

The Keep It Tool

Three questions. One takeaway. Then close the book.

The reflection tool from Episode 1 of Emotions for Humans - originally built for actors, useful for anyone.

WHY THIS EXISTS

After class. After the audition. After the meeting that mattered. Before the day sweeps it away, take 10 minutes. Write by hand if you can. Then close the book - that's the discipline. Your room might be a studio, a meeting, or a kitchen table at midnight. The questions don't change.

THE 10-MINUTE ROUTINE - THREE QUESTIONS, ONE TAKEAWAY

- 1 Name what you felt** ~ 1 MINUTE
One word is enough. Not the story - just the word. Naming a feeling is how you change what it's doing in your body (the research calls it affect labelling) - and it's the raw material of every performance you'll ever give.
- 2 What surprised you?** ~ 2 MINUTES
Surprise is the freshest data you'll ever have. Within a day or two, memory flattens everything into "brilliant" or "terrible". Capture the nuance while it still has resolution.
- 3 Same / Different** ~ 5 MINUTES
What would you keep? What would you change next time? This is the expert's question, asked twice. Answer it honestly, in your own words. If it was an audition, add: what feedback or direction did you get? Write it down verbatim - it's the note you'd otherwise pay a coach to give you again.
- 4 One takeaway, then close the book** ~ 2 MINUTES
Compress all of it into one note to self. Then close the book. You're done. The 10 minutes after the experience now belong to you.

HOW TO RUN IT

- **10 minutes, then stop.** Closing the book is the discipline - the tool works because it ends.
- **Write by hand if you can.** The page helps you slow down to the speed of actually noticing.
- **Fresh page, every time.** The questions are the constant; the answers are new.
- **Anywhere.** The studio, the meeting room, the kitchen table at midnight - the questions don't change.

START NOW - FRESH PAGE, EVERY TIME

The experience: _____

My one word: _____

What surprised me: _____

What I'm keeping: _____

Next time, I'm changing: _____

Note to self: _____

THE SCIENCE, BRIEFLY

- Affect labelling: naming an emotion measurably reduces the charge in the brain's alarm centre (Lieberman et al., 2007, Psychological Science 18(5)).
- Reconsolidation: recalled memory becomes editable - reflection within hours captures the experience at the resolution it deserves (Nader, Schafe & Le Doux, 2000, Nature 406).
- Deliberate practice: the self-evaluation step is where gains actually consolidate (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993, Psychological Review 100(3)).
- Offline learning: the brain keeps consolidating skill after practice ends - one clear instruction tells it what to keep (Bonstrup et al., 2019, Current Biology 29(8)).

Now.

Go be a human.