

This Week's Rules

WEEK OF _____

Not goals. Not intentions. **Rules.** Small enough that you'll actually do them, specific enough that you'll know if you did, and the kind you can break on Tuesday and fix by Thursday. **Pick three.** Three is plenty. Ten is a to-do list. Stick this on the fridge.

1 The one that matters most goes here. ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

Check the box on Sunday if it mostly happened. Mostly counts. Give a new one two weeks before you decide. If it does nothing for you, it's gone.

WHAT WORKED

WHAT DIDN'T

NEXT WEEK I'LL KEEP

MINE, THIS WEEK, STRAIGHT FROM MY PHONE

- In bed by 9:30. That's the one I keep losing, so it goes at the top.
- The car stays quiet. No music, no podcast, no audiobook. Talking to myself counts.
- A mile a day, walked or run.
- **One that didn't work:** phone in my purse for the whole drive. It stressed me out more than it helped, so it's gone. That's not failing at a rule. That's the rule doing its job.

Notice how small they are. None of these would impress anybody. That's the point. A rule you'd brag about is a goal, and goals are where good intentions go to die.

Notice how specific. "Drink more water" isn't a rule. "A whole bottle before I'm home from drop-off" is. You'll know by 8:15 whether you did it.

They change. Every Monday I look back and pick three again. Sometimes I keep one. Sometimes they all change. There's no principal. There's no boss. These are for you.

The one under all of these: keep a note in your phone. Every time you have a thought that feels true, write it down. Decide nothing. Read it back in seven months.

The dishes can wait. Your life won't.

katieworden.com · @katiewo

100 Tiny Ideas to Steal

FOR THIS WEEK'S RULES

A menu, not a to-do list. Everybody has things their body resets with, and things that make it worse. The week is how you find out which is which for you. Steal three. Give each one two weeks. If it does nothing, pick something else. Most of these cost nothing and take under ten minutes.

PORCH AND OUTSIDE

- 1 Eight ounces of water, standing outside, before the day starts. Porch, balcony, or front step. My cousin's. He says it changed his mornings.
- 2 Ten minutes outside in the morning light. It sets your body clock for the night.
- 3 Coffee on the porch, or the front step, before anyone else is up.
- 4 Eat lunch outside, even if it's ten minutes.
- 5 Twenty minutes somewhere that feels like nature. A park counts. Sitting counts. Three times this week.
- 6 Walk barefoot in the grass for two minutes.
- 7 Lie in the grass for five minutes and look up.
- 8 Watch the sunset all the way down. Post it tomorrow, if at all.
- 9 A fifteen-minute walk where you look for one thing that amazes you. Big sky counts.
- 10 Watch the dog, the birds, or the trees do nothing for five minutes.
- 11 Watch a storm come in from the doorway.

WATER

- 12 A whole glass of water before the coffee.
- 13 A glass of water before you decide you're tired. Mild dehydration feels a lot like a bad mood.
- 14 A whole bottle of water before you get to work, or back from drop-off.
- 15 Feet in some water for five minutes. A pool, a creek, a kiddie pool. Coffee in hand.
- 16 Cold water on your face for twenty seconds. It slows your heart rate.
- 17 A bath with the door shut and nothing playing.
- 18 A long shower with the lights low.
- 19 Sit by any water you can find: a creek, a pond, the fountain at the park.

HANDS BUSY, HEAD QUIET

- 20 A puzzle on the kitchen table all week. Five pieces at a time.
- 21 Diamond painting.
- 22 Shell pecans. Snap beans. Anything repetitive.
- 23 Hand-write one list on paper.

- 24 Brush a pet.
- 25 Pet a dog or a cat for ten minutes. Borrow one if you have to. It lowers your stress hormones.
- 26 Thirty minutes in the garden, even pulling weeds. Or repot one plant. It calms you down faster than the couch does.
- 27 Bake one thing from scratch with nothing playing.
- 28 Color something. Kids' crayons count.
- 29 Fold the laundry while it's still warm.
- 30 Write a real letter to somebody and mail it.

QUIET

- 31 The car stays quiet. No music, no podcast, no audiobook. Talking to yourself counts.
- 32 Two breaths in through the nose, one long breath out. Five minutes. It beats meditation in the studies.
- 33 Ten minutes a day with no screen.
- 34 Stand in a line without your phone. Let yourself be bored for once.
- 35 Wake up fifteen minutes before anyone needs you.
- 36 One meal a day with nothing playing. You'll taste it, and you'll eat less without trying.
- 37 Sit still for thirty seconds. Then a minute.
- 38 Finish your coffee while it's hot. Sitting down.
- 39 Let the phone ring out once a day. Call back when it's a good time.
- 40 Lights off, one lamp on, for the last hour of the night.
- 41 Read ten pages of a real book.
- 42 Let one afternoon have nothing in it. Nothing is supposed to happen sometimes.

IN THE CAR

- 43 A voice memo instead of a podcast. Talk your thoughts out.
- 44 Windows down for one mile.
- 45 Pull over for the sunset. Thirty seconds.
- 46 Sit in the car for two minutes before you go inside. Let the day end before the evening starts.
- 47 Leave the phone in the console for one errand. Or more than one.
- 48 One drive with somebody you love and nothing playing. See what they say.
- 49 Take the long way once a week.

The dishes can wait. Your life won't.

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BODY

- 50 Ten minutes of walking with no technology.
- 51 In bed by 9:30. Pick your number and put it at the top.
- 52 Same bedtime every night, weekends too.
- 53 Write tomorrow's to-do list before bed. People who do fall asleep faster.
- 54 Charge your phone outside the bedroom.
- 55 Stretch on the floor while dinner cooks.
- 56 Swing on a porch swing or a park swing.
- 57 Ten slow breaths before you get out of the car.
- 58 Eat breakfast sitting down.
- 59 Walk the dog slower than the dog wants.
- 60 Dance to one song in the kitchen.
- 61 Go to bed when you're tired, not when the list is done.

WITH YOUR PEOPLE

- 62 Phone in the other room from dinner to bedtime.
- 63 Phones off the table at dinner. Even face down, they cost you some of the fun.
- 64 Look up every time someone talks to you. Every time.
- 65 Say yes to the cuddle. The dishes can wait.
- 66 Twenty minutes of the show they love, even if you don't. Hold hands.
- 67 Let them struggle with the heavy thing. Watch from far away.
- 68 One question at dinner besides "how was your day."
- 69 Three good things from today, out loud, at bedtime. Kids are great at this. So is a spouse.
- 70 Walk to the mailbox together.
- 71 Let the little one help, even when it takes twice as long.
- 72 Say "tell me more," then be quiet.
- 73 Stay five minutes longer than you need to. At bedtime, at dinner, at your parents' house.
- 74 Send the check-in text. People are gladder to hear from you than you think.
- 75 Ask your parents a question about when they were young.
- 76 Sit on the floor with them. Just sit.

AT WORK, AT SCHOOL

- 77 Eat lunch away from your desk.
- 78 Two minutes every hour: stand up, look out the window.
- 79 Notifications off, except for people. Check three times a day instead.

- 80 Walk the hall once with no destination.
- 81 Leave the building for ten minutes in the middle of the day.
- 82 One email can wait until tomorrow. Pick which one.
- 83 Look up from the grade book, or the inbox, until they walk away.
- 84 Say "I'll get back to you tomorrow" once a day.
- 85 Leave on time one day a week. Pick the day now.
- 86 Greet them by name when they walk in. Every kid, every coworker, every morning.

JUST BECAUSE YOU LIKE IT

- 87 Name your favorite snack, movie, and store out loud. If you can't, start finding out.
- 88 Ask yourself what you want for dinner before you ask anyone else.
- 89 Next time you buy something for your place, pick the one you like before you ask anyone else.
- 90 Play the song you loved at sixteen.
- 91 Buy the good pens.
- 92 The Sonic drink after the hard thing.
- 93 Ice cream. Figure out your favorite. That one took me a while.
- 94 Wear the thing you've been saving.
- 95 Reread the book you loved as a kid.
- 96 Take the picture and keep it just for you.
- 97 Do one thing this week that nobody asked you to do.
- 98 Sign up for the lesson: riding, pottery, line dancing, whatever it was.
- 99 Thirty minutes on your thing. The one that brings you there.
- 100 Every week, notice one thing you actually like. Write it down.

THE PRACTICE

Monday morning. Open the note. Pick three, just for this week. The one that matters most goes at the top.

Two weeks. Week one you're learning it. By week two you know if it does anything for you. If not, it's gone.

One new thing at a time. The week you're working on something hard, add nothing.

Next Monday. What worked? What didn't? What came easy? Keep one, swap one, drop one.

There's no principal. There's no boss. These are for you.