
DREAMER'S PAUSE

A WEEKLY PRACTICE

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A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK TO RECLAIM THE CAPACITY
TO IMAGINE FUTURES WORTH BUILDING

WHY THIS MATTERS

Research shows that constructive thinking about the future requires specific cognitive conditions - what neuroscientists call "constructive internal reflection" (Immordino-Yang et al., 2012). This capacity doesn't happen during task execution. It requires pause, rest, and unstructured time.

Most leaders have stopped dreaming not because they lack vision, but because they've eliminated the space where imagination happens.

This resource provides a simple weekly practice to rebuild that capacity.

PRACTICE: 30MINS ONCE A WEEK

Block a recurring 30-minute slot in your calendar with these three rules:

1. **No agenda** - This is not planning time or problem-solving time
2. **No devices** - Phone off, laptop closed
3. **No immediate action** - You're not required to do anything with what emerges

Label it in your calendar: "*Constructive Wandering*"

THE FIVE QUESTIONS (WEEKLY)

Each week, focus on one question. Let your mind wander around it. No forced answers. Just curious exploration.

WEEK 1: POSSIBILITY

What could become possible if we weren't constrained by how things have always been done?

PROMPTS:

- If I could wave a magic wand, what would change?
- What would our team/organisation look like in its best possible future?
- What opportunities are we too busy to see?

WEEK 2: IDENTITY

What are we uniquely positioned to build or create that no one else can?

PROMPTS:

- What strengths do we have that we're not fully leveraging?
- What do people come to us for that they can't get elsewhere?
- Who are we when we're at our best?

WEEK 3: LEGACY

What would we want people to say about our contribution five years from now?

PROMPTS:

- What impact do we want to have made?
- What would we regret not attempting?
- What do we want to be known for?

WEEK 4: BARRIERS

What competing commitments are keeping us from pursuing what matters most?

PROMPTS:

- What do we say we want but our systems prevent?
- What are we not willing to give up?
- What would need to shift for the dream to become possible?

WEEK 5: NEXT STEP

What's one small experiment we could run to test if the dream is viable?

PROMPTS:

- What's the smallest version of this we could try?
- Who could we partner with to explore this?
- What would prove or disprove this possibility?

HOW TO CAPTURE

...without Killing the Dream

Don't: Write a detailed plan, create a project brief, or immediately schedule follow-up meetings.

Do: Keep a simple journal with three columns:

What Emerged

Brief note of the idea or insight

Energy Level

High / Medium / Low

One Possible Next Step

Single, small action (if any)

Review quarterly to notice patterns:

- What ideas keep returning?
- What generates the most energy?
- What small experiments have you actually run?

COMMON OBSTACLES

...and How to Address Them

"I feel guilty not working"

This is work. It's the work that creates the capacity for everything else. Leaders who never pause make progressively worse decisions.

"My mind goes blank"

That's normal. Sit with it. The brain needs time to shift from execution mode to exploration mode. Give it 10 minutes.

"I keep thinking about my to-do list"

Write it down on a piece of paper and set it aside. Tell yourself: "I'll deal with this in 30 minutes."

"Nothing useful comes up"

You're measuring the wrong thing. The goal isn't immediate productivity. It's rebuilding the neural pathways that enable constructive imagination. Trust the process.

"I don't have 30 minutes"

Then start with 10. Consistency matters more than duration.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE PRACTICE

Default Mode Network: When you stop task-focused thinking, your brain's default mode network activates. This is where creative connection-making, future-thinking, and meaning-making happen (Immordino-Yang et al., 2012).

Hope Theory: Regular practice of envisioning goals, pathways, and agency rebuilds hope - which research shows is essential for engagement, resilience, and performance (Snyder, 2002).

Competing Commitments: By surfacing what you're not willing to give up, you can consciously design around it rather than being unconsciously blocked by it (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

GETTING STARTED

This week:

1. Block 30 minutes in your calendar (recurring)
2. Label it "Constructive Wandering"
3. Start with Week 1: Possibility
4. Bring a journal and nothing else

Remember: The proof of being alive is that you're still dreaming. This practice rebuilds the capacity to imagine futures worth building. The question is whether you'll take the time to remember how.

References

Immordino-Yang, M. H., Christodoulou, J. A., & Singh, V. (2012). Rest is not idleness: Implications of the brain's default mode for human development and education. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(4), 352-364.

Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. L. (2009). *Immunity to change*. Harvard Business Press.

Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13(4), 249-275.