root

The High Performer's Workbook

by James Conole

Contents

Introduction

> “One of the main issues in today’s work culture is that burnout tries to be worn as a badge of honor.”
>
> — Josh Currie

Output Over Hours

For too long, high performance has been confused with overwork. Long nights. Constant availability. Burnout dressed up as commitment. I lived that version of “success,” and I can tell you—it doesn’t lead anywhere worth going.

We are classic knowledge workers. We create value through the problems we solve, not through the time we spend in front of our laptop. But so often our impression of a “high performer” is someone who works 60-80+ hours per week.

That shouldn’t be the case.

A high performer is judged by their output—the effectiveness of their work, not the quantity of their work or the number of hours they spend doing it.

At Root, we are available 40 hours a week to standardize our availability to both clients and other team members, but our value does not come from time we spend at our desks. We do not want to wear burnout as a badge of honor.

The resources outlined here aren’t meant to be a rigid rulebook. It’s a collection of tools. Real examples. Filled-in pages. Systems that work because they’re simple enough to use every day. These aren’t theories—they’re the same habits my team and I use to keep ourselves grounded, focused, and operating without chaos.

Everything ahead is designed to be skimmed, referenced, and returned to whenever you need a reset.

Let’s get started.

Part One: Perform

> “If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster.”
>
> — Stephen Covey

Weekly & Daily Top 3

Most days get swallowed by reactive work—inboxes, Slack messages, alerts, small fires that feel urgent but don't move anything forward.

That's why the Weekly Top 3 and Daily Top 3 exist. They anchor your attention to the work that matters. They protect your time from being stolen. If everything is important, nothing is. These simple rituals pull you back to what's essential.

Your Weekly Top 3 sets your direction.

Your Daily Top 3 protects your execution.

What Your Weekly & Daily Top 3 Actually Do

01 Focus Your Week

You know the 2–3 things that matter most.

02 Give Your Direction Daily

Tomorrow isn't a guessing game—you already know what to tackle first.

03 Protect Your Energy

You avoid wasting your best brain hours on Slack, email, and small tasks.

04 Build Momentum

You see progress every week, not just busyness.

Weekly Top 3

Your Weekly Top 3 is how you turn big goals into weekly action.

Instead of trying to tackle your whole quarter at once, you choose three meaningful steps that push your work forward. These aren't the easiest tasks—they are the tasks that matter most when it comes to achieving goals.

- ☐ Finalize first draft of Josh's retirement plan
- ☐ Build next month's content calendar
- ☐ Close 3 open client follow-up loops

One strategic push per week prevents quarterly drift.

Daily Top 3

Tomorrow's success begins today. This is probably the single biggest thing you can do to increase your effectiveness and overall performance.

At the end of each day, you write down the three most important things you'll work on tomorrow—before distractions get a say. If you wait until morning, your inbox will decide your priorities for you.

- ☐ Finalize the Millers' plan recommendations
- ☐ Draft Monday/Wednesday content outline
- ☐ Send Carter family follow-up summary

At least one item should directly support your Weekly Top 3.

> “We are kept from our goal, not by obstacles but by a clear path to a lesser goal.”
>
> — Robert Brault

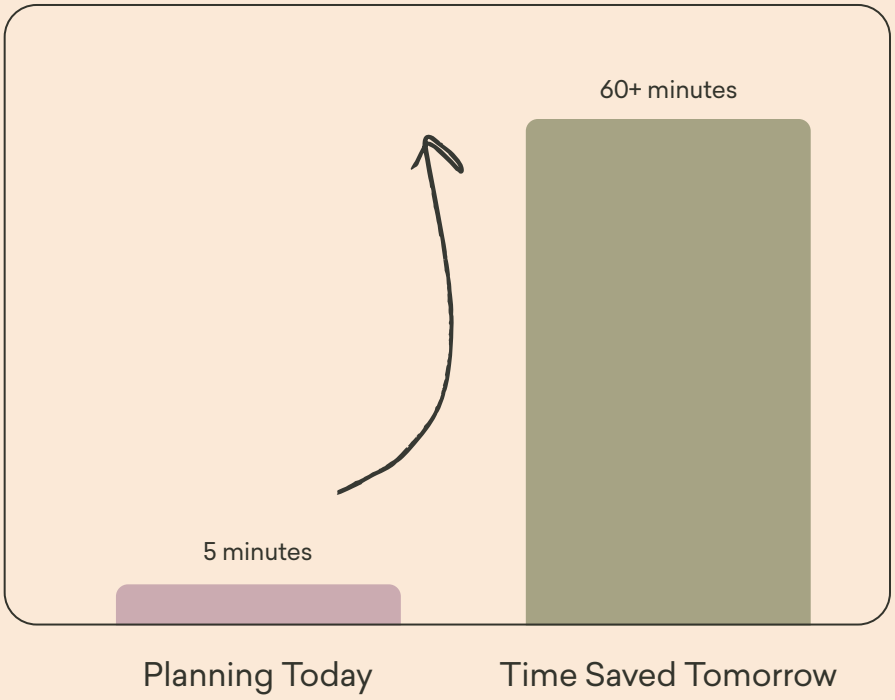
Memorize the quote above.

The reason we fail to accomplish our daily goals, our annual goals, our life goals, isn’t because of obstacles. It’s because we take the clear path to a lesser goal, an easier goal.

This productivity hack isn’t complicated. It simply requires the discipline to write down your Top 3 Tasks for the next day and then carve out at least 30-60 minutes to get those things done. Over time, this becomes the anchor of your daily performance.

The Power of Planning for Tomorrow

Five minutes of planning tonight can save you hours tomorrow. This habit also helps you sleep better because your brain isn't trying to hold tomorrow's priorities.



* Pro tip: Avoid starting your day with email. It's the fastest way to lose control of your morning. The moment you open your inbox, your priorities are replaced with other people's requests. Even "just checking" pulls your mind into reaction mode and scatters your attention.

Make Your Goals Visible

If you don't see your goals, you forget your goals. During busy weeks, the biggest challenge isn't effort—it's remembering where to direct it. Visibility creates accountability. That's why it matters.

Here are two ways we keep goals top of mind:

01 Create what we call a "Focus Center" and set it as your home/startup page. Review this at the start of each day. We like to use Monday.com. Structure the page from highest-level objectives down to daily actions. This keeps your day anchored to the bigger picture and ensures every task serves a clear purpose. Your page can include top-of-mind items like:

- Company mission, vision, and values
- Quarterly goals
- Weekly top three
- Daily top three
- Running to-do list

02 Or, keep it simple. Write your goals on a sticky note or in a notebook and keep it somewhere on your desk where you will see it.

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Write your Weekly Top 3 every Monday.
- [ ] Write tomorrow's Daily Top 3 before ending each day.
- [ ] Ensure at least one daily task supports the weekly priorities.
- [ ] Start each morning by reviewing your Top 3.
- [ ] Keep your Top 3 visible all day.

Deep Work & Focus

Deep work is where your highest-value contribution happens. It's the difference between reacting all day and creating work that actually moves the needle.

Your value isn't measured by how many messages you respond to—it's measured by the depth and clarity of your thinking.

This chapter shows you how to create the space, energy, and consistency required to do meaningful work every single day.

Deep work is not a luxury. It's a requirement if you want to produce real results without burning yourself out.

Top Goal Time

It's possible to respond to a quick email or slack message while bouncing between meetings. But it's not possible to do deep work in quick, distracted increments of time.

Your ability to make progress hinges on carving out time for the most important thing you can do each day. Not the most urgent thing. Not the easiest thing. The most important thing.

One of the simplest and most effective strategies you can implement is "Top Goal Time".

This is inspired by Gary Keller's concept in The ONE Thing: Block out time each workday to focus exclusively on your top priority—the thing that, if accomplished, makes everything else easier or unnecessary.

Start small by scheduling 30 minutes early in your day. As this habit builds, increase the time to 60 minutes. Then try to bump it up to 2 hours. This may feel like a big leap at first, but even a small start will create momentum.

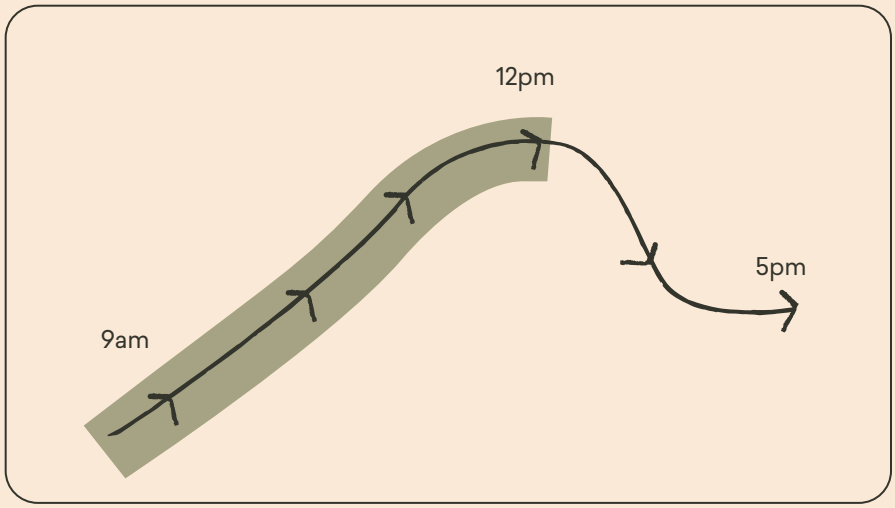
7:30am – 8:00am	→	Top Goal Time
8:00am – 8:15am	→	Quick Break
8:15am – 9:15am	→	Project Work

Every day you start with your Top Goal Time, you'll find yourself making tangible progress, not just staying busy.

Protect Morning Deep Work

Your morning hours are your highest-value hours.

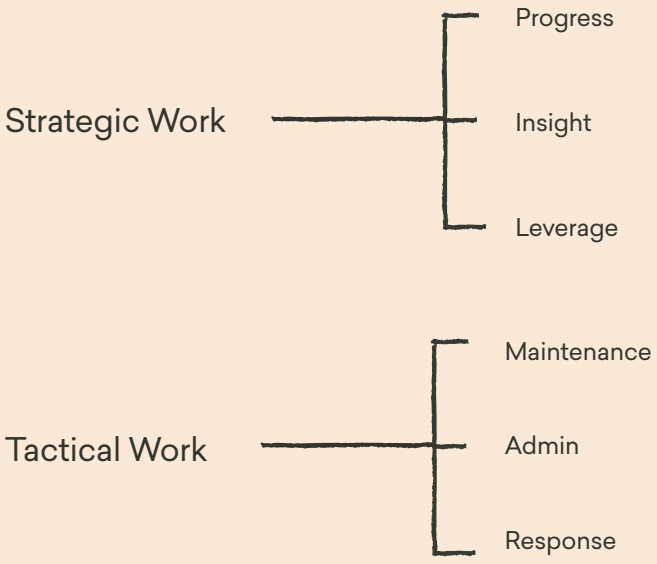
Research shows your brain is most capable of sustained focus early in the day—before distractions, decisions, and meetings drain your energy. When you guard the first part of your morning, you give your best attention to your best work.



Strategic Work Before Tactical Work

Tactical work is necessary, but strategic work is what moves your career, your projects, and the business forward. Most people spend their entire day putting out tactical fires because strategic work requires more energy.

A consistent weekly pattern helps you protect deep work without overthinking it. Over time, your brain learns to drop into focus faster because it recognizes the pattern.



What is Flow State?

You know that feeling when time disappears, distractions fade, and you're just in it—thinking clearly, moving fast, creating great work without even trying to multitask? That's flow state.

It's not magic. It's how humans are wired to do their best work. Flow happens when three things align:

01 You're working on something challenging, but not overwhelming.

02 You're completely focused. No distractions, no task-switching.

03 You're clear on what success looks like.

In a flow state, your brain produces dopamine and norepinephrine—chemicals that help you concentrate, think faster, and feel great about your progress. You're not just getting more done. You're doing better work with less effort.

How to Get Into Flow

01 Block the time.

Look at your calendar each week and block chunks of time for focused, uninterrupted work. Even just 90 minutes can change your day.

02 Eliminate distractions.

Silence your phone. Close Slack and email. Tell your team you're heads-down. Set your environment up so you can protect your attention like it's your most valuable resource.

03 Know what you're working on.

Flow hates ambiguity. Before you start, clearly define what you're trying to accomplish in that session. The more clarity you have, the faster you'll lock in.

04 Use a pre-work ritual.

Some people make tea. Others write out their goals or turn on a specific playlist. Whatever it is, create a habit that signals to your brain: "It's go time."

05 Keep a notebook nearby.

Ideas or distractions will come. Instead of switching tasks, jot them down quickly and keep going. Stay in the zone.

06 Give it time.

Flow isn't instant. It usually takes 15–20 minutes of focused effort to settle in. During that time, your brain will try to escape—check your phone, refresh your email, wander off. Don't give in.

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Block 30 minutes of Top Goal Time on your calendar.
- [ ] Protect that block from meetings and notifications.
- [ ] Choose one clear outcome for each deep work session.
- [ ] Create a simple pre-work ritual.
- [ ] Gradually increase deep work time as consistency builds.

Reducing Distraction

Most people aren't running out of time—they're leaking it.

Distraction is the biggest hidden threat to performance, and it often shows up disguised as something that feels productive: checking email, responding instantly, toggling between tabs.

But every interruption forces your brain to reset, and that constant context-switching destroys momentum.

This chapter shows you how to work with a clear mind instead of a fractured one.

Email Batching

Living in your inbox keeps you reactive.

Every time you check email, your brain has to shift out of focus and into response mode. Over the course of a day, those “quick checks” add up to hours of lost productivity.

Email batching solves that by confining email to 1–3 intentional windows. This keeps your main work protected while still ensuring you communicate effectively.

Why it matters:

- You stop being reactive
- You recover time and mental energy
- You actually respond better

How to do it:

01 Set aside 1–3 email windows per day.

Maybe it's 11am and 4pm. Or after your Top Goal Time. Pick times that work for your energy and schedule. Then shut it down outside of those windows.

02 Turn off notifications.

Yes, really. You don't need to know the exact moment a new message lands in your inbox. If it's urgent, they'll call.

03 Triage, respond, move on.

When it's email time, process everything: respond, archive, delete, or tag for later. Then close it out and get back to the work that moves the needle.

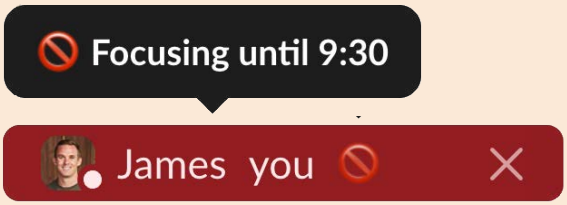
Email Batching

Meeting	9:00 – 9:50am
Meeting	10:30 – 10:55am
Email	11:00 – 11:30am
Lunch	11:30am – 12:30pm
Heads Down	12:30 – 2:30pm
Email	2:30 – 3:00pm
Meeting	3:00 – 3:50pm
Email	4:30 – 5:00pm

Slack Boundaries

Slack is a powerful tool, but it becomes chaos if you treat it like a real-time command center. Constantly checking Slack fractures your attention and makes deep work impossible. Set expectations with your team about response times, and use status updates during focus blocks.

* Remember: Being responsive is not the same as being available every second.



Send the Follow-Up Email Now

Your brain wants a break after a client meeting. That's natural. But before you dive into Slack, check email, or reach for your phone to scroll, pause and send the follow-up email.

Here's why:

01 Context fades fast.

The details, the momentum, the tone—they're all fresh right after the call. That's when you're most equipped to clearly summarize what was discussed and outline next steps with precision.

02 It builds trust.

Clients and coworkers notice when you follow up quickly. It tells them you're organized, proactive, and dependable - the kind of advisor they want in their corner.

03 It clears your mind.

Loose ends take up mental space. By sending the follow-up now, you get it off your plate, and your brain gets to truly rest.

Make this a habit. The meeting isn't over until the follow-up is sent.

Multitasking is a Lie

We love the idea of multitasking. It makes us feel efficient, productive, like we're getting more done in less time.

But here's the truth:

> "Multitasking is merely the opportunity to screw up more than one thing at a time."
>
> — Steve Uzzell

You can do two things at once, but you can't focus on two things at once.

Multitasking makes you feel productive, but it actually lowers the quality of your work. When your attention is split, your brain never reaches deep focus—it just skims the surface repeatedly.

The fastest way to improve your performance is to stop dividing your attention.

Task-Switching

Email → Slack → Plan → Email → Dashboard

Single-Tasking

Plan → Plan → Plan → Plan

Here's what to do instead:

01 Work in sequence, not in parallel.

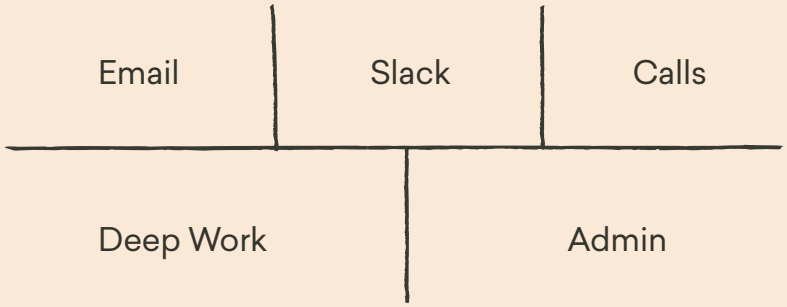
When everything feels important, nothing is. Start your day with your ONE thing—the task that will make the biggest impact. Then move down the list.

02 Batch your tasks.

Your brain loves patterns. Group similar tasks (calls, emails, planning) and give each category focused time. It's faster, cleaner, and less stressful than jumping between five modes of work.

03 Give yourself permission to do less at once.

This isn't laziness—it's focus. And focus is the ultimate productivity hack.



Better Focus Habits, Better Work

Clear your desk, close extra tabs, silence your phone, and give yourself a defined window to work.

These small steps create enormous leverage over the course of a week. When your environment supports focus, you stop relying on willpower and start relying on structure. Better habits build better work.

Focused Day	Scattered Day
✓ Slack paused	✗ Slack open
✓ Email Batched	✗ Email pinging
✓ Single tab open	✗ 8 open tabs
✓ Deep work block	✗ Random tasks

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Set 1–3 fixed email windows per day.
- [ ] Turn off email and Slack notifications.
- [ ] Set a Slack status during focus blocks.
- [ ] Send follow-up emails immediately after meetings.
- [ ] Commit to working on one task at a time.

Managing Your Time

Time isn't the problem. How we use time is the problem.

Most people aren't drowning in tasks—they're drowning in unstructured days that expand to fit every distraction, interruption, and open-ended assignment. Without boundaries, even simple tasks balloon. And when your day has no shape, the urgent crowds out the important.

High performers at Root do one thing differently: they constrain their time on purpose. They build structure into their day so their best hours go to their best work.

Parkinson's Law in Practice

Parkinson's Law says: "Work expands to fill the time available for its completion."

Ever notice how when you have two weeks to finish a project, it takes two weeks... but when you have two hours, it somehow gets done in two hours? That's Parkinson's Law.

Here's how to fight it:

01 Set tighter deadlines.

Don't give yourself a whole day to prep for a meeting if you only need 45 minutes. Set a timer, block it on your calendar, and move on once time's up.

02 Time-box your calendar.

Treat your calendar like a puzzle. Block specific windows for strategic work, admin tasks, deep thinking, and client communication. Then stick to it.

03 Reflect, adjust, repeat.

After you've completed a task, ask: "Did I need that much time?" If not, take note. Learn to trim the fat from your workday by continuously tightening up your time estimates.

Usually we don't need more time—we need to make better use of the time we already have. When you put guardrails around your work, you get sharper, faster, and more focused. You also get your life back.

Set Some Boundaries

It's not uncommon to hear, "I'm working 60 hours a week," especially when things get busy. And to be clear, there are seasons where extra effort is required. But if 60-hour weeks become the norm, not the exception, something's broken.

That kind of pace isn't sustainable. And more importantly, it's rarely effective.

Being available isn't the same as being accessible. High performers set clear expectations around when they respond and when they're focused.

Boundaries make you more reliable, not less.

- → Constrain your time on purpose—no 60 hour work weeks
- → Time-box your calendar and create time for deep work
- → Be honest with your priorities and figure out what's just "noise"
- → Get clarity on your priorities if you're unsure

Identify Noise vs Meaningful Work

Not everything you do is equally important. Some tasks move the business forward, some maintain order, and some simply look productive without creating any real impact. When your time is limited, you have to know the difference.

✕ Noise:

Work that fills time, not impact.

- Checking Slack on repeat
- Living in email
- Tweaking, updating, reorganizing

Meaning:

Work that moves something forward.

- Progress on a big project
- Strategic decision making
- A conversation that solves a problem

When you're clear about the difference between the two, you can make better choices about where to invest your best hours. This awareness alone can transform your week.

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Time-box your calendar for the week.
- [ ] Set tighter deadlines on key tasks.
- [ ] Identify and eliminate one low-value activity.
- [ ] Review where time expanded unnecessarily.
- [ ] Adjust next week's calendar accordingly.

Action Over Perfection

High performers don't wait for perfect information before they move. They don't sit on ideas until every variable is accounted for. They act—thoughtfully, quickly, and with intention.

One of the biggest traps I've seen in our industry is overthinking: gathering more context, wanting more certainty, polishing the draft instead of sending it.

But progress doesn't come from hesitation. It comes from the willingness to take the first step and adjust as you go.

> "You learn by doing. You can never do by learning."
>
> — Nick Murray

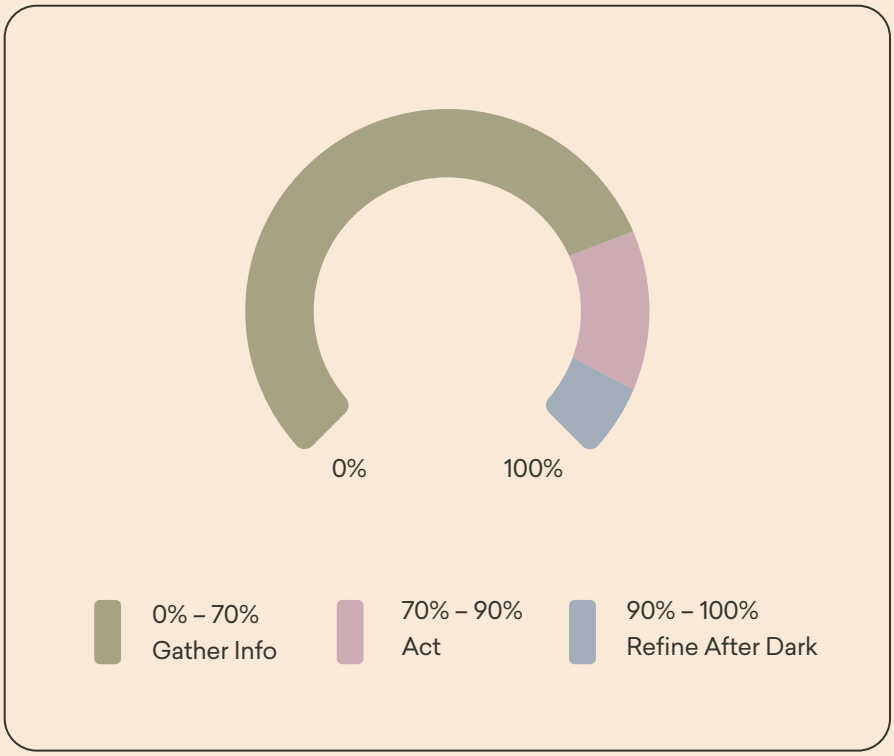
The following pages will show how to build a bias toward action into your work.

01: The 70% Rule

You don't need to be 100% certain to act.

In most situations, if you're 70% sure, you have enough information to take the first step. Waiting for complete clarity slows everything down and keeps good ideas stuck in your head instead of in motion.

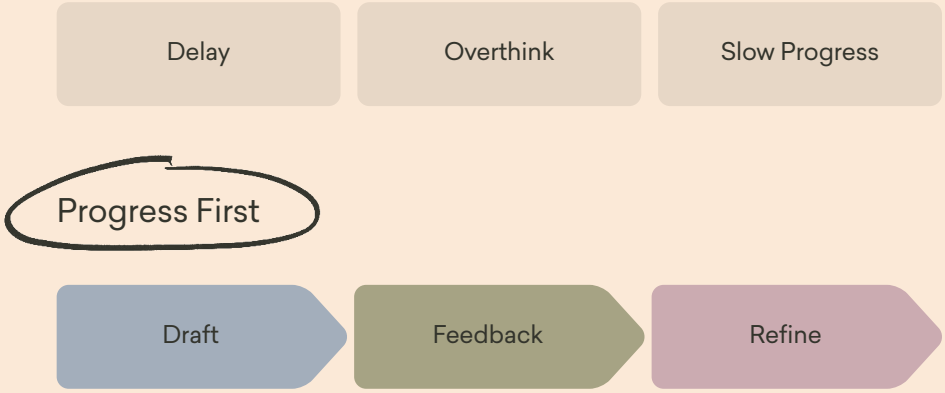
When you move at 70%, you learn faster because you're collecting feedback from real action—not guesses.



02: Progress Over Polish

A perfect plan sitting in a Google Doc doesn't help anyone. A rough draft that's in motion does.

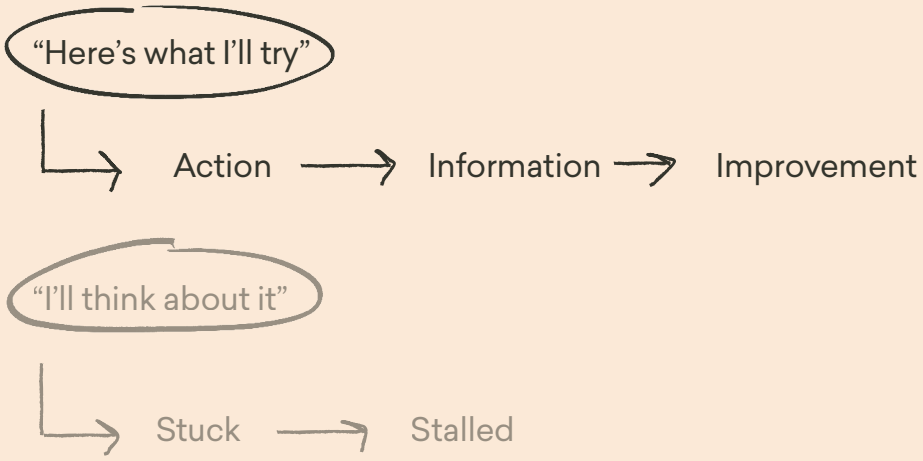
Most people wait too long to share work because they want it to be airtight. But polish delays progress. When you choose progress over polish, you get feedback earlier, collaborate better, and prevent the bottleneck of waiting until something is "just right."



03: Shift From “I’ll Think About It” to “Here’s What I’ll Try”

“I’ll think about it” is usually code for “I’m stuck.” It sounds reasonable, but it doesn’t create movement.

Replace that phrase with something that creates action: “Here’s what I’ll try.” That small shift changes your posture from passive to proactive.



04: Action Beats Anxiety

When you're stuck, anxious, or spinning your wheels, the worst thing you can do is stay still.

Action is the antidote. Even a small move breaks the loop of overthinking and puts you back in control. The longer a task sits untouched, the bigger and heavier it feels.

This doesn't mean rushing or skipping important context. It means refusing to let fear or uncertainty freeze your progress. When you build the habit of taking one small step forward, big projects stop feeling overwhelming.

- Resource: Bias Toward Action

> "You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step."
>
> — Martin Luther King Jr.

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Identify one task you've been overthinking.
- [ ] Move forward once you reach 70% clarity
- [ ] Share a draft instead of waiting to polish.
- [ ] Replace "I'll think about it" with a concrete action.
- [ ] Take one small step immediately.

Better Meetings

Meetings aren't just calendar events—they're an opportunity to build trust, get on the same page, and move work forward. But they only do that if you treat them with intention.

Too many meetings run long, start late, or drift off course because no one set a clear direction. Our standard is simple: show up on time, prepared, present, and ready to lead.

Respecting time is one of the clearest signals of high performance. A good meeting doesn't require more time; it requires more discipline.

Be On Time & Prepared

Being on time isn't just about punctuality. It's about respect. For your clients. For your team. For yourself.

When you schedule a meeting, someone on the other end is stopping what they're doing to be there. If you're late, they're stuck in limbo. Each minute they spend waiting is productivity you've taken from them. And they'll feel that, even if they never say a word.

When you're late, the message you're unintentionally sending is: "My time is more valuable than yours."

But life happens. Internet connection issues. A meeting that runs long. Something unexpected. It's not always possible to be exactly on time. But here's the standard:

If you're going to be late, communicate it the moment you realize it. Not when the meeting starts. Not five minutes after. The moment.

Being on time also means being prepared. That starts before the meeting begins.

Here's the standard:

- For client meetings: Set aside 15 minutes before the meeting to bring yourself up to speed on exactly what you're going to talk about and any relevant context.
- For internal meetings: Wrap up what you're working on at least 5 minutes beforehand to shift your focus.
- Use Google Calendar's "Speedy Meetings" setting: Schedule meetings for 25 or 50 minutes instead of 30 or 60 (see page 44 for more).

When you show up prepared, you contribute meaningfully from the first minute instead of spending the first half catching up.

On Time Means:

- ☑ Arrive when you said you would
- ☑ Communicate immediately if running late
- ☑ Begin the meeting with full presence (no Slack or email)

Be Fully Present

Presence is becoming rare—and that makes it powerful. When you're in a meeting, be in the meeting.

That means no Slack, no email, no glancing at your phone under the table. Every time you look away, you signal that something else is more important. Presence increases trust, creates stronger communication, and helps the whole team think more clearly.

You can't claim to value someone's time and then divide your attention. If the meeting is inefficient, fix the meeting.

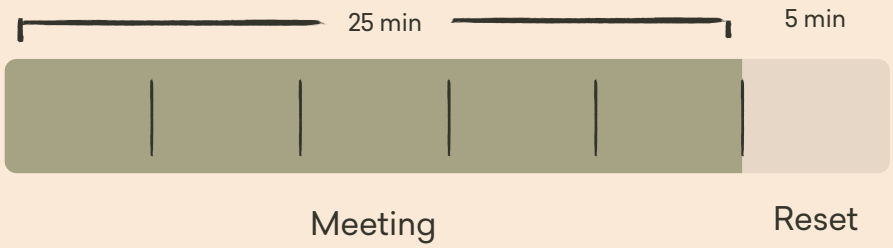
Don't check out.

Root Hack: 25/50 Minute Meetings

Back-to-back 30- or 60-minute meetings leave no breathing room, which means you carry stress and cognitive residue from one meeting into the next.

This compounds over the day and destroys your ability to think clearly. Speedy meetings—25 minutes instead of 30, 50 instead of 60—fix that.

They create a built-in reset window so you can stretch, breathe, prepare, and show up fully for the next session.



Don’t Let Meetings Run Long

Running long doesn’t make a meeting more valuable—it often means it lacked structure. When meetings consistently exceed the time allotted, it signals one of three issues:

01 The agenda wasn’t set.

02 The agenda wasn’t followed.

03 Someone talked too much.

Learn to manage the clock. Know when to move forward, when to tighten the conversation, and when to land the plane.

A meeting that ends on time earns trust. A meeting that runs long drains it.

Set and Follow Agendas

A good agenda gives the meeting a path, helps people prepare, and keeps the conversation grounded.

It doesn't need to be elaborate; it just needs to define the purpose and the steps. Without one, meetings drift into tangents or become dominated by the loudest voice. With one, they stay anchored and decisive.

Following the agenda is just as important as setting it. If something doesn't fit, capture it and move on. Agendas protect your time and everyone else's.

45-Minute Client Review

5 min — Review commitments from last meeting

10 min — Walk through investment changes

15 min — Update retirement timeline and projections

10 min — Confirm next steps & responsibilities

5 min — Schedule follow-up + send recap

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Shorten meetings to 25 or 50 minutes.
- [ ] Prepare before every meeting.
- [ ] Eliminate multitasking during meetings.
- [ ] Follow an agenda and manage the clock.
- [ ] Send a recap and next steps after every meeting.

Protecting Priorities

Every hour you spend on one thing is an hour you can't spend on something else—and that's why protecting your priorities matters so much.

Most people burn out not because they're working hard. They burn out because they're working on the wrong things. When you treat every request, notification, or task as equally important, you leave no room for the work that actually moves you forward.

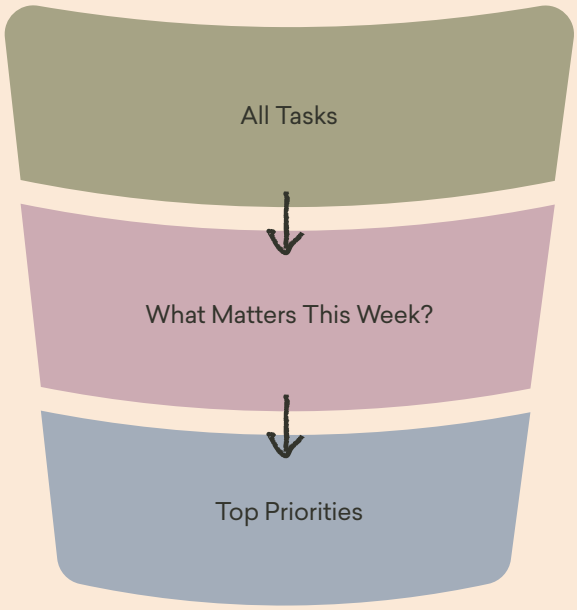
Protecting your priorities is about making sure you can show up fully for the things that matter most.

If Everything's Important, Then Nothing's Important

One of the biggest mistakes in knowledge work is treating every task like it has equal weight.

When everything is "urgent," your brain goes into survival mode and starts responding to the easiest or loudest thing instead of the most meaningful one. This creates busyness, not impact. The work that should define your week gets buried under a pile of small, reactive tasks.

The moment you decide what truly matters, your day becomes simpler. You make sharper decisions, you spend your energy intentionally, and your work starts compounding.



The Power of Saying No

Every time you say yes to something, you're saying no to something else.

That's just math.

Saying yes to a meeting, a new project, or a favor might feel generous. But if it crowds out time for the deep, high-impact work you were hired to do—then it's actually the wrong yes.

One of the hardest but most important things to learn as a professional is this: focus requires boundaries.

Saying no isn't rude. It's not selfish. It's what makes yes actually mean something.

If you're overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overbooked, you're not going to be effective—you're going to be busy. And there's a big difference.

Get clear on what matters. And protect it.

Check Priorities Before Agreeing

Before committing to something new, pause and ask yourself: “Does this move my most important work forward?”

If the answer is no—or even unclear—don’t commit on the spot. Buy yourself time. Check your calendar. Review your Weekly and Daily Top 3. Look at what’s actually on your plate.

This simple habit prevents you from agreeing to things out of pressure, habit, or guilt. It also helps you communicate with confidence instead of scrambling later when you realize you can’t follow through.

Scripts for Saying No (Without Being Unhelpful)

- “Let me check my priorities before I commit.”
- “I can’t take that on right now, but I can help you find someone who can.”
- “I’m heads down on a high-priority project. Can we revisit this next week?”

Protecting Deep Work Windows

As we covered before, your deep work blocks are the most valuable part of your day. But unless you protect them aggressively, they will disappear. Notifications, meetings, quick questions, and “Can you hop on for five minutes?” requests will eat them alive.

Protecting deep work windows starts with setting expectations. Let your team know your focus hours. Block them on your calendar. Pause Slack. Close your email.

When you defend this time consistently, people learn to respect it—and more importantly, you start producing the kind of work that actually moves the business forward.

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Review your current commitments.
- [ ] Identify what deserves priority this week.
- [ ] Practice pausing before saying yes.
- [ ] Block deep work time on your calendar.
- [ ] Communicate focus windows to your team.

Part Two:
Rest & Recovery

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.”

— Anne Lamott

Managing Energy & Recovery

High performance isn't just about pushing harder—it's about knowing when to recover. High performers understand this: you don't get stronger in the workout—you get stronger in the recovery.

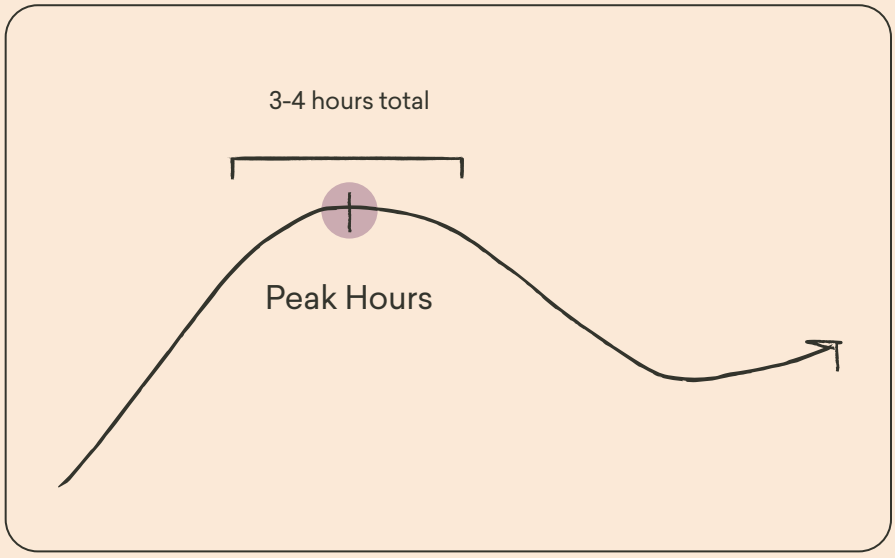
The same principle applies here. Sustainable high performance in any demanding role requires intentional rest. Your brain, like your body, has limits. Burn past them too often and output drops, decision quality suffers, and creativity disappears.

Recovery isn't a luxury. It's a strategic advantage. When you treat rest as part of the performance cycle (not separate from it), you come back sharper, faster, and more focused.

Energy > Time

You can control your time. But you can't cheat your energy. Most people assume that an eight-hour workday means eight productive hours—but the truth is, you get about 3–4 peak cognitive hours per day.

Those hours aren't negotiable, and they don't shift just because your calendar is full. When you spend your best brainpower on low-value tasks, you lose the chance to make meaningful progress on the work that actually matters.



The highest performers aren't the ones who grind the longest—they're the ones who use their peak energy wisely. They align deep work with high-energy windows, and they save reactive work for the dips.

Identify Your Peak Hours

Everyone has a natural cadence.

For many people, the morning holds their sharpest thinking. For others, it's late morning or early afternoon. Once you know when your brain fires the best, you can design your day around it. Use that window for high-impact tasks: planning, writing, strategy, problem-solving. Reserve email, admin, and reactive work for lower-energy periods.

- ☐ 7:00am – 10:00am
- ☐ 9:00am – 12:00pm
- ☐ 1:00pm – 4:00pm

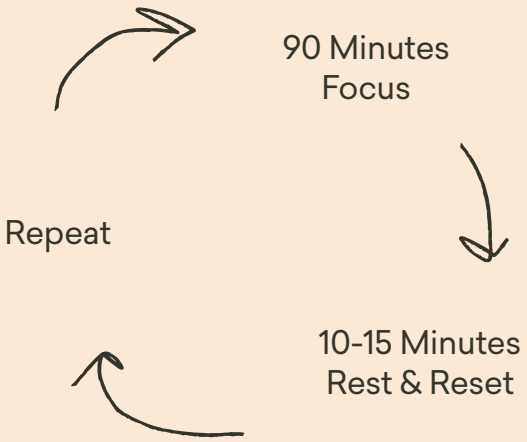
Choose one.

Perform, Reset, Repeat

Your brain isn't built for uninterrupted effort. After about 90 minutes of focused work, cognitive performance drops.

The good news is that a short reset—movement, water, stepping outside—allows you to re-enter another productive cycle. High performers use these 90-minute waves intentionally instead of trying to grind through exhaustion.

When you ride these cycles, you create pockets of deep, high-quality effort punctuated by short, restorative breaks.



Fall Out of Flow? Here's How to Re-Enter

If you've been practicing flow state (covered on page 17), and find yourself slipping out of it due to distractions or natural fatigue, don't worry. You can re-enter it by doing the following:

- Close your tabs.
- Silence your phone.
- Revisit your goal for the next 30–60 minutes.
- Engage your pre-work ritual.
- Flow returns when you give your attention a single target.

Sleep: The Foundation of Performance

Sleep is more than a luxury; it's a necessity for optimal function.

This is when your body repairs itself, consolidates memories, and restores mental clarity. Sleep is a vital part of the recovery process that directly impacts your energy, decision-making, and overall effectiveness.

A full night of sleep is non-negotiable. If you're not consistently getting enough quality sleep, you're not performing at your best—no matter how many hours you put in.

The optimal amount varies, but for most people, 7-9 hours is the sweet spot.

That said, it's not just about the quantity, it's about quality. The most efficient recovery comes from deep, restorative sleep. If your nights are filled with interruptions, your mind won't have the chance to fully recover.

Here's a quick checklist to see if your sleep hygiene is up to par. If you can confidently check all of these off each morning, you're on the fast-track to high performance.

Sleep Hygiene Checklist:

- ☐ Consistent bedtime
- ☐ Device-free wind-down
- ☐ Cool, dark room
- ☐ No late caffeine
- ☐ 7–9 hours
- ☐ Morning sunlight

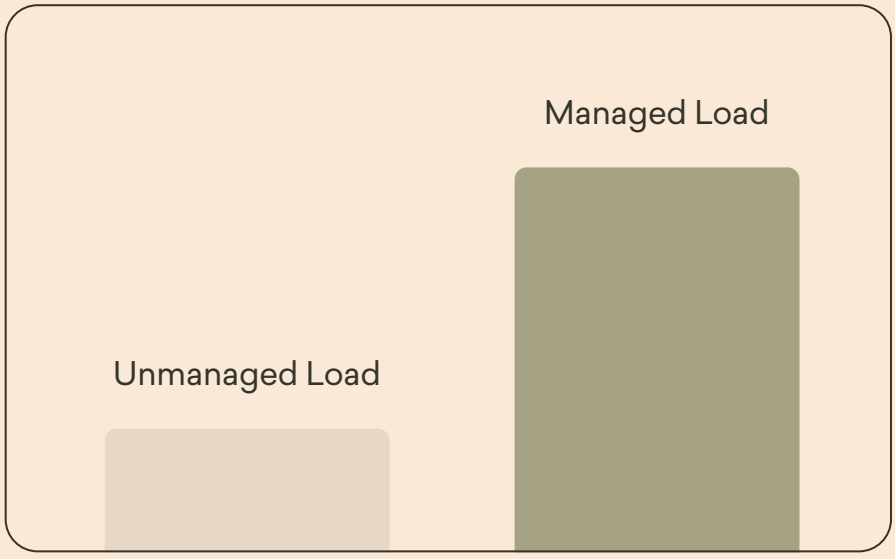
Load Management: Know When to Push and When to Rest

Load management is all about being more strategic with how you take on workload and recovery. That means knowing when to push and when to recover, all while building your capacity to handle what's on your plate.

Remember... You're a human, not a machine.

So as "productive" as it would be to sprint 24/7, it's actually less productive in the long run. High performers use boundaries not to avoid work, but to protect their capacity to do excellent work consistently.

Being always-on isn't high performance—it's the fastest route to burnout.



Root Reset: A Strategic Pause

When your body is tired or your brain is foggy, there's a signal being sent: you need a break. High performers don't ignore that signal. They respond to it.

Just like elite athletes take rest days to repair muscle and restore energy, top professionals take rest days to reset mentally and emotionally. If you've been pushing hard, a day away gives your nervous system space to recalibrate.

That's part of the reason we've built what we call "Root Reset" into our schedules. The last Friday of every month is yours. There are no meetings. No obligations. You can take the day to catch up on deep work without distractions. Or knock out errands. Or get an early start on a weekend away.

However you use it, the goal is the same: rest and recover. We encourage you to use Root Reset in your own practice.

Root Reset Day

Morning:
Deep work on a long-term project

Midday:
Walk outside & synthesize notes

Afternoon:
Admin cleanup, errands, early weekend

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Identify your peak energy window.
- [ ] Schedule deep work during that time.
- [ ] Work in 90-minute focus cycles.
- [ ] Improve one aspect of your sleep routine.
- [ ] Plan intentional recovery into your week.

Breaks & Being Outdoors

Your brain wasn't designed to move from meeting to meeting with no space in between.

When you're in back-to-back calls, your cognitive load doesn't just rise—it compounds. Stress builds, focus drops, and by the afternoon, you're not doing your best work. You're just grinding through it.

Breaks are a performance tool. A five-minute reset can change the quality of the next fifty minutes. And stepping outside resets your nervous system in a way no productivity hack can.

If you want sustainable high performance, you must create space for recovery inside the workday, not just outside it.

This chapter gives you the tools to do exactly that.

Breaks Between Meetings

Research shows that when people are stuck in continuous meetings with no breaks, their brainwaves reflect increasing stress and cognitive overload.

That's why we use shortened "speedy meeting" windows (25- or 50-minute blocks). Even if your calendar doesn't allow the perfect cadence, you can create micro-breaks intentionally.

What to Do in a 5–10 Minute Reset

A reset doesn't need to be elaborate. In fact, simple is best. Your goal is to lower cognitive load, not add tasks to your plate. A good reset shifts your posture, breath, or environment—anything that helps your nervous system let go of the previous meeting before entering the next one.

Reset Checklist

- [ ] Stand up and stretch
- [ ] Drink water
- [ ] Step outside for 2 minutes
- [ ] Breathwork
- [ ] Take a walk or do jumping jacks

The Argument for Walking Meetings

If a meeting doesn't require screen sharing or heavy notes, take it on the move and reap the rewards:

- Stimulates creativity
- Reduces stress
- Frees you from the posture fatigue
- Resets your focus
- Makes conversations more fluid and productive

Outdoor Time as a Performance Tool

Spending time outdoors, particularly in natural light, has a profound impact on both your physical and mental well-being.

Sunlight is a powerful tool when it comes to regulating your circadian rhythm, which controls your sleep-wake cycles.

Exposure to natural sunlight, especially in the morning, helps signal to your body that it's time to wake up and be alert. This simple act can help enhance your mood, focus, and overall energy levels throughout the day.

In fact, studies show that just 20 minutes of sunlight exposure can significantly boost your vitamin D levels, reduce stress, and even improve your cognitive function.

Day Without Outdoor Breaks

- Afternoon crash
- Increased stress
- Lower creativity
- Poorer sleep

Day With Outdoor Breaks

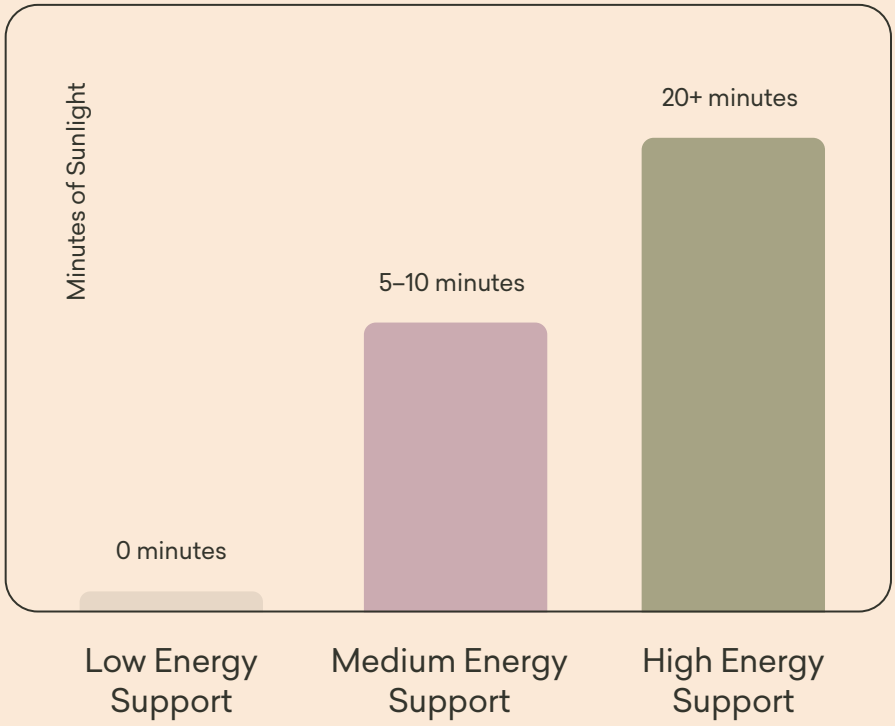
- More stable energy
- Better thinking
- Reduced stress
- Stronger sleep cycle

The Power of Sunlight & Fresh Air

A few minutes of sunlight signals your brain to wake up, regulate mood, and restore focus.

You don't need a long walk or a workout, just exposure. Step outside between tasks. Take a call while walking. Get five minutes of early sunlight. These tiny practices compound into significantly better energy throughout the day.

Natural light = natural performance booster.



Ending the Day Grounded

How you end your day impacts how you start the next one.

Finishing with an outdoor moment—a walk, a step onto the patio, or even a few breaths of fresh air—helps your brain transition out of work mode. It clears lingering mental residue so tomorrow doesn't start in a fog.

A grounded shutdown is one of the most underrated habits in high performance: small action, big ripple.

Shutdown List

- [ ] Write tomorrow's Top 3
- [ ] Close laptop
- [ ] Step outside for 5–10 minutes
- [ ] End the day intentionally

→ Your Action Items:

- [ ] Add short breaks between meetings.
- [ ] Stand up or move every 90 minutes.
- [ ] Take at least one walk during the workday.
- [ ] Get sunlight early in the day.
- [ ] End each day by planning tomorrow and stepping outside.

Conclusion

“I apologize for such a long letter—I didn’t have time to write a short one.”

— Mark Twain

Move Forward With Intention

High performance at Root isn't built on intensity or long hours—it's built on intention.

The tools in this workbook are here to help you work with focus, protect your attention, and spend your energy on the things that actually matter. When you use them consistently—planning your days, defending deep work, reducing noise, taking real breaks—you create space for your best thinking.

You don't need more time to be a high performer. You need better use of the time you already have.

When you prioritize well, recover well, and show up each day with clarity and discipline, your output becomes stronger, cleaner, and more sustainable. That's the kind of work that makes Root different.

And now you have everything you need to do it.

root

Let’s get to work.