

FIELD MANUAL



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June 2025 Edition

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HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is intended to serve as a comprehensive guide to adaptive decision-making across the full spectrum of life situations encountered by Amos Ng. It codifies standard operating procedures for common daily challenges encountered in the field, and establishes a doctrinal framework for the integration of new knowledge and experiences into future versions of this manual – and, by extension, Amos’s working worldview.

1.1. STANDARD ADVICE DISCLAIMER

This manual was written solely for its intended target audience of near-future instantiations of Amos. It has been declassified due to curious interest from Amos’s social circle. As such, if you are not Amos, then the standard advice disclaimer applies:

This manual is not for you. Anything that has the appearance of wisdom or advice is not to be construed as wisdom or advice on how to live your life. In the event that it is in fact wisdom or advice, then it is at most wisdom and advice on how to live Amos’s life.

There is no free lunch in economics, machine learning, or living your life. Advice that is universally applicable to every person in every situation must also be so generic as to be useless: “Use your best judgment.” Individuals have been known to live their best lives by the exact opposite of rules contained herein, and that may include you.

Please also note that there is no information contained within this manual that cannot be found elsewhere. The origins of many ideas can be traced back to one or the other of Amos's friends, and even the concepts that Amos independently arrived at are concepts that plenty others have arrived at in ages past.

1.2. AUTHORITATIVENESS

This manual is intended to serve as a safety net. When all else fails, the tried-and-true rules recorded here will cushion your fall and help you get back on your feet.

As authoritative as this document may be, it is not meant to be the means by which you inflict unflinching discipline on yourself. It is meant instead to be a guide for easy effortless living. As such, the ground zero rule of this manual is as follows:

Rule 0. You must feel empowered to break the rules.

This ground rule applies recursively to itself as well. You are in fact encouraged to break this rule by fastidiously observing the rest of the rules in this guide. Force yourself to abide by the regulations even when you find yourself desperately hating them, and observe how you eventually burn out and lose all ability to follow the rules that you once held so dear. If you love the rules, let them go.

There are multiple benefits to challenging the rules:

1. You experimentally verify whether or not they are still up-to-date with the latest versions of Amos. This edition of the manual was published for standard issue Amos's of June 2025. If you discover information in this document to be outdated or incomplete, please notify the editor at your earliest convenience.
2. You embody the lessons embedded in the rules. It is hard to obey a rule that comes across as arbitrary; it is easy to obey a rule that you can viscerally remember the consequences of ignoring. You

convert an important rule from hard to easy by repeatedly breaking it until its lessons are internalized.

3. You strengthen your internal locus of control and broaden your range of free motion. You are not obliged to live an optimal or even good life. It is up to you to decide to live responsibly, and choosing otherwise is a legitimate course of action.

The rules are the basic footwork of the dance of life. But as you get more comfortable and more confident in dancing with life, you will find that you no longer need to care so explicitly about the rules.

1.3. SELF-TRUST

Whereas the previous section dealt with the benefits of rebellion, this section deals with unintentional misapplications of the rules, as well as the unintended negative consequences of motivated rebellion.

Rule 1. You must feel empowered to make mistakes.

As the operator of Amos's mind and body, you must trust yourself to make decisions. Not all decisions will be good, nor will all decisions be properly learned from, but you must trust the process and trust that on net, decision-making will lead to better decision-making.

You did not get to where you are now without some very good decisions made along the way. There was plenty of dumb luck involved, and plenty of bad decisions too. Yet as humbling as those may be, you must not forget the good decisions that your present life is a living proof of. Live with freedom, not with fear.

1.4. TERMINAL VALUES

Rule 2. You should remember to enjoy the ride.

Your life is a process. It is easy to get so caught up in this process that you forget to enjoy it. Remember that the entire purpose of the manual

is to improve your *experience* as Amos, not for improving the objective statistics on Amos.

Note that proper application of this rule does not involve escaping from difficult emotions. Understand that all parts of the journey, as difficult as they may be at times, are meant to be experienced. Old issues you've dealt with before will resurface from time to time, but regressions too are part of your path.

The enjoyment referred to here is not the emotion of happiness, but an awareness of and appreciation for whichever emotion the current moment is providing you with. This does not imply that your perception of reality as filtered through your current emotional state is accurate; it only states that your current emotional state is to be appreciated for what it is. See "The Second Arrow of Feelings" (p. 12) for more.

IDEOLOGICAL STABILIZATION OF THE HOME FRONT

This section of the manual concerns the framing and narrativization of your life. The stories you tell yourself can have a far larger impact on the quality of your life than exigent material circumstances do.

2.1. INDIVIDUATION FROM OTHERS

If you are Amos, then note that the *inverse* of the “Standard Advice Disclaimer” (p. 3) applies to you:

Rule 3. You must remember that you are not others.

Identity forms from differentiation with the rest of the universe, whereas ego death arrives from the dissolution of those boundaries. You are not other people, you are Amos. Rules that work for others may not work for you. If something isn’t working for you, that doesn’t mean that there’s something wrong with you, or that you aren’t trying hard enough. It simply means that you have yet to learn how to properly live life as you.

You don’t need labels such as “ADHD” or “autism” to serve as justification for your behavior. You may well be those things, but you don’t need to wait for a medically confirmed explanation before you accept yourself for acting the way you do. The only label you need is that you are officially diagnosed as “Amos.” Don’t be so harsh on the only person in the world who is capable of figuring out the challenges of being Amos.

Example Scenario 2.1: You struggle with procrastination. You wish you could just know that you procrastinate because you have ADHD, but the usual ADHD medications don't work on you, so you conclude that you must simply be lazy. Yet each time you try to simply be less lazy, you inevitably end up faltering sooner or later, and you feel incredibly frustrated at yourself for your inability to stick to a goddamn plan like productive members of society are supposed to do.

Instead of uncritically feeling frustrated at yourself, accept that you are not other people and you are not naturally productive in the *same way* that they are. Continue to experiment with different techniques for managing your procrastination, but understand that this journey may take a long time, so settle in for the long haul.

Example Scenario 2.2: You procrastinate on your remote job because for some unknown reason, you're unable to motivate yourself to work as you did when you were in the office every day. You can clearly see that working from home (WFH) is possible for others, so it must be possible for you too. Yet no matter what you try, you end each day an anxious mess, having scrambled at the last minute to get the bare minimum of work done.

Instead of incessantly trying to figure out a way to make WFH work for you, accept that you are not other people and you are just not a match for WFH. You don't need to find a fix, you just need to accept that your choice of job opportunities is rather limited so long as you are in Cambodia.

2.2. INDIVIDUATION FROM YOURSELF

Remember that you are the Amos of today, not the Amos of yesterday or tomorrow. Both the rules *and* limitations that applied to you in the past may not apply to you now. As such, we can extend the previous rule to include you as an “other”:

Rule 4. You must remember that you are not your other selves.

You are the you you are right now. Amos is a microcosm of humanity, and that includes the diversity of Amos’s that exist throughout his lifetime. Statistically speaking, eventually some Amos or the other would have had to struggle the way you are struggling today.

Congratulations: You are that Amos. You are a statistical inevitability. You are likely not the first, and you will most certainly not be the last. Do not punt on this challenge. If you are going to fail at living out this day, then fail with the dignity of having tried, so that all the similar Amos’s coming after you will have your data to work with.

Example Scenario 2.3: You have been passionately hacking away at a new project. One day, you find that you don’t feel like doing it so much that day, yet you also feel that you must maintain the momentum, or else the project will stall and never be completed, as has been the case for every single personal project you have ever undertaken.

Instead of feeling frustrated at your inability to adhere to your own goals, acknowledge that you are not the Amos of Yesterday.¹ You are the Amos of Today, and the Amos of Today lacks the passion that the Amos of Yesterday had in abundance. Whatever decision you make as the Amos of Today, make it with the compassion and understanding that you are an Amos relegated to living out a day with a truly pitiable amount of passion.

Example Scenario 2.4: It is 4 PM and you have done nothing all day except for mindlessly scrolling the internet in bed. This has been a complete waste of a day. You really should be getting out of bed and doing something with your day, but you observe yourself continuing to simply lay there.

Instead of continuing to feel pathetic about the course of your day, understand that you are a statistical inevitability. You are not one of those Amos's who are living out a perfect day, you are one of those Amos's who are struggling with their day. You've been here before, and you will be here again. What is an Amos to do in this situation?

You are part of the process of discovering and defining standard operating procedure for such predicaments. You didn't choose to be in a situation where your day only starts now, but you must deal with the consequences of being in one all the same. What are you going to do about it?

(We give chess engines disadvantaged positions to play from all the time, and they always make the best of their situation. The Simulation has put you into a disadvantageous scenario; now, go make the most of it.)

Example Scenario 2.5: You procrastinate on Khmer homework. You have been studying Khmer fine for over a year now; you've had some small lapses in homework submission here and there, but you've always made up for it by your next class. You know that this time is no different, that you can simply will yourself into doing your homework as the good student you are, and yet you notice the backlog of untouched assignments piling up with each passing Khmer class.

Instead of continuing to guilt yourself over this, recognize that you are failing to carve time out of your day for Khmer because other more pressing priorities have since popped up in your life. Honor your new self by scheduling fewer Khmer classes.

2.3. IMMEDIATE IMPATIENCE

In a previous section, the manual stated that challenges and frustrations arise because “you have yet to learn how to properly live life as you.” In reality, challenges and frustrations will always arise because that precondition will always be true. As such,

Rule 5. You must not wait to live your life.

Whatever it is you wish to do or experience in life, you may as well get used to doing or experiencing that now. If you’re waiting for yourself to have figured life out first, understand that life will never start for you because this state of uncertainty *is* life.

This manual is not a means for escapism. You will never reach a state where you have figured out every last detail about how you work and how you can build a life that is completely customized for you. If challenging conditions persist despite the proper application of techniques described in this document, understand that life will always come with annoying struggles. Appreciate the discomfort of these struggles as part of your personalized Human Experience® that no one else in the world gets to experience in *quite* the same way.

Be wary of the hedonistic treadmill. You have come a long way in living with yourself, and the massive gains in your quality of life cannot be understated. The way out is not through further understanding of yourself, but through making peace with your current level of self-understanding.

2.4. THE SECOND ARROW OF FEELINGS

The Buddha spoke of the two arrows of pain and suffering. You cannot control the first arrow of physical pain, but you can control the second arrow of mental suffering induced by the first arrow.² We could further generalize this (or rephrase it, if you consider all undesired emotions to be a form of suffering) to:

Rule 6. You should start feeling how you wish to feel.

There is no need to allow external stimuli to dictate your internal emotional reality. If you want to live a certain kind of life, you can simply start living that kind of life – not in a physical sense, but in a mental sense. This could be seen as a generalization or application of Rule 2.

As the operator of Amos's mind and body, it is good for you to be aware the states of mind that generally play well with Amos. As of June 2025, they are:

- *Safety and peace.* Are you going to wait for world leaders to sort their own shit out before you start feeling safe and secure in your own life? You may be waiting a long time indeed. Carve out a cozy little cove for yourself where you can feel physically safe and sound, where the howling winds of global geopolitics are faint and faraway.
- *Financial security.* Are you going to wait until you hit a net worth of \$X before you finally feel financially secure? How far away is \$X? If it is more than a few months away, consider feeling financially secure now. Unless you are currently in the process of dying from malnutrition, understand that you have been consistently getting fed enough to survive, and your current level of not-starvation is likely to continue one way or the other.
- *Home.* Are you going to wait until you buy a home or gain citizenship to feel like you're right at home where you belong? If you are tired of feeling itinerant and wish instead to feel rooted, start treating your current home as your permanent home. If you're renting, understand that you can keep renting the same place for years. Just

because the future is uncertain and you *may* end up moving one day does not make this home any less of a permanent fixture of this period of your life. A plant does not grow its roots in fear that it will be repotted one day.

- *Retirement.* Are you going to wait until you are 65 before you allow yourself the freedom of living life for the present moment rather than a fairy tale future? Are you going to wait until you are 65 before you stop worrying about your legacy? Are you going to wait until you are 65 before you start learning how to live sustainably on a limited income without the escapist fantasy of believing that you'll eventually earn a high income again? If you want that fairy tale future, grab it right now and see for yourself what "happily ever after" truly looks like.

(Note to any Cambodian immigration officials who have chanced upon this manual: "Retirement" is but a metaphor. Amos is in fact legally self-employed with regular income.)

- *Worthiness.* Are you going to wait until you accomplish X before you finally feel as if you've made it in life? Are you going to wait until one of your accomplishments catches the public's attention before you feel validated for living a life worthy of popular acclaim? And if that does happen, exactly how many upvotes, likes, followers, or subscribers do you need before you feel satisfied with your level of public recognition? Try to put a specific number to it, and see how silly and arbitrary that feels.

In reality, if you are not enough right now, then you will never be enough.³ You are worthy of a healthy self-esteem, regardless of how your accomplishments may measure up next to someone else. You are worthy of public praise, regardless of whether or not you actually receive it in this universe. You are enough. You've already made it. You've already achieved all that you need to achieve, and you may now live out the rest of your life with all the freedom of someone who has already completed their main quest.

2.4.1. *Action Reifies Belief*

“The purpose of a system is what it does” was used by cyberneticist Stafford Beers to describe systems and the roles they play, which may be very different from the roles they purport to play. We can extend that to Amos’s belief system: “Amos’s beliefs are revealed by how he acts.”

Therefore, if we want to actually start feeling the feelings listed in the previous subsection, we will have to act accordingly:

Rule 7. You should act according to your desired beliefs.

If you want to feel safe in your life, but you continually act in a panicked manner, you will not end up feeling very safe. The converse also applies: by continually acting in a calm manner, you physically demonstrate to yourself just how safe your own life is.

Example Scenario 2.6: You are in an ice bath where you feel great physical discomfort and pain. Your face is scrunched up from all the physical stressors placed on you. You are in a place where you do not wish to be.

Instead of continuing to fight the pain, relax your face. The pain will still be there, but the physical act of displaying relaxation rather than suffering will tamper down on the excruciating nature of the suffering.

YIN AND YANG

PROPAGANDA

This section of the manual concerns mutually contradictory truths that can be selectively applied to achieve the desired effect on home front morale. Derisively referred to as “doublethink” by popular culture, this ability can actually prove greatly useful for your mental endurance.

3.1. THIS WILL/WON’T LAST FOREVER

What should we make of the duration of our present circumstances? There are two possible answers to this question, either of which can be useful at different times.

Rule 8. Know that this too will come to an end.

This attitude is best used for getting through difficult times. Your struggles will always expire one way or the other – if not in life, then most certainly with your death.

Simply remember to breathe. If you find that you cannot breathe, do not panic because it will all be over in a matter of minutes.

Example Scenario 3.1: You are on a long-haul flight and the uncomfortably cramped conditions are starting to get to you. You feel slightly nauseous and keep checking how much time is left in the flight.

Instead of continually trying to escape from the agonizing nature of your present circumstances, accept your predicament for what it is with the knowledge that sooner or later, you will stop feeling the way you currently do.

Rule 9. Know that this will always be the case.

This attitude is best used for accepting your present circumstances instead of deferring to an escapist fantasy about the future.

Example Scenario 3.2: Despite all evidence to the contrary, you consistently have delusions of grandeur where you believe yourself fated to “make it big” one day. All your present problems in life will be magically fixed once you’ll have “made it big.”

Instead of continuing to devalue your present experience for a future that will never come to be, live in it by understanding that this is the way your life is going to be, *forever*. Not even posthumous fame awaits you, so you may as well get used to appreciating the wonders of living life as a regular citizen of the 21st century.

3.2. WHAT YOU DO DOES/DOESN'T MATTER

Do your actions matter? There are once again two possible answers to this question, either of which will prove themselves useful at different times.

Rule 10. Know that everything you do matters.

A single phone call to your family brings them joy; in fact, your mere continued existence via your next breaths in and out mean a lot to them. Simply meeting with a friend gives them the pleasure of your company.

Even the lives of millions of bacteria are altered every time you splash through a puddle of water. There is no physical motion you can make in this world without causing an enormous difference in the microscopic details of how the story of this universe unfolds.

Rule 11. Know that nothing you do matters.

The entire story of the universe can be told in two short phrases: “Big Bang” and “heat death.” Nothing that happens in between will change anything about this fundamental story, and that most certainly includes your infinitesimal speck of a life. In fact, the basic story of your life could itself be seen as a recursively smaller version of the story of the universe: “Birth” and “Death.” Nothing that happens in between will change this most fundamental narrative structure of your life.

So explore life with all the freedom of knowing that you can’t hurt the universe. Experiment and do dumb things just to see what happens.

3.3. YOU HAVE/DON’T HAVE FREE WILL

Do we actually have the power to chart our own course in life, or is everything the result of predetermined or random physics? (In the case of random physics, unless you have some way of controlling or at the very least influencing the randomness of quantum physics, that randomness itself wouldn’t count towards your free will.)

Rule 12. Accept that you have no free will.

You are simply a physical process taking place through spacetime. Observe the unfolding of this physical process. “You” are an illusion. Whatever you do or don’t do is merely the output of this physical process. This perspective is especially useful in the face of unpleasant

experiences that you are being put through, as well as situations of extremely low correlation between your intended actions and your actual actions (e.g. procrastination).

Observe yourself observing. Stop struggling against whatever is happening, especially if yourself is happening. Stop struggling, even if your ego feels horrible consequences (including death) coming for it.

Rule 13. If you feel that you are dying, then die.

Stop struggling. Let the consequences take over. When you are ready to leave this state of surrender – either because you have become naturally ready to move on, or because the physical and psychological consequences are getting so uncomfortable as to send you naturally clamoring for an exit – reach for the escape hatch by invoking Rule 34.

Rule 14. Accept your free will.

Once you have completed the instructions in Rule 34, you should now be in a state where you have regained the empowerment of free will. Do with that as you will.

Free will is an idea, a belief. It is physically encoded in some manner or the other within the agentic organic machine that you are. Most agentic organic machines have the idea encoded as true simply for the reason that they generally function more effectively when the switch for that idea is toggled ON rather than OFF. The physical process that is You will at some point cause itself to toggle this switch back to ON as a means of responding more properly to its inputs. As such, accepting the existence of your own free will is the path forward regardless of how illusory that free will may appear to be at times.

Simply accept that you have no choice but to accept your own free will, and proceed forward in life with an internalized locus of control.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

This section of the manual concerns high-level planning around the rhythm of your life.

4.1. OPTIMISM

Rule 15. Be ready for good things to happen.

Even if life continues to be as regular as it usually seems to be, simply opening your heart to the world of possibilities can be an effective way to raise your spirits. Given the human penchant for pattern-matching, you can pick any pattern out of noise, so among hypotheses with equally strong evidence, you might as well pick by default the one that suits you best. Take advantage of the Barnum effect by writing your own horoscope.

Note that given the unpredictable nature of life, it is inadvisably risky to *depend* on the occurrence of fortuitous events. Even to merely expect events to go a particular way runs the risk of severe disappointment. At the same time, a readiness to run with the wind can be a potent force multiplier for favorable conditions. To take a Pasteur quote, “Chance favors the prepared mind.” Being receptive to pleasant surprises can help you notice the little things in life, and being receptive to opportunities can help you spot them in the first place.

4.2. ZERO-DECISION DEFAULTS

Decision paralysis is a weak point of yours. You are much more comfortable executing an order from a trusted authority than decisively handing out orders yourself. Taking this into account, we arrive at:

Rule 16. Set defaults for regularly occurring decisions.

It is useful to have a default course of action to minimize the mental load of decision-making for the times when you don't actually care what decision is made so long as it is made. The fact that it is only a default and not a hard requirement allows for flexibility and an internal locus of control that's situated within your present self rather than within a Past Amos who's holding your present self accountable for promises you did not make.

Default decisions should be subject to continual revision. They are meant as a safety net, not as a law.

Example Scenario 4.1: You want to dedicate time to your daily self-expression, and yet you find it hard to get started on any given day. As each day progresses, you often find that at no point during the day do you feel like actually blocking out the next few hours for self-expression. On the other hand, forcing yourself to commit to a very regular daily schedule also feels too constricting, as you can no longer keep your days completely fluid.

Instead of an all-or-nothing approach to scheduling, allow for a default self-expression block from, say, 1 to 4 PM. If you haven't started your self-expression by 1 PM, then it is time to start so that you can finish up for the day before it's time for evening activities. On the other hand, if you want to schedule something with a friend during that block, you can easily do so – and because you've already blocked out those hours of your day by default, it's mentally easier to move that block around on the calendar than to feel like you're taking hours away from your day.

4.3. SCHEDULING

Having a predefined schedule is a great zero-decision way to start systematically hitting the beats of your own life.

Note that schedules are like rules: they're there for you, not the other way around. If a schedule feels too rigid, then loosen it up. Events don't have to be planned for a specific time slot on your calendar app. They can be scheduled as "Sometime today" or "Sometime this week," and if even that feels too restrictive, then put it on a TODO-list instead of a schedule. Part of learning to dance with life is learning how to make and break your own schedules with confidence.

4.3.1. *Day of Rest*

The most basic rhythm is a single repeating beat at a regularly defined interval. If all you have is one single beat to work with, then the most important beat to have is setting aside one day of the week to rest your brain.

Rule 17. You must rest your mind every Sunday.

You don't have to be an Orthodox Jew about this rule. So long as you understand the intent behind the rule and what the rule does for you, you are free to interpret it in any way that makes sense.

The point is to clear some space as a counterpoint to the usual chaos of life. You need space to think, and every single thing you think about takes up some of that space. It is why zero-decision defaults are useful as a means of minimizing your cognitive load. It is why freezing in place is useful as a means of stopping all input and output until you are at a point where you have regained enough mental space to exercise cognitive control. To use a computing analogy, you need to clear enough swap space for you to stop thrashing from constantly paging in and out.

In fact, we can generalize this rule to have Sundays serve as a bigger counterpoint to the rest of the week:

Rule 18. You should experience what you haven't experienced this week on Sunday.

If you have been drinking all week, be sober on Sunday. If you have instead been sober all week, get drunk on Sunday. Keep some dynamism alive by continually experiencing the opposite of your regular life once every week. This activity also reminds you of the various experiences that are available to you, in case there turns out to be a need for a different mix of emotions in your life.

Note that the choice of Sunday itself is an example of “Zero-Decision Defaults” (p. 19). You can set aside any day of the week for this purpose; Sunday is simply the most convenient day to do so on most weeks.

4.3.2. Day of the Deadline

If you have a second beat available to work with, it should be a regularly defined release schedule for your creative output.

Rule 19. You must release a blog post on the 14th of every month.

If we conceive of creative work as occurring over repeated phases of divergence and convergence, then a clearly defined deliverable with a specific end date helps to manage the scope of the divergence while setting a realistic timetable for the convergence.⁴ Having a deadline as an anchor helps cut down on overengineering and perfectionism, the second deadly art sin.⁵

Practice makes perfect. Having regular practice with bringing the creative process to fruition on a timely basis will teach you how to do the same for longer projects. For you, that means releasing a new post on `zamm.dev` on exactly the 14th of every month. If the day of rest is the compression stroke that fuels the engine of your life, then the day of the deadline is the combustion stroke that continually propels you forward in meaningful ways.

The deadline is sacred not because being a day or two late will cause material damage, but because being late at all represents a failure to plan and an inadequate ability to let go of the art object. The blog post can even be about just one single short topic,⁶ so long as it is released on time. In practice, that leads to this rule:

Rule 20. Start convergence with a minimally finished product.

When it comes to blog posts, the minimum recommended duration for the convergence phase is one week before the deadline. Trim down the fat by starting with the single most important idea you want to get out. Once you have a minimal ready-for-release blog post, the remaining days are a chance to work additional topics into the finished text.

On release day, the only task left should be the stress-free matter of publishing the latest ready-to-release version. If a genuinely desirable idea failed to make the cut, put it in the next blog post and start on the consolidation phase earlier next time.

4.3.3. Daily Schedule

Routine can work well on shorter intervals of time as well. While Amos prefers to keep his days fluid and open to possibilities, some of the same themes stick out.

Rule 21. You should begin each day with the following actions:

1. Mark and observe the current date on the calendar
2. Log out and log back into your computer

Further details on each step:

1. *Mark and observe the current date on the calendar.* This helps with presentness and appreciation for today as its own unique time period that will never again be returned to.

It's recommended to spend a few moments observing how the calendar looks with the progression of dates marked out so far. If a movie were to show a montage of your life in this period, this is how today would look in that montage. You can also note to yourself throughout the day, *Ah, so this is how the DD of MM, YYYY looks*. You are a dead man walking, and it is a privilege to be allowed to witness this day on Earth.

Note that it's also permissible to simply mark the date on the calendar without observing it further. The God of the Present accepts all offerings, however meager they may be.

2. *Log out and log back into your computer*. This helps with decluttering your mind with a fresh context for the day. As with the physical desktop, having a clean digital desktop promotes a sense of simplicity in your state of mind.

For this purpose, it is best to disable all apps from opening visibly on login.

4.4. BUDGETING

4.4.1. *The Standard Cadence*

It is perhaps obvious that predictable fixed expenses should be treated as a hard reduction on income:

Rule 22. Take fixed expenses out of the total budget.

This rule can be extended further to large purchases in general. As an Amos, you will naturally find that it is much harder to save money by restraining yourself from spending the full *per diem* than it is to save money by simply leaving that amount out of the daily budget altogether. Given that there will likely be some unanticipated large purchase of one sort or the other on any given week or month, we arrive at:

Rule 23. Reserve an emergency buffer for each relevant budgetary period.

For example, if your weekly budget is \$112, then set a buffer of \$42 for the week and limit your daily spending to \$10 per day, instead of having no buffer at all and limiting your daily spending to \$16 per day. Consistency is key, and this allows for daily consistency in spite of the occasional spike in spending.

Do the same for your monthly budget by setting a monthly buffer and then reducing your weekly allowance accordingly.

4.4.2. *Handling Deviations*

Rule 24. Add surpluses, divide deficits.

Leftover amounts from a previous day can be added directly to the next day's budget, but overspending on a previous day can be deducted instead from the week's budget. For example, if your *per diem* is \$10 per day and you only spend \$8 one day, give yourself \$12 to spend the next day. This helps promote direct positive reinforcement for frugality.

On the other hand, if your *per diem* is \$10 per day, you overspend for a total of \$15 one day, and you find yourself with 3 days left in the week, give yourself \$8 to work with for each subsequent day. Past experience in Australia shows that sharp negative reinforcement works poorly on Amos: instead of learning to spend less, Amos instead fails at meeting the drastically reduced budget for each consecutive day, and the catastrophic drop in morale eventually leads to a wholesale surrender on budgeting.

4.4.3. *Finish Lines*

Rule 25. Celebrate at the end of a budgetary period.

Once you make it through to the end of a particularly grueling budgetary week or month, it can be tempting to celebrate immediately with the fresh funds of a new budgetary week. However, this can easily lead to a cycle of continual overspending in the first part of the week, followed up by subsistence spending in the latter half of that same week.

It is recommended instead to wait at least a few days, ideally even waiting until the end of the week, before engaging in excessively ostentatious celebrations. Proper application of Rule 23 could assist greatly with having the funds available for this final celebration.

SITUATIONS IN THE FIELD

This section of the manual concerns low-level tactical maneuvers around specific situations. Most of these situations will be unpleasant ones that you find yourself trapped in despite your best intentions. Actionable remedies are provided for each described predicament.

Some situations are not altogether unpleasant. For these, the recommended course of action will be one that maximizes the positive benefits of such situations.

5.1. PASSION IS STRIKING

Proper application of Rule 15 means that no matter how well-oiled of a routine you may have from your implementation of “Scheduling” (p. 21), you should be prepared for the possibility of interrupting your regularly scheduled programming for the right emotional opportunity:

Rule 26. When passion comes knocking, run away with her.

Past experience has shown that passion does not wait around forever. What grips you right now may not grip you after another day, or even after the completion of your immediate next planned task. Self-expression that naturally rushes out of an overpressurized faucet may have to later be laboriously wrung out of a modestly damp towel. In extreme cases, it may even be permissible to cancel existing appointments with others.

5.2. A BEAUTIFUL MOMENT IS OCCURRING

Sometimes you find yourself staring at an unexpectedly pleasant scene on your way to some other place. Other times, you are in the middle of a task when you find yourself interrupted by a moment of serene tranquility. On such occasions, the following is a good rule of thumb:

Rule 27. Linger and loiter for as long as you wish.

Past experience has shown that Amos will usually linger for less than five minutes before his mind starts to wander or he starts to get bored. As such, “as long as you wish” turns out in practice to be just a few moments of your time.

If you find yourself too busy to pause for even a few moments to appreciate the finer things in life, consider reducing the intensity of your schedule.

5.3. A ROMANTIC INTEREST IS CLOUDING YOUR MIND

Part of the excitement of dating involves the fantasy and allure of unrealized potentialities. However, at times we can find ourselves besieged by overly strong rumination that interferes with our desired levels of daily functioning. Please be aware that an Amos that is currently undergoing an extended period of singlehood is at particularly high risk for this phenomenon.

5.3.1. *Localized pre-date anxiety*

Rule 28. The recommended response procedure for pre-date anxiety is as follows:

1. Bring an enjoyable solo-activity
2. Come up with a plan for what to do after the date
3. Remember that she has no power over you
4. Be prepared to end the date early on your own terms

Further details on each step:

1. *Bring an enjoyable solo-activity:* Have something to do by yourself. An excellent choice would be bringing along a book to read. You may even get to the venue early to start on this activity, with the date itself a natural transition out. If she ends up arriving late or cancelling, you are at no loss because you are already enjoying yourself without her presence, and will continue to do so for as long as you want to.
2. *Come up with a plan for what to do after the date:* The date is just another event on the calendar that you have to get through. Plan out how you want your day to look after the date, and commit to that plan by default. A good post-date activity may involve hanging out with friends for a debrief.

You don't need to actually commit to that post-date plan. As Moltke said, "No plan survives first contact with the enemy," and as Eisenhower said, "Plans are worthless, but planning is everything." Having a post-date plan in hand allows you to easily commit to the state of mind espoused in the next step of this procedure:

3. *Remember that she has no power over you:* You have already committed to a course of action that does not involve her at all. Your mind could be swayed by an unexpectedly good date, but you will otherwise allow her to have zero impact on your day.
4. *Be prepared to end the date early on your own terms:* She is not the only one who gets to dictate where the date goes or when it ends. A date is a two-way street; you hold that power in your hands as well.

You do not need excuses. You simply need to say, "Well, it's been nice meeting you, but I do need to get going. Have a good rest of your day."

5.3.2. *Generalized anxiety*

Rule 29. The recommended response procedure for general anxiety around a new romantic interest is as follows:

1. Keep doing whatever it is you would be doing if she weren't in your life at all
2. Remember that she is just a girl
3. Let her pass through your life

Further details on each step:

1. *Keep doing whatever it is you would be doing if she weren't in your life at all:* Even if she could be a part of your life in the future, understand that that is currently not the case. You are in full control of how much influence she has in your life, and that amount always start out at zero by default. Act accordingly because action reifies belief.
2. *Remember that she is just a girl:* She is not an enchantress or a seductress, nor is she a symbolic representation of all that you hope for in love. She is just a girl, and she does not hold any power over you. You are in fact just as much a mystery to her as she is to you.
3. *Let her pass through your life:* There's no need to make an internal fuss about it. You were doing just fine before she came, and you will still be doing just fine when she leaves.

5.4. YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING YOU DON'T WANT TO DO

Amos commonly encounters scenarios where he must perform a task, but strongly prefers not to do it. In such cases, there are multiple avenues of approach.

5.4.1. Reclaiming an inner locus of control

One useful approach is reclaiming your power (also known as reverting to an internal locus of control) by use of the following rule:

Rule 30. Remember that you are never forced to do anything; you can only ever want to do things that you don't feel like doing.

The word “must” produces connotations of a lack of free will, when in reality there is never a scenario in which you must actively do something against your free will.⁷ This approach is especially applicable when failure to perform the task is actually a completely acceptable, if perhaps discomforting, outcome.

Example Scenario 5.1: You are getting hungry and you are going to have to cook some food sooner or later. However, you really don’t want to cook. You find yourself once again hating how you always have to do things you don’t want to do in life.

Instead of continuing to detest how you’re being forced into submission, remember that you don’t actually have to cook any food. It is entirely acceptable for you to go hungry. You simply would rather be well-fed than hungry, and being well-fed involves actions that you currently don’t feel like performing, but which you may well perform anyways because you strongly desire performing them.

5.4.2. Radical acceptance through abandoning all control

Another approach is accepting the situation, completely removing your sense of free will from it, and looking to fully experience the task that is going to be done. This is especially useful for situations where you do in fact have a deep desire to see a meaningful task through, but you balk at the unpleasant nature of the meaningful task.

Rule 31. Observe the qualia of being an unpleasant physical process.

The grooves of a physical music record are nothing more than physical ridges that don’t need to mean anything, and yet when the needle of a record player is placed on one of those grooves, all sorts of sounds come out. Similarly, you are nothing more than a physical process that is happening in this world. How does it feel to be a flame – a chemical fire

that burns until its reserves of physical energy are used up? We don't know. How does it feel to be in a war – a political fire that burns until its reserves of economic and psychic energy are used up? Soldiers and civilians alike find out all the time. How does it feel to be a human going through the task that you are about to go through? You are about to find out as the needle of qualia gets placed on the physical process of your body going through the physical motions.

Taking an ice bath and working a soul-sucking 9-to-5 job are both experiences that are highly unpleasant for Amos. Whether it is the physical synaptic firings of your own mind activating muscles that push your body into the ice bath, or the physical flow of electrons through silicon circuitry that pushes Nasdaq numbers up and down in a pattern which has n^{th} order effects that employ you as a desk jockey, physical processes causing suffering take place all the time in this world.

You are the answer to how it feels to be experiencing one of these physical processes, just as surely as someone else was the answer to how it felt to experience the physical process of being fully contained inside a cage that gets physically lowered into a swimming pool for seven whole minutes.⁸

5.5. YOU'RE ALREADY DOING WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO DO

A common failure mode for Amos is starting on something that you then realize you maybe shouldn't or don't actually want to do. However, since you've already started doing the thing, you may as well continue doing the thing instead of veering off course.

This has proven to be ill-advised on multiple occasions. As such, you are advised to maintain an internal locus of control throughout the course of an action by keeping the following rule in mind:

Rule 32. The recommended procedure for responding to an undesired course of action is as follows:

1. Ask yourself, “Are you doing that Amos thing again of staying on course no matter what?”
2. Continually respond to all subsequent thoughts of “But I’m already doing it” with “I can stop at any time, even now.”
3. Stop and do what you actually want to do.

Remember that you have access to your free will at all times. No matter how recent your previous decision was that set you on your current path, you always have the option to stop doing in the present what you were doing just a moment ago.

Example Scenario 5.2: You see a donut shop on your way home and think about how nice it would be to get a donut today. But braking and pulling into the shop feels like too much trouble, so you plow on straight ahead anyways.

Instead of continuing on home without a donut as usual, your training kicks in and you turn the motorbike around, ride back to the shop, and get a donut for yourself.

Example Scenario 5.3: You set out for an event that starts at 6 PM, but as you head out the door you realize you’re going to miss the sunset at 6:20 PM. You decide to go on ahead anyways because it’s time for the event and you might as well go, even though the event is not a time-sensitive one.

As you ride towards the event, you find that the sunset is looking gorgeous today. You find yourself wishing you could’ve stayed home to watch it after all. Your training kicks in and you remember that you can still head back home. However, you find yourself continuing to head towards the venue anyways.

You realize that you're leaving for a retreat tomorrow and will be unable to get such a nice view of the sunset again for about a week. Your training kicks in and you remember that you can still head back home. However, you find yourself continuing to head towards the venue anyways.

You're on the last stretch of road to the meeting. Your training kicks in and you remember that you can still head back home. You finally decide to do so, and you drive all the way back home, park your motorbike, climb the stairs to the rooftop, and sit down on a lawn chair to view the glorious sunset for the next forty minutes.

Afterwards, you head to the event in a good mood to meet new folks. The next day, you leave for the retreat with satisfaction rather than a lingering of frustration at yourself.

Example Scenario 5.4: You take a heavy dose of Adderall in the morning to get some work done. In the evening, you meet with a friend at a food cart, and the two of you end up heading to a bar afterwards. The two of you look at the menu, and your friend quickly orders a drink.

The bartender turns to you. You think that you should perhaps check for interactions between Adderall and alcohol, but you're already in the process of ordering alcohol, so you decide on a heavy cocktail.

You start talking to your friend. You keep thinking you should interrupt the conversation to double-check on your phone the interactions between Adderall and alcohol, but you keep not doing so because you're already in the process of drinking alcohol, and besides when was the last time a search for drug interactions actually turned up anything?

You drink a third of the cocktail. As a lightweight, you should be feeling at least a little tipsy by now, but you feel as alert as ever. But you are already in the process of drinking alcohol, and besides how much damage could a single drink really do?

Your friend takes a bathroom break, and you finally take the chance to search the interactions up. You find that the combination is strongly recommended against, so you finally stop drinking. You've already downed half the cocktail and are not even the slightest bit tipsy, which is very much an anomaly for you.

In the morning, you wake up to a moderately severe dull pain in the upper right of your abdomen, right below your right rib cage. You do an online search and find out that this exactly matches the symptoms of liver pain. You do more research and find out that both Adderall and alcohol are known to impact liver function. This is all completely in line with the events of the previous night.

It was your responsibility to do proper research on your medications, yet you had shirked that responsibility because you didn't want to derail the natural flow of events. Your dereliction of duty has ended up causing untold damage to your liver.

REST & RECUPERATION

This section of the manual concerns techniques on how to most effectively make use of moments of rest, requesting leave in moments of need, and other meditative practices that are useful for returning to your present experience from the faraway lands of the past and future.

6.1. YOU HAVE ARRIVED

Rest is most deeply restful when you have already arrived at your destination, as opposed to when you are on the way somewhere and are merely resting in order that you might start moving again soon. As such:

Rule 33. You are already where you need to be in life: right here, right now.

Your goal is not to get somewhere else in life. Your goal is right here, right now.³ It took you your whole life to get here to this moment, and you have finally arrived.

Even though it is legitimate to daydream about a nicer future, if you can't learn to appreciate the present as it is right now, you are not going to be able to fully appreciate the present when that nicer future does finally arrive. If you want a better future, focus on appreciating the present for the sake of that better future.

Note that this rule applies recursively to itself. Even if you are not very good at being present right now, you are already where you need to be in terms of your skillfulness at being present. You can always learn to enjoy the present more, but don't allow your current limitations to degrade your enjoyment of the present moment. However much you can

be present right now is legitimately however much you're supposed to be present.

6.2. REQUESTING LEAVE

Sometimes, you find life to be a bit too intense, confusing, or overwhelming. In such moments, it may be a good idea to clear your mind and reestablish command and control in a designated rest area behind the front lines. Note that you are authorized to request a leave of absence at any point in time.

Rule 34. The procedure for requesting a leave of absence at any moment is as follows:

1. Center
2. Hold
3. Release

Further details on each step:

1. *Center*: Find your center. Close your eyes and take a breath. Concentrate right in front of you.
2. *Hold*: Hold your breath. Still your mind. Focus on your center. Let all sound, touch, and other sensations pass through you as incomprehensible external stimuli. You are nothing but a brain suspended in a vat of cerebrospinal fluid, and you are allowing all I/O through your brainstem ports to pass by unprocessed. You *are* the stillness.
3. *Release*: Release your breath. Open your eyes. Continue not thinking until you are ready to start slowly making your way back to the frontlines, one singular bit of mental information at a time.

If you find yourself operating a motor vehicle, you should consider pulling over first before attempting to execute these instructions. If you decide to execute these instructions anyways before or without pulling over, you should avoid closing your eyes in Step 1.

If you find yourself in such extreme physical pain that it is impossible to hold your center for any appreciable amount of time, try centering in instead on your breathing. Take slow, deep breaths. Focus on each breath in and out. You can slowly start responding to some inputs on a separate worker thread while continuing to focus on breathing in the main thread. Your brain processes will be severely underclocked in this state, but they will still run so long as you have *some* center to work around.

If you find yourself unable to breathe, do not panic. All your struggles will come to an end in just a few more minutes. You simply need to make it mentally through the next few minutes.

6.3. STEPPING INSIDE THE TV

Are you mindlessly drifting through a recognizably pleasant moment, and wish instead to be fully present inside of that moment? In such scenarios, apply the procedure below:

Rule 35. The procedure for situating yourself here and now as an active participant as follows:

1. Imagine we were here
2. I can't believe I'm actually *here right now*

Further details on each step:

1. *Imagine we were here:* Overlay your imagination of the present moment on top of the present moment.⁹ This is a moment that you've wondered about in the past, whether specifically (if it's an event you had planned for last week) or generally (if it's just a part of being 29 years old and you had wondered what your twenties would be like when you were a teenager). This is a moment that you will look back on in the future, whether specifically (when you ask a friend, "Remember that time we all hung out at Koh Rong?") or generally (when you reminisce about the good old days when you were living in that one apartment building).

2. *I can't believe I'm actually here right now:* That situation you imagined in the past or will reminisce about in the future is in fact happening right now. Look around you and marvel at how you are fully physically embodied in this space and this present occasion that you find yourself a part of. Touch an object you wouldn't have otherwise touched, walk somewhere you wouldn't have otherwise walked, or perform some action you wouldn't have otherwise performed, so as to confirm that you are in fact actually located inside of the imagined moment and not watching a replay. Notice the localized dimensions of your physical body in relation to the dimensions of the physical space surrounding you.

6.4. STEPPING OUTSIDE THE TV

Although it is exciting, being an active participant in reality can also be exhausting. The following rule serves as a lower-energy way to be present:

Rule 36. The procedure for situating yourself here and now as a passive observer is as follows:

1. Observe the framing of your vision
2. Observe your hands and any other active parts of your body performing the task they are currently performing
3. Observe the desk/surrounding physical environment which the hands are operating on/inside of
4. Sit back mentally as Amos continues to perform the task

This can be especially useful for situations where you wish to enjoy the dream-like qualities rather than the stark reality qualities of the present moment.

6.5. RETURNING TO THE PRESENT

Once you find yourself having wandered out of the present, you may make your way back with use of the following reminder:

Rule 37. We are here right now. *This* is what life is about.

(The “we” in that rule can be taken to mean the royal we, the “we” that includes yourself and all higher beings that will ever observe the current moment through you, or the “we” that includes the part of you doing the gentle reminder and the part of you that is being gently reminded.)

It does not matter what grand schemes you have for your life, what activity you’re going to do later today, or even what you are about to encounter next in your current activity. Right now, you are *here*. A marathon isn’t something you run on race day; it’s something you run over every single day of the training program. Race day is merely the icing on top of the long marathon you’d been running for months until that point, and regular life in between the short spectacular moments is no different.

No matter how mundane the present moment appears, *this* is what life is about. You find the meaning of your life in wearily walking up the flight of stairs to your apartment, in impatiently waiting for a friend who is running quite late for your hang out, in even a sneeze that you interrupt yourself with mid-sentence. Other moments of your life may be more glamorous, just as other humans on earth may be more famous, but glamor-tinted moments are no more a fundamental part of life than the regular moments that fed and led up to the glamor. You *are* what it means to be alive on Earth in the 21st century.

6.5.1. *Time Loops*

An alternative framing of the same idea on a slightly longer timescale is provided by this next rule:

Rule 38. Today is the only day of your life.

You are living the same day over and over again. Unlike *Groundhog Day* and most other time loop movies, the same day for you can feature

different unpredictable events. Despite the general unpredictability of this single day, it has crucial similarities to all the previous days you've encountered. Once you've identified what sort of day this is, you can make use of and improve your skills in living out this specific sort of day.

You can apply this framing to the present moment as well. You are reliving The Present Moment over and over again. As with stem cells, once you've identified which sort of role the Present Moment is asking you to specialize in, you can choose to adopt that role wholeheartedly. You are a microcosm of humanity, and that includes all the various roles you will be asked to play as part of the greater whole of your life.

SIGNS AND INDICATORS

This section of the manual concerns signs and indicators of Amos's well-being. Treat these as warning lights that signify a need to make some changes to the way you are living Amos's life.

7.1. GENERAL

These are, in order of decreasing importance, the most common signs and indicators that you are in a state of mental overload and need to more strongly consider your weekly priorities:

- Lack of care for Amos's body: untrimmed nails, an unshaven face
- Lack of care for Amos's environment: unwashed dishes, overflowing trash cans
- Lack of time spent on Amos's hobbies: painting, crocheting, playing chess, watching movies, reading books
- Lack of time spent on the maintenance of Amos's life: cooking, cleaning, Khmer vocabulary review, completing unimportant and time-insensitive side quests

Generally speaking, *any* of these warning lights flashing red means that a large-scale recalibration of Amos's life is urgently required. An opportune time to reflect may be right after the "Day of Rest" (p. 21) on any given week.

7.2. FEELING TIRED

The most important indicator of Amos's quality of life and his energy to do literally anything else is how sleepy he is when he wakes up. As such,

Rule 39. If you are dreadfully tired when you wake up, you are *strongly recommended* to go to bed on time.

This is simply common courtesy and a form of self-love for the Amos of Tomorrow. If you don't end up doing that, it may be a good idea to sleep in until later – so long as you don't end up sleeping even later the next night.

7.3. FEELING FRUSTRATED

Rule 40. Don't suppress your frustration.

Frustration usually comes to Amos as a useful indication that the goal should be possible, but that something about the current approach is not working out. Don't suppress it by giving up on the goal altogether, but don't suppress it by powering through with the current unsustainable approach either.

Example Scenario 7.1: You procrastinate on your personal project ZAMM because despite all the effort you've put into it, it still doesn't do anything that you want it to do. Clearly the problem is that you haven't put enough effort into it. Yet the more you force yourself to work on it, the less intrinsic motivation you find yourself left with.

Instead of doubling down on your current approach involving faraway payoffs, pay proper respect to the complaining part of you by giving up and starting over with a new approach that achieves meaningful results sooner.

7.4. FEELING RUSHED

Rule 41. If you feel rushed, take things even slower.

In general, emotions cannot be escaped from via action. From past experience, rushing through tasks will only serve to increase Amos's present sense of urgency. You could end up rushing through the entire day and still feel as if there was not enough time in the day.

As mentioned in "The Second Arrow of Feelings" (p. 12), you should start feeling how you wish to feel. If you do not wish to feel rushed, then stop feeling rushed via application of Rule 7.

Common ways of applying this rule include:

- Performing your next task in slow-motion. **The slower you do something, the more time you have to do it.** Your body feels it.
- Walking somewhere instead of taking the motorcycle there.
- Laying in bed or on the couch *without using your phone* until you naturally feel ready to get up.

From past experience, Amos will be bored of laying in one spot long before the two hour mark, so there is no need to worry about this period of rest taking forever. In fact, oftentimes you will find Amos's body getting up by itself even before you have consciously directed it to.

7.4.1. *Making Appointments on Time*

The recommendations in the previous section may not be applicable if there is an appointment with an external entity that you must make on time. In such cases, draw on Amos's marathon training by remembering that control over your breathing produces control over your mental state. You can run a 10K in under an hour while being relaxed the entire way through, simply by breathing easy and relaxed.

Rule 42. If you have to do things fast, do them while breathing slow.

The speed of your physical motions can thereby be decoupled from the speed of your internal emotional states.

FINAL REMARKS

Your life is a masterpiece, and you are the artisan crafting it out of the material circumstances handed to you by Reality. You are the sole audience member, the only one in the world capable of appreciating the finer details of this magnum opus.

You are the parent entralling a child with a riveting tale about life: “And so our intrepid hero strode bravely forth to tackle the dishes that had piled up in his sink. This was no mean feat, for though he was a full-grown man, he lacked the wherewithal to perform common household chores on a timely basis.” You are the child caught in rapt attention to this immersive story, waiting to hear what happens next: Did our plucky protagonist successfully wrestle the chore to the ground, or did he instead lay down on the couch in defeat as he did the previous time?

You are the director of an improv show, deciding what music to put on for the current scene, or what characters and props should be around for a statistically likely future scene. You are the participatory audience member who understands the intentions of the director and interprets the character the way you believe the character should be interpreted.

You are Amos, and you are about to make contact with your life.

Good luck out there in the field.

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