

THE OPEN HAND

**A Monthly Journal for Noticing Where
You Grip, Feed, or Chase, and
Practising Letting Go**



THE INNER LISTENER

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Welcome

The Open Hand is built around one idea. Squeezing a goal, feeding a worry loop, and chasing an outcome are the same habit wearing different clothes, a tightening around something you are afraid to lose or desperate to secure. The shape changes daily. The grip is always the same grip.

The journal is my attempt to make that grip visible, whatever form it happens to be wearing on a given day. Nothing mystical about it, just a daily practice of naming the grip before it tightens further, catching it mid-day while it is still happening, and checking in the evening on whether you managed to loosen it at all.

What will it look like? The shape is a month-long practice, daily check-ins, a short weekly look-back every seven days, and a monthly overview at the back so the pattern shows up across the whole thing instead of just one day at a time. Simple, minimal pages. Nothing to overthink, just enough structure to catch yourself gripping.

What changes by the end of the month? Almost everyone is squeezing at least one goal, feeding at least one loop, or chasing at least one outcome without quite noticing they are doing it. This journal gives you a chance to catch that grip, most days around midday, and practise one small act of loosening instead of tightening further. Over a month, this shows up as a hand that opens a little more easily, and a little sooner.

WORTH ASKING

Why Journal This?

Thinking about a grip rarely loosens it. Writing it down does. It is one thing to believe, inside your own head, that you are relaxed about an outcome. It is another thing entirely to write “I chased his approval again today” on a page and have it sit there in front of you.

A single day proves nothing on its own. Thirty days of the same grip, written down, is far harder to argue with, and once a grip is visible, it becomes much easier to loosen.

Lao Tzu is widely credited with the observation that “nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.” Very little about this journal asks you to hurry either.

The Stoic philosopher **Epictetus** opened his teaching with a simpler distinction still: “some things are up to us, and some things are not”. Most of what this journal tracks is the daily work of telling the two apart, one grip at a time.

The Open Hand is a short, practical version of that same distinction, applied to whatever you happen to be squeezing, feeding, or chasing this month.

WORTH KNOWING

The Shape of This Practice

The Grip

Squeezing a goal, feeding a worry loop, and chasing an outcome are all the same tightening, just aimed at different things. This journal treats them as one habit rather than three.

The Catch

Noticing, in the moment, which shape your grip has taken today, a goal you are checking on too often, a loop you keep replaying, or an outcome you are pushing too hard for.

The Release

Not giving up on the goal, the worry, or the outcome, just holding it without clutching it. The small, repeatable act of loosening instead of tightening further.

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

The Daily Rhythm

Morning, name the grip. Before the day gets going, name what you are most likely to squeeze, feed, or chase today. This is the one step the whole practice depends on.

Midday, catch it. Notice whether you have gripped since this morning, and name one thing that would loosen it, right now, even slightly.

Evening, release. Rate how much you managed to loosen your grip today, overall. A tight day tells you just as much as a loose one.

Once a week, a short review page asks you to look back over the last six days. At the end of the month, a simple overview brings the whole pattern into view at once, rather than just one day of it.

Blank journal pages have been added after every week, at the end of the month, and towards the end of the book, for anything else that needs writing down.

IF YOU ARE STUCK NAMING THE GRIP?

Some mornings the grip is obvious. Other mornings it takes a moment to place, and that blank space is usually where the practice stalls. If nothing comes to mind, borrow an example below, or use it to point toward your own.

Goals I might be squeezing

- A deadline
- A fitness target
- A new job offer or promotion
- A launch
- A number on the weighing scale

Loops I might be feeding

- A worry about money or job security
- An old argument
- A decision already made
- A reply I am waiting on
- A mistake I keep replaying

Outcomes I might be chasing

- Someone's approval or validation
- A specific reply
- A certain result
- Being seen a certain way
- Things going exactly to plan

None of these have to be exact. Naming the shape of today's grip is usually enough to start noticing when it tightens.

Worth Checking

Signs You Might Be Gripping

The grip does not always look like effort. Sometimes it looks like this instead.

A goal you are squeezing:

- Checking progress more than once a day.
- Feeling anxious when you cannot check.
- Planning weeks ahead for one outcome.
- Letting the goal define your worth.

A loop you are feeding

- Replaying the same conversation.
- Rehearsing what you should have said.
- Checking your phone for a reply.
- Telling the story to more than one person.

An outcome you are chasing

- Needing one specific response from someone.
- Feeling the day is ruined if it goes differently.
- Over-preparing for a single result.
- Struggling to imagine being fine with any other ending.

None of these are a problem on their own. They are simply worth noticing, the same way this journal asks you to notice everything else.

BEFORE DAY ONE

Set Your Intention

Before starting Day One, take a moment to name one grip you are already aware of, whatever shape it happens to take. Not a strict goal, just an honest starting point.

The grip I am most aware of right now is:

I will know I am loosening it when:

Come back to this page whenever a day feels tight. It is there to remind you what you were actually trying to loosen.

WEEK 1

Find the Grip

“Before loosening anything, notice exactly where and how you are gripping.”

"Noticing where you grip is not a failure to already be free. It is the only place freedom was ever going to start."