

WHAT I DID

DAY 13

Make Them Feel It — William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Take one message you need to land soon — a pitch, a request, an explanation. Spend fifteen minutes rewriting its opening as a specific story about one real person feeling the problem, before any data appears. Lead with the human, not the number.

WHAT I DID

DAY 14

Use the Platform You Have — Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)

Name one platform you actually have — a group that listens to you, a skill, an audience, a seat at some table. Spend fifteen minutes identifying one concrete way to use it this week for someone other than yourself, and write down the specific action.

WHAT I DID

DAY 15

Win Before You Fight — Sun Tzu (c. 5th century BC)

Pick one "contest" coming up in the next few weeks — a negotiation, interview, pitch, or difficult conversation. Spend fifteen minutes doing reconnaissance: write down what you'd need to *know* — about the other side, the terrain, and your own real position — to have won before you walk in. Then note the one piece you're missing.

WHAT I DID

Which upcoming battle am I planning to wing that I should be winning in advance?

DAY 16

Living by One Principle — Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965)

Spend fifteen minutes drafting your one organizing principle — the axis you want your major decisions to serve. Write several candidates, then cut to one sentence. Test it against a real decision you're facing: does it actually help you choose? Refine until it does.

WHAT I DID

DAY 17

The Prepared No — Rosa Parks (1913–2005)

Identify one thing in your life you keep saying yes to that you should be refusing. Spend fifteen minutes preparing the no: decide exactly where your limit is, and write the calm, clear words you'll use when the moment comes. Prepare it like Parks prepared — so it's ready before you need it.

WHAT I DID

What is the one no I need to prepare and then actually say?

DAY 18

Trust What You Actually See — Galileo Galilei (1564–1642)

Find one place where the "official story" in your work or life is drifting from what you can actually observe. Spend fifteen minutes writing down the plain evidence — the real numbers, the real behavior, what you've actually seen — separately from what you're being told. Let the two columns sit side by side.

WHAT I DID

Where am I ignoring the evidence of my own eyes because authority says otherwise?

DAY 19

Do the Homework They Can't Dismiss — Rachel Carson (1907–1964)

Take one concern you've been raising (or want to raise) on conviction alone. Spend fifteen minutes turning it into a case: list the specific evidence, real examples, and numbers that would make it undismissable. Identify the one piece of proof you still need to gather.

WHAT I DID

What true thing am I asserting on feeling that I should be proving with homework?

DAY 20

Follow the Evidence You Didn't Want — Charles Darwin (1809–1882)

Identify one belief you're emotionally invested in where the evidence has been quietly straining against you. Spend fifteen minutes honestly listing the evidence *against* your position — as fairly as if you were arguing the other side. Notice what you've been explaining away.

WHAT I DID

What do I want to be true that the evidence is quietly telling me isn't?

DAY 21

Working for a Harvest You Won't See — Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906)

Spend fifteen minutes identifying one thing worth doing whose payoff is years away or beyond your own reach — a person to develop, something to build to outlast you, a long cause to serve. Write down one concrete action toward it you could take this month, reward or no reward in sight.

WHAT I DID

DAY 22

Focus Is What You Say No To — Steve Jobs (1955–2011)

Write out everything you're currently trying to do or move forward. Spend fifteen minutes ruthlessly sorting: the two or three that matter most, and everything else. Then, for one "everything else" item, decide to actually drop it — and write down what you'll stop doing.

WHAT I DID

What good thing do I need to kill to give my great thing a real chance?

DAY 23

The Invisible Work That Matters Most — Norman Borlaug (1914–2009)

Identify one high-impact but low-visibility task you've been avoiding in favor of flashier work. Spend fifteen minutes actually starting it — not planning it, starting it. Notice the pull toward the more visible thing, and do the important one anyway.

WHAT I DID

DAY 24

Make Your Wound the Material — Frida Kahlo (1907–1954)

Identify one experience — a hardship, an oddity, a way you don't fit — that you tend to hide or downplay. Spend fifteen minutes writing how it might actually be a source of insight or distinctive value in your work or life: what does it let you see, make, or understand that others can't?

WHAT I DID

What have I been hiding as a weakness that might be my most original material?

DAY 25

The Pen Against the Empire — José Rizal (1861–1896)

Take one idea you genuinely believe could improve something — at work, or in a community you care about. Spend fifteen minutes writing it out clearly, as if for readers who aren't in the room with you: the problem, the idea, why it matters. Make it travel without you.

WHAT I DID

DAY 26

You Become What You Repeatedly Do — Confucius (551–479 BC)

Choose one small practice that, repeated daily, would slowly make you into who you want to be — ten minutes of reading, one honest thank-you, a single push toward a goal. Spend fifteen minutes designing it so it's small enough to actually do every day, and do it once, now.

WHAT I DID

What am I becoming through my current daily habits — and is it who I want to be?

DAY 27

Care Is Not Enough Without Proof — Florence Nightingale (1820–1910)

Take one thing you care about changing. Spend fifteen minutes figuring out how to *measure* it — what number would show the problem's real size — and how to present that number so vividly (a simple chart, a stark comparison) that someone with power couldn't dismiss it. Sketch the measurement now.

WHAT I DID

DAY 28

Finding the Voice You Were Told to Silence — Maya Angelou (1928–2014)

Find one place where you've been silencing yourself — an idea unspoken, a truth unsaid, work unmade because you doubt your right to make it. Spend fifteen minutes giving it voice: write it out fully, in your own words, as if your perspective obviously deserves to exist. Then pick one place to actually say it.

WHAT I DID

DAY 29

Vision Is Not Enough — Nikola Tesla (1856–1943)

Take one exciting idea you've been holding. Spend fifteen minutes stress-testing its *execution*, not its brilliance: What's the concrete first step? Who or what does it need to actually happen? Where would it realistically die? Write the honest path from idea to shipped — or admit it doesn't have one yet.

WHAT I DID

DAY 30

Go Back for Them — Harriet Tubman (c. 1822–1913)

Think of one person who is now where you used to be — facing a door you've already walked through. Spend fifteen minutes doing one concrete thing to help them through it: a message, an introduction, an hour of your time, something you learned written down and handed over. Go back for one person, today.

WHAT I DID

Now that I've made it through some door, who am I going to go back for?