

Unfinished, After Hours

Digital Toolkit · \$10

Deadline Season Mode

For when everything is due and nothing feels possible.

“Being behind doesn't mean you're failing. It means you're human in an inhuman situation.”

7 guided exercises

10 journal prompts

A triage-without-panic reset plan

Use this alongside the platform, or on its own. There is no right way.

BEFORE YOU START

A note on deadline season

Deadline season has a specific texture. It's not regular stress — it's the feeling of time compressing, of everything being important, of your brain refusing to cooperate at the exact moment you need it most. This kit is built for that specific state. It won't make the deadlines disappear. It might make them survivable.

EXERCISES

1.

Do the triage, not the panic

When everything feels urgent, nothing gets done. This exercise creates order without pressure.

1. Write down everything that is due. Don't organise it yet — just get it out.
 2. Circle the one thing with the hardest deadline. Not the most important — the one with the least time.
 3. Draw a box around everything that can wait 24 hours. Even if it feels like it can't.
 4. Work only on the circled item until it's done or you've hit your limit for the day.
 5. The boxed items will still be there. They haven't disappeared.
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2.

Reset your relationship with the next two hours

Deadline brain catastrophises — it pictures the whole mountain, not the next step. This exercise shrinks the horizon.

1. Ask: what's the most I could realistically do in the next two hours?
 2. Write it as an action, not a goal. ("Draft the intro" not "write the essay")
 3. Set a timer for 90 minutes. Work only on that.
 4. At the 90-minute mark, stop — even if you haven't finished.
 5. Take 30 minutes. Eat something. Move.
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3.

Name what's making it harder

Deadline paralysis is rarely just about the deadline. Something else is usually in the room.

1. Write: "What's making this harder than it needs to be?"
 2. Be specific. (Fear of judgement. Exhaustion. A conversation you're avoiding. The work itself feeling meaningless.)
 3. Ask: can any of these be addressed right now? Even partially?
 4. If not — acknowledge them. Sometimes naming the obstacle is enough to stop it taking up so much space.
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4.

Micro-rest without guilt

Rest during deadline season feels irresponsible. It isn't. Sustained focus without breaks produces worse work.

1. Choose a rest that takes under 10 minutes. (Walk to a different room. Lie on the floor. Make tea slowly.)
 2. Before you do it, say: "This is part of working." Not a reward. Not a break. Part of the process.
 3. Set a timer so the rest has a container. It's easier to rest when you know it ends.
 4. Return without self-commentary.
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5.

Separate "done enough" from "done perfectly"

Perfectionism and deadline season are incompatible. This exercise forces the distinction.

1. For the thing you're working on, ask: what would "done enough" look like?
2. Not ideal. Not impressive. Just: submitted, sent, handed in.
3. Write that version down as a goal. That is now the target.
4. Anything above that is extra. It may or may not be possible.

5. Remind yourself: a submitted imperfect thing always beats a perfect unsubmitted one.

6.

Find the body in the deadline

Deadline stress lives in the body. Ignoring the body makes the deadline harder.

1. Notice where you're holding tension right now. Jaw? Shoulders? Stomach?
 2. Name it. "My jaw is clenched."
 3. Release it consciously. Unclench your jaw. Drop your shoulders.
 4. Take three slow breaths — not for calm, just for oxygen.
 5. Return to work. Repeat this every hour.
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7.

Write a one-sentence intention for today

Not a goal. Not a plan. Just an intention — something to orient around.

1. Complete this: "Today I am trying to _____."
 2. Keep it to one sentence. Keep it honest. ("Get through the day." is a completely valid intention.)
 3. Put it somewhere visible.
 4. At the end of the day, check in with it — not to grade yourself, just to see where you landed.
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JOURNAL PROMPTS

For when you have 10 minutes and need somewhere to put the feeling.

“What would I need to feel okay about today – not good, just okay?”

“What am I most afraid won't get done, and what would actually happen if it didn't?”

“What's the difference between "behind" and "in progress"?”

“When did I last feel on top of things? What was different then?”

“What's one thing I'm not giving myself credit for right now?”

“If a friend described their week the way mine has been, what would I say to them?”

“What's the most reasonable version of the next 48 hours?”

“What am I avoiding, and why?”

“What would I do after this is over, if I actually let myself rest?”

“What does "good enough" mean to me right now – not in general, just today?”

Triage without panic

Use this when you've hit a wall. Not a productivity sprint – a way to get from stuck to moving.

Step 1	Stop what you're doing. You're not losing momentum – you've already lost it. Stopping is the first step to restarting.
Step 2	Get a glass of water. This is not a metaphor. Hydration affects cognition.
Step 3	Write down the one next action – not the whole task, just the next physical thing. "Open the document." "Send the email." "Read the first paragraph."
Step 4	Do only that one thing. Then write the next one.
Step 5	Take a real break at some point in the next 3 hours. Non-negotiable. 10 minutes minimum. Screen off.
Step 6	At the end of the work session, note what you did – not what you didn't do.
Step 7	Give yourself a defined stopping time. Work without end is not sustainable. Even during deadline season.