

FIELD GUIDE / VOL. 001

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NOT FINISHED YET.

A FIELD GUIDE TO
UNFINISHED WORK
AND THE RIGHT TO
KEEP BECOMING



Ideas, evidence, diagrams, worked examples,
and printable pages for your next revision.

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READ THIS FIRST / 02

A manifesto should have an exit door.

This guide is not about remaining forever unfinished. It is about recognising that work, identities and commitments can be revised. Completion can be a gift. So can a respectful ending. So can a pause.

The title is deliberately defiant; the argument is less theatrical. Your life need not demonstrate constant improvement to justify its value.

Four kinds of statements in this booklet

- **Evidence:** a limited description of what cited studies investigated or reported.
- **Interpretation:** a practical reading of evidence, not a validated rule.
- **Fiction:** invented scenes offered to clarify a dilemma, never passed off as testimony.
- **Exercise:** a reflection tool, designed here, without diagnostic authority.

WHAT THIS GUIDE DOES NOT CLAIM

No personality score, clinical prescription or universal law of success.
A choice to keep going is not inherently better than a choice to stop.

Reader's route

Read the argument, study the decision map, build a draft manifesto, review the fictional case, and use the printable worksheets. You may skip any exercise. Nothing here requires self-disclosure.

ARGUMENT / 03

Five propositions for unfinished people.

1. Incomplete does not always mean failed.

A draft might be useful, dormant, outdated or intentionally open. Judge it by its purpose, constraints and effects rather than its age.

2. Your work is not your entire worth.

Creative labor can matter deeply without becoming the price of dignity, rest or companionship.

3. Progress is information.

A small improvement can reveal what works. A failed experiment may reveal what to stop repeating. Neither guarantees a happy ending.

4. A value becomes real in a decision.

"I value care" becomes meaningful when you make room for another person's needs, consent and boundaries - even when nobody applauds.

5. The right ending may be a revision.

Finishing, shelving, handing off and closing are all possible responses. Persistence is not a moral ranking system.

These are editorial propositions. Research summaries later in this publication help illuminate parts of the picture; they do not validate every philosophical claim above.

THE DECISION MAP / 04

What kind of unfinished is it?

An unfinished project needs a question, not a slogan. Begin with two dimensions: **meaning** (does the work still serve a purpose you endorse?) and **constraint** (what time, access, resources or responsibilities limit it?).

ORIGINAL REFLECTION MAP — NOT A VALIDATED PSYCHOLOGICAL INSTRUMENT

HIGH MEANING / FLEXIBLE METHOD**Adapt the form**

Preserve why it matters;
change how it works.

HIGH MEANING / HIGH CONSTRAINT**Protect + pace**

Keep purpose, negotiate
resources and limits.

LOW MEANING / FLEXIBLE METHOD**Archive or remix**

Keep a useful fragment,
release the obligation.

LOW MEANING / HIGH CONSTRAINT**Permission to end**

Close responsibly; stop
investing by default.

Use the map without pretending it can decide for you

- Describe the project in one sentence, without adjectives about your character.
- Name its purpose today. The purpose may have changed since you began.
- Name at least one real constraint. A genuine constraint is not a failure of mindset.
- Choose a temporary response: continue, alter, pause, release or close.

Original diagram and editorial framework. This two-axis map is not derived from a validated clinical or organisational assessment. It simplifies complex choices and may omit structural pressures.

RESEARCH LENS / 05

What the evidence can - and cannot - say.

Autonomy, competence and relatedness

Ryan and Deci (2000) describe self-determination theory, which examines conditions supporting motivation and well-being. Their synthesis emphasises autonomy, competence and relatedness. This offers one reason a "living manifesto" might focus on values and relationships rather than externally imposed rankings. **It does not show that this particular generator improves well-being.** [1]

Small wins in meaningful work

Amabile and Kramer (2011) analysed diary reports from people doing creative work and described the motivational importance of progress on meaningful tasks. Their findings concern work experience; they are not proof that every individual should produce something daily. [2]

Letting go can also be adaptive

Wrosch and colleagues (2003) examined goal disengagement and reengagement across three studies, finding associations with subjective well-being. Context matters. In some cases, letting go can be a constructive response rather than defeat. [3]

Fresh starts are not magical resets

Dai, Milkman and Riis (2014) identified increases in some aspirational behaviours around temporal landmarks. A birthday, Monday or new edition can be useful as a prompt; none erases prior constraints. [4]

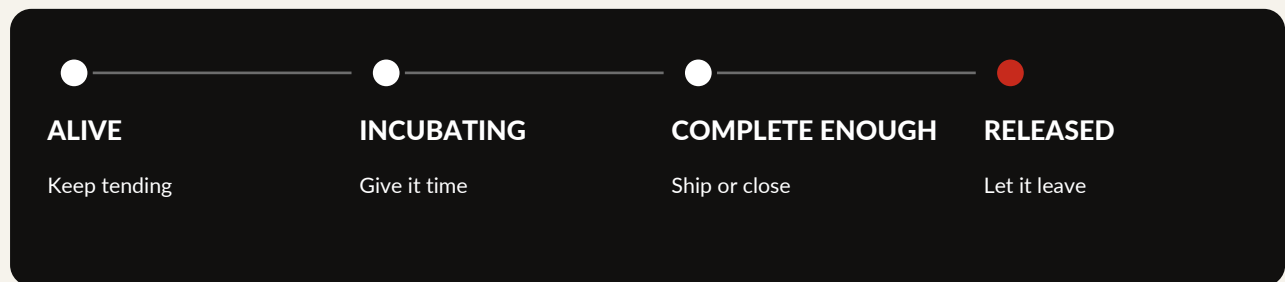
EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

These studies differ in samples, methods and measured outcomes.
None is an experiment testing the Not Finished Yet website.

UNFINISHED TAXONOMY / 06

Four statuses. Zero shame.

The simplest edit to your internal story may be changing a project's status without changing your judgment of its maker.



ALIVE

The work still has a meaningful next action. Ask whether you have the capacity to give it attention. Keep the next action small enough to inspect, not small because you are afraid.

INCUBATING

Some work develops slowly. Collect notes and protect a return point. Avoid using "incubating" as a euphemism for an obligation you no longer choose.

COMPLETE ENOUGH

A version serves its intended purpose; publish, deliver or hand it over. "Enough" can be responsible craftsmanship, not compromise.

RELEASED

The purpose, resources or desire may have disappeared. Record what was learned, settle responsibilities and put the project down.

The four statuses form an original editorial tool. They are labels for conversation, not psychological classifications.

MANIFESTO CONSTRUCTION / 07

From a noun to a practice.

The interactive website asks readers to select up to five values. The limit is an editorial choice made for clarity; there is no established psychological reason that exactly five is best.

**Worked construction: honesty**

Value: Honesty. **Verb:** verify, disclose, correct. **Boundary:** I do not owe strangers my private history.

Draft sentence: "I will revise a claim when the evidence no longer supports it."

Worked construction: rest

Value: Rest. **Verb:** pause, recover, decline. **Boundary:** Caring for myself is not a test I must pass. **Draft**

sentence: "I will allow recovery without demanding a justification."

The revision rule

A useful manifesto contains verbs rather than identity labels; permits exceptions and learning; avoids promising the impossible; and never tries to override the consent or autonomy of another person.

THE MATERIALS / 08

Ten values. Ten possible practices.

VALUE	PUT IT INTO A VERB	WATCH THE SHADOW
CURIOSITY	Ask a better question	Endless questioning can delay decisions
CRAFT	Improve what matters	Perfection can crowd out usefulness
FREEDOM	Protect meaningful options	Choice brings responsibility
CARE	Notice effects on people	Care still needs boundaries
HONESTY	Correct unsupported claims	Not all private facts are owed
PLAY	Make room for delight	Play need not justify itself
COURAGE	Try proportionate risks	Fearlessness is not required
REST	Allow recovery	Rest is not a performance
CONNECTION	Invite reciprocity	Nobody owes a response
PATIENCE	Give important work time	Patience can mask avoidance

Not every value must be active in every season. You may decide to change your list, and the choice of a value is not proof of possessing it.

CASE FILE / 09

Mira and the six recordings.

FICTION — INVENTED EXAMPLE, NOT INTERVIEW DATA

Mira wants to build a neighbourhood sound archive. She announces a public release date. Three weekends later she has six recordings, uneven audio quality, and several participants who have not approved publication. Her imagined launch day arrives. The archive is not ready.

Her first conclusion is personal: "I cannot finish anything." Her second conclusion is more useful: "I have not yet designed a process for consent and review." Both statements are interpretations, but only one points to a practical constraint.

Revision, not resignation

- **Original target:** publish 40 recordings in 30 days.
- **Revised purpose:** preserve community stories with consent and dignity.
- **New constraint:** nothing public without explicit participant approval.
- **Honest status:** six recordings; no public launch promised.
- **Possible next action:** request permissions and produce one edited pilot.

“She did not lower the meaning of the work. She changed its shape to protect it.”

No outcome is guaranteed. Another reasonable choice might be to pause or end the archive. This is fiction created to illustrate changing constraints, not to serve as proof of a research claim.

WORKED MANUSCRIPT / 10

A manifesto you can actually edit.

SELECTED VALUES: CURIOSITY / CRAFT / CARE / REST

I am not a final draft. I will ask one better question before defending an easy answer. I will care about making things well without confusing quality with perfection.

I will treat people, including myself, as more than instruments of achievement. I will allow recovery without demanding a justification.

When a project stops serving its purpose, I may revise it, rest, or let it go. My values will become visible through practice, not proclamation.

I am not finished yet. And that is not a failure.

The editor takes a second pass

Question: Is the statement too heroic? **Revision:** Replace “I will always care” with an action that fits a real choice. **Question:** Has rest become another demand? **Revision:** Keep it permissive. **Question:** Does the statement invite learning? **Revision:** Add a clause that permits changing your mind.

Practice the right to change your mind

Try swapping one value for another. Which sentence changes in a meaningful way? Which sentence sounds good but does not correspond to a decision? A manifesto is useful only while it leaves room for truth.

TRY THE INTERACTIVE EDITOR

Visit notfinished.sahilwho.online when deployment is verified.
All selections stay in your browser, with no account or submission.

PRINTABLE EXERCISE / 11

The inventory without the verdict.

Write about one current project. Distinguish the project's status from your value as a person. You may leave any question unanswered.

WHAT EXISTS TODAY? CONCRETE FACTS ONLY.

WHAT PURPOSE, IF ANY, DOES THIS WORK STILL SERVE?

WHAT LIMITS OR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE REAL?

WHICH RESPONSE FITS TODAY: CONTINUE / ADAPT / PAUSE / RELEASE / COMPLETE? WHY?

Worksheet A. This is an editorial reflection exercise, not a diagnostic scale or an instruction to persevere.

PRINTABLE EXERCISE / 12

An experiment without a scoreboard.

If you want to test a direction, design a two-week experiment. It is equally legitimate to test whether pausing creates more space for rest or relationships. Do not treat the outcome as a moral assessment.

WHAT QUESTION AM I TESTING?

WHAT ONE MODEST ACTION OR PAUSE WOULD ANSWER PART OF IT?

WHAT SIGNALS WOULD COUNT AS USEFUL INFORMATION?

WHAT WOULD MAKE ME STOP OR REVISE THIS EXPERIMENT?

WHO MAY BE AFFECTED, AND WHOSE CONSENT MATTERS?

Worksheet B. Review outcomes descriptively: learned, changed, useful, not useful, unknown. Do not use the exercise to override health, care or financial constraints.

ETHICS OF UNFINISHED WORK / 13

Against the endless hustle.

A publication about creative agency becomes misleading if it implies that every unfinished ambition can be solved by trying harder. Time, money, caregiving, discrimination, disability, health, access and sheer chance can shape what is possible. The point is to use honest choices within real conditions, not erase conditions with language.

Four permissions

- **Permission to stop:** a project may no longer deserve your limited attention.
- **Permission to finish:** release can be a craft decision; you need not revise forever.
- **Permission to enjoy ordinary life:** a good afternoon need not generate content.
- **Permission to be accountable:** changing course still involves keeping promises, repairing harms and respecting other people.

A note on confidence

Confidence founded on evidence grows by noticing what you can actually do, what you do not yet know, what changed, and who helped. It does not require a myth of invulnerability.

“Keep the work alive when it deserves life. Let it end when it has done its work.”

The quotations and permissions on this page are original editorial language, not attributed research findings.

REFERENCES AND REUSE / 14

Sources. Attribution. Next edition.

Research cited in this guide

[1] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.

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[4] Dai, H., Milkman, K. L., & Riis, J. (2014). The Fresh Start Effect: Temporal Landmarks Motivate Aspirational Behavior. *Management Science*, 60(10), 2563-2582.

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