ROLE ETHICS

PURPOSE

To clearly define the many roles in your life, so you can focus on what is important, deliberately.

As humans we have limited attention and limited energy.
So it makes sense to use them in ways that are effective.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Follow the six steps below, in order. Do not skip ahead.
2. Be brutally honest. Nobody else has to see this.
3. Write what you do, not what you mean to do.
4. Pages 4 and 5 are where you decide who you will be in the roles that matter. Sign it.

Why this works. The roles you play are a big part of who you are, and the ones that matter most to you shape what you do. People who give real care to all their important roles, not just one, tend to feel better. But most of us have a gap between what we say matters and how we live. Therapists measure that gap with two questions: how important is this to me, and how much did I live it this week? Your mind wanders almost half the time, so where your attention goes, your life goes. Writing who you want to be in your own words, and planning for what will get in your way and when you will act, makes it more likely to happen. The idea is old: Confucius taught that a good life is built by living your roles well.

IDENTITY THEORY (STRYKER & BURKE, 2000) · ROLE BALANCE (MARKS & MACDERMID, 1996) · VALUED LIVING (WILSON ET AL., 2010) · ATTENTION (KAHNEMAN, 1973 · KILLINGSWORTH & GILBERT, 2010) · SELF-PERSUASION (ARONSON, 1999 · MAGILL ET AL., 2018) · BEST POSSIBLE SELF (KING, 2001 · CARRILLO ET AL., 2019 · HEEKERENS & EID, 2021) · MENTAL CONTRASTING (OETTINGEN & MAYER, 2002 · OETTINGEN, 2012 · WANG ET AL., 2021) · IF-THEN (GOLLWITZER & SHEERAN, 2006) · CONFUCIUS (AMES, 2011)

STEP 1 Clearly list all of the roles in your life. ALL OF THEM

Most people stop at five. Keep going. Look in every corner, then inside your own head. Some of your biggest roles have no name tag.

HOME & FAMILY
Partner, husband, wife, mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandma, uncle, nephew

WORK & MONEY
Employer, employee, leader, team mate, provider, business owner, the one who pays the bills

FRIENDS & COMMUNITY
Friend, neighbour, citizen, coach, mentor, member, volunteer, attendee

BODY & HEALTH
The one who trains, eats, sleeps and rests. Or the one who doesn't.

THE ROLES IN YOUR HEAD
Worrier, optimist, your own judge, the critic, the peacekeeper, the rescuer, the fixer, the people-pleaser, the scroller, keeper of your attention, keeper of your energy, trustee of your future self, the narrator of your life

Which role do you play every day that you never chose? Write that one down too.

1 ◯ _____
2 ◯ _____
3 ◯ _____
4 ◯ _____
5 ◯ _____
6 ◯ _____
7 ◯ _____
8 ◯ _____
9 ◯ _____
10 ◯ _____
11 ◯ _____
12 ◯ _____
13 ◯ _____
14 ◯ _____
15 ◯ _____
16 ◯ _____

STEP 2 From that list, choose the three that are most important to you.

Rank them 1, 2, 3 in the circles. Not the ones you should pick. The ones you would grieve if you lost them.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

WHERE IT REALLY GOES

STEP 3

List the roles in your life taking the most of your energy and attention.

Not the ones that matter. The ones that take. Check your screen time, your calendar and what you think about in the shower.

THE ROLE	HOURS A WEEK Best guess	IT MOSTLY
		☐ gives me energy ☐ drains me
		☐ gives me energy ☐ drains me
		☐ gives me energy ☐ drains me
		☐ gives me energy ☐ drains me
		☐ gives me energy ☐ drains me
		☐ gives me energy ☐ drains me

STEP 4

Your top 3. How much time do you really give them? BE BRUTALLY HONEST

Then rate your attention when you are there. Phone out? Mind at work? Half listening? That is not a 10.

	MY TOP 3	HOURS A WEEK Really	ATTENTION 0 to 10	WHEN I'M THERE, MY MIND IS ON Phone, work, worry...	IF I ASKED THEM, THEY'D SAY Name them. My kids, my partner...
1		____ hrs	____ /10		
2		____ hrs	____ /10		
3		____ hrs	____ /10		

Ask them for real this week. Their number counts more than yours.

THE GAP SIDE BY SIDE

Copy both lists. Then look at them for a full minute.

WHAT I SAY MATTERS MOST · STEP 2		WHERE MY ATTENTION REALLY GOES · STEP 3
1	VS	1
2		2
3		3

THE TWO LISTS ARE ☐ the same ☐ partly the same ☐ not even close

What does this gap cost me, and who pays for it?

STOP FEEDING THE WRONG ROLES

STEP 5

What roles do you need to stop giving attention to?

The roles you play that are not effective. They take energy and give back little. The worrier. The scroller. The fixer of problems nobody asked you to fix. Look back at Step 3, then decide what to do with each one.

THE ROLE	I WILL		WHAT IT COSTS ME NOW	WHAT I GET BACK
	☐ stop ☐ hand back	☐ shrink ☐ keep		
	☐ stop ☐ hand back	☐ shrink ☐ keep		
	☐ stop ☐ hand back	☐ shrink ☐ keep		
	☐ stop ☐ hand back	☐ shrink ☐ keep		
	☐ stop ☐ hand back	☐ shrink ☐ keep		

The hours I win back each week: _____ **I will give them to** _____

STEP 6

Who do you want to be in your top 3 roles? PART 1 · THINK FIRST

Answer these for your number 1 role. Go slow. Your first answer is rarely the true one.

a **If the person on the other side of this role spoke at your 70th birthday, what would you want them to say about you?** Your child, your partner, your team.

b **What would the best version of you in this role do on a normal Tuesday?**

c **What does this role need from you that you have been giving to something else?**

d **What do you do in this role that you would hate to watch played back on video?**

e **If you had one more year in this role, and then it was over, what would you change tomorrow?**

WHO I CHOOSE TO BE

STEP 6 **Who do you want to be in your top 3 roles?** PART 2 · WRITE IT

Read your answers on page 3. For roles 2 and 3, ask yourself the same questions first. Then write who you are in each role, in your own words, as if it is already true. Your words will move you more than ours. Read it out loud. Change it until it sounds like you.

Like this. "In this role, I am someone who puts the phone away at dinner, listens to the end and says sorry first."

ROLE 1

In this role, I am someone who _____

ROLE 2

In this role, I am someone who _____

ROLE 3

In this role, I am someone who _____

STEP 6 **Define, with great specificity, how you want to be and who you want to be in your top 3 roles.** PART 3 · MAKE IT REAL

Be extremely specific. Not "a better dad." Write what someone would see if they filmed you.

THE ROLE	ROLE 1	ROLE 2	ROLE 3
Who I want to be Three words			
What I will do Things a camera could film. Not wishes.			
What I will stop doing In this role			
What they will say about me in a year			
My first action this week Day and time			

PLAN FOR THE HARD PART

STEP 6 **What in you will get in the way?** PART 3 · MAKE IT REAL

Picture your best self in each role. Now picture the moment it goes wrong. Be honest. It is rarely other people. It is the tired you, the busy you, the you who reaches for the phone. Then decide now what you will do.

Like this. "I get home tired and grab my phone. When that happens, I will put it in the drawer and ask one question."

THE ROLE	ROLE 1	ROLE 2	ROLE 3
What in ME will get in the way? A feeling, a habit, a thought. Not other people.			
When that happens, I will... One thing. Small enough to do on a bad day.			

COMMIT

Read pages 1 to 4 back first. Then say it in your words.

The roles I'm stepping up in... _____

The roles I'm stepping back from... _____

This week I will... _____

If-then. When _____ , I will _____ .

Pick a moment that happens every day. "When I walk through the front door, I will put my phone in the drawer for the first hour."

I will redo Step 4 and ask them again on _____

Signed _____ Date _____

When was the last time you looked at, audited and defined the roles in your life? Today counts.