

DESIGNING A LIFE YOU DON'T WANT TO LEAVE

A Practical Workbook For Manifesting The Life You Were Born To Live

PART I. INTRODUCTION

PART II. DISCOVERY

PART III. DIVERGENCE

PART II. CONVERGENCE

PART I. EMBODIMENT

PART II. ATTUNEMENT



Why Do You Need This Workbook

Manifestation is real. It's just not the magic trick you think it is.

There was a time when I rolled my eyes when someone was talking about manifestation. The vision boards, the affirmations, the idea that if you want the villa with the ocean views badly enough you just have to believe strongly enough. That wasn't my thing.

But I've come around to it, because I noticed the mechanism underneath the woo-woo was exactly the same thing we were doing in the studio. And it turns out I've been using that mechanism for years. I even wrote two very practical books about it.

I have been manifesting something out of nothing for 25 years, I was just calling it something else.

I'm a pragmatic person. As much as I love philosophical, spiritual and cosmological conversations, I also want a plan. A path that bridges the expansive thinking to the daily work needed to make my dreams come true. I know I'm not alone, so I've created a workbook that is ambitious but also anchored in the pragmatic way dreams come to life.

In the height of the digital boom, I was running a product design company. We conceived of and built many of the apps and websites you have used in your daily life. We felt like we were magicians because we could have an idea one day, and have a usable prototype the next. It was like waving a magic wand to make ideas a reality.

We worked on seven hundred projects during that time. None of those products would've shipped if we hadn't had a simple way to go from idea to finished product. To make that happen we started using a process that stepped through five distinct stages.

This became known as a *design sprint*.

For over two decades, the design sprint has helped tens of thousands of teams clarify their thinking, generate bold options, and bring new realities into being. It is a structured process for making the unknown known. A framework for moving from foggy ideas to tangible forms.

What I have come to understand is that this same process is nothing less than the ancient practice of manifestation itself. The design sprint does not just build products, it builds realities. And the reality most worth designing is the one you are here to live.

~ Richard



Richard's Story

For decades, I lived by the metrics of achievement: startups founded, books published, clients served. Ticking the boxes of the American Dream. And for a while, it worked, until it didn't. Losing my wife to cancer and being forced to shut down a business soon after stripped everything down to essentials. What emerged from the smoldering mess was a remembering of what it means to build something from love, not fear. Of how creativity, relationships, and purpose can rebuild a life.

Devon's Story

I've spent my life at the intersection of care and creativity—building a portfolio of startups, nurturing a community around that, raising children, navigating transitions with grace and humor. My transformation wasn't a single moment, but a collection of them: the realization that being fully alive means being fully present. That real leadership starts with the humility to truly listen to others, and to myself. Second Harvest is where all of that experience comes home. My work is to create environments of belonging—places where people can safely drop the masks, meet themselves again, and rediscover the joy of being seen

Second Harvest began as a question we needed to answer for ourselves: What if the second half of life could be better than the first? It's now become our answer to that question. A living, breathing experiment in meaning-making.

Before You Begin

This is not a book about ideas. It is a book about aligning action with purpose. Every section ends with an exercise. The exercise is the point. If you read this without doing the work, you've just added another book to the pile.

This workbook does not assume you are broken or in need of optimization. It assumes that deep inside of you is a feeling you know what you want to do. You might not have heard that voice inside you speak much recently, but you know it's in there somewhere.

There is also a part of you that wants a path to get there.

Work through each section in order. Write in it. Argue with it. Do the exercises before moving on. The workbook will not do anything for you. That's the whole point.

One rule: do not skip to the end. Clarity is built incrementally, through repeated small acts, not through insight alone.

The Five Phases

One of the things I love about design is that the language design almost always maps into the spiritual world. In this book, I've described the five phases as discovery, divergence, convergence, embodiment and attunement.

They describe movements of the mind and soul that humans have practiced across every wisdom tradition. The only adjustment is that where product designers speak of prototypes and tests, we speak of embodiment and attunement. Because the work here is not to build something outside yourself. It is to return to who you have always been.

01 DISCOVERY	Surface your assumptions, truths, and the nature of what you seek. Know your <i>stories</i> .
02 DIVERGENCE	Open yourself to all possibilities without judgment. Think and feel expansively.
03 CONVERGENCE	Choose what is aligned. Release what is not. This is also the work of <i>via negativa</i> - the path to your higher self through removing obstacles.
04 EMBODIMENT	Inhabit the new self before you fully believe in it. Pretending, fake it until you make it, experimenting.
05 ATTUNEMENT	Listen for resonance. Let the body confirm what the mind has chosen. Tuning the instrument.

There are no wrong answers here. This is not a productivity exercise. It is an act of deep listening. We will be making the time to listen to yourself, to your core desires, and to the future that is already moving toward you.

Take your time. Do one phase per sitting if that feels right. Return to earlier phases when later ones reveal something new. While there is a linear path to these exercises, you can also circle back and revisit ideas to create more clarity. Each time around, you arrive closer to the center of yourself.

PHASE 01

Discovery

The truth you have been avoiding is often the doorway you have been looking for.

Discovery begins not with answers but with probing questions. This questioning phase surfaces our assumptions. We often treat beliefs as facts and fears as certainties. For this part of the work, we will simply ask, without judgement, what you know, what you believe, and what you have been telling yourself about who you are and what is possible for you.

Before you can move toward a new reality, you must first see clearly the reality you are currently holding onto with white knuckles. Not to judge it. Not to fix it. Simply to understand it. Think of this as a compassionate interrogator who is trying to discover the information that will service you best. The goal here is to identify the stories running your life and reclaim the space between the observer and the narrative.

We all live inside scripts or assumptions.

Very often we didn't write our identity stories, money stories, love stories, age stories, worthiness stories. They were handed to us by parents, culture, teachers, algorithms, partners, lovers, and random authority figures or social media influencers who had no business designing your identity. If you need a nudge, there's a long list of stories in the appendix of this workbook. Things like, I'm an introvert. I'm an extrovert. I'm the quiet one. I'm the loud one. I'm the funny one. I'm the serious one. I'm the responsible one. I'm the messy one. I'm the creative one. I'm not creative. I'm the caretaker. I'm the peacemaker.

So, what are the family stories that you're holding onto?

What do I believe to be true about myself that may simply be an assumption I inherited?

What are my stories about love, relationships and safety?

What are my stories about money, abundance or wealth?

What do I know for certain? What's a fact, not just a fear?

What do I sense is possible, even if I cannot yet explain or justify it?

What's the pain I'm keeping away or the problem I'm trying to solve with my stories?

Living A Question

Using the responses above we'll now narrow our focus to one big question. In 1903, Rilke told a young poet to stop hunting for answers he wasn't yet able to live. "Live the questions," he wrote, and grow, slowly, into the answers.

You probably achieve much of what you have today by having answers. Fast ones, good ones. Smart people like to close the open loop, make the call, resolve the unknown. So an open question in your own life starts to feel like a failure of nerve, or a gap to be closed. The anxiety that comes from a big open question is, *if I don't know yet, I'm falling behind*.

Rilke's counsel was to be patient with everything unresolved, and to love the questions themselves. Not to chase the answer, but to live toward it, until one day you notice you've been living inside it all along. That's the correction this workbook makes to "manifestation": you don't have to name the outcome today. You have to live the question with humility and curiosity so that a real answer has room to form.

In this period of your life, what question are you most curious about?

Related to the question above, what answer have you been chasing or have been told you should already have?

Now, let's see how we can expand our imagination to allow for unexpected answers to flow towards your living question.

PHASE 02

Divergence

Expanding your imagination beyond your stories and assumptions.

In the design sprint, divergence is where we resist the pull toward the obvious answer. We generate as many wild, practical, strange, and beautiful possibilities to our big question/s as we can. We expand our imagination because the best direction is rarely the first one the mind reaches for. Judgment is suspended. Openness is the mindset.

Spiritually, this is the act of releasing control. Sometimes referred to as surrender. It is the practice of trusting that the universe holds possibilities you have not yet imagined. There's a humility in that framing. After all, it would be hubris to believe a single individual had better ideas than the entire universe. Your willingness to remain open is itself an invitation. Divergence is not passive. It is an active, and often bold, expansion.

Let's start with a mental exercise. Imagine someone hands you a billion dollars — now what? Most people have a quick response about buying the house, the car, booking the travel, only to then discover they've only spent a few million and still haven't figured out what they want to do with their lives. Suddenly people realize they are not chasing the money, but rather the feeling of freedom, or a connection to others, or just safety.

The point is that most dreams aren't gated by money at all. The real bottleneck is confidence, a willingness to risk failure, and the imagination to see what's possible with what you already have. The bottleneck is avoiding *feelings*.

Over the course of this workbook we'll discover ways to overcome these bottlenecks of confidence and imagination. You will learn a reliable way to *manufacture* confidence and *stress-test* imagination. Before we do that, let's answer some more questions.

If you had no fear of failure, judgment, or loss, what would you choose to be?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Imagine your best friends are watching a movie about your life. You are the main character and the climax of the movie is approaching. What are they screaming at the screen for you to do? “Quit the toxic job!” “Kiss them already!” “Book the ticket!”

What signs, coincidences, or recurring themes has the universe been offering you lately?

PHASE 03

Convergence

Choosing what is meant for you, and more importantly, releasing what is not.

Clarity is not found by adding more options. It is found by having the courage to let the wrong ones go. *So*, after divergence, we converge.

In product design, this means selecting the most promising direction. But not because it is perfect, but because it is most aligned with what we are trying to create. We weigh it against our gut reaction (a full body “yes” or “no”), we choose with an open heart, and we commit. This is not about making the right choice, it’s about making the choice right. Research has shown time and time again that people who commit to something, even if it’s not perfect, are more likely to achieve what they want than those that hold too many options open.

I’ll say it again: this choice doesn’t need to be perfect, but it does need to feel aligned with your most authentic version of yourself in this moment.

In the spiritual realm, convergence is the practice of discernment. This discernment lives in your body. Your mind, driven by the ego, can lie to you, but your body won’t lie. You’ll know in your heart and your gut if something is worth pursuing or not.

It is the moment of listening to your internal voice. Not the voice in your head. Not the voice of fear or approval-seeking, but the deeper voice of your true self. Choosing what is meant for you is an act of integrity. And releasing what is not aligned is equally sacred. You cannot say yes to the life that is calling you while still saying yes to everything else.

Look back at the possibilities you named in the Divergence section, which make you feel expanded rather than contracted? Which gives you thrills and which feels off?

Which version in your answers above feels like remembering who you are since birth, rather than striving for something you were told to be?

What version is most aligned with the big question you came up with in Part I?

What would you need to release to make room for what you know is meant for you?

Embodiment

In the design sprint, a prototype is not the finished thing. It is the most immediate version of the idea to learn from. By definition, a prototype is not perfect or even close to the finished product. We build it before we are ready, because readiness is often just another word for fear. The prototype asks for a lot of curiosity and a sprinkling of courage.

Your thoughts, your words, your actions all change before the evidence arrives. It is not performance. It is not pretending. It is practice. You are moving into the new self the way you might move into any new activity or skill. You do not think your way into a new way of living. You act your way into a new way of thinking.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

What is one small, concrete action you can take today, and tomorrow, and all this week as if your desired version of reality is already arriving?

How does the person I am becoming carry themselves? How do they think, speak, decide, rest, and move through the world?

What provisional, and possibly imperfect, belief would you need to hold to move through tomorrow as that person?

My Embodiment Commitment

Write the one embodied action you will take to live your question:

Attunement

In the design sprint, testing means putting the prototype in front of real people and watching what happens. It's an act of curiosity to learn what no amount of thinking could have revealed. The test is a gift because it shows you the truth not the assumption.

In the spiritual realm, we do not test. We attune. Attunement is the practice of becoming sensitive enough to your own inner signal that you can feel the difference between alignment and incongruence. When you act as the person you are becoming, does it feel like coming home or does it feel like a performance that exhausts you? The body knows before the mind does.

To attune is to listen at a frequency most people never slow down enough to hear. This phase asks you to be still, to notice, and to trust what you find there.

[illegible]

Did the action feel expansive or contracting? Describe the felt sense in your body, not just your mind. These might be very subtle signs. A slight lightness, or relief, if it's expansion or a tension in your jaw or neck if it's a contracting signal.

Where in your body did you feel resonance? Where in your body did you feel incongruence? Resonance is usually felt as warmth and openness in the chest and low, deep, and steady breaths that feel easy. While incongruence appears as tightness in the throat or a knot in the stomach and shallow breathing or a tight, compressed feeling around the ribs.

What did this experience help you understand about the reality you are moving toward?

The sprint does not end here. It returns to Discovery with new knowledge. What needs to be adjusted or refined? What does the next phase of Discovery look like?

A note on the process

This process is really quite simple. It is about taking what is unclear and making it visible. Taking what is in your head and making it something you can see and feel. Taking what is imagined and bringing it into form.

Discovery asks you to see without the filters of your stories. Divergence asks you to open your heart fully. Convergence asks you to choose from the heart and gut. Embodiment asks you to inhabit the new self before the world catches up. And Attunement asks you to listen to the resonance in your body and the signal beneath the noise in your head. Each of these steps is a little confirmation that you are on your path.

The world you are designing is not a product. It is a life. And you are both the designer and the design. You are the one asking the questions and the one the questions are for. If you want to dig deeper into the creation of the reality around you, I suggest moving to the workbook entitled The World, which you can find on our website.

Good luck on your journey.

Richard & Devon
secondharvest.co

Appendix:

My Stories

I'm an introvert. I'm an extrovert. I'm the quiet one. I'm the loud one. I'm the funny one. I'm the serious one. I'm the responsible one. I'm the messy one. I'm the creative one. I'm not creative. I'm the caretaker. I'm the peacemaker. I'm the black sheep. I'm the golden child. I'm the baby of the family. I'm the one who holds everything together. I'm the one no one worries about. I'm the difficult one. I'm the independent one. I'm the one who always has to step up. I'm the type A one. I'm not a leader. I'm better as a number two. I'm not good with money. I'm not entrepreneurial. I'm the hardest worker in the room. I'm always behind. I'm not as smart as them. I'm the reliable one. I'm stuck in this career. I'm bad at relationships. I always pick the wrong people. I'm too much. I'm not enough. I'm the one who gives more. I'm the one people lean on. I'm not the kind of person people choose. I'm awkward in groups. I'm the outsider. I'm the one who keeps the peace. I've always struggled with my weight. I'm not athletic. I'm the strong one. My body just isn't like that. I'm getting older, so it's downhill from here. I don't have discipline. I'm either all in or all out. I'm not someone who sticks with things. I always procrastinate. I'm just not that kind of person. I'm the provider. I'm the stay at home parent. I'm the breadwinner. I'm the one who sacrifices. I'm the one who makes things happen. I'm the one who doesn't need help. I'm the one who figures it out. I'm the one who goes last. I'm the one who keeps everyone happy. I'm the one who holds it in. I'm the one who doesn't complain. I'm the one who can handle it. I'm the one who shouldn't want more. I'm the one who already has enough. I'm the one who can't mess this up. I'm the one who has to be perfect. I'm the one who doesn't quit. I'm the one who always finishes what I start. I'm the one who overthinks everything. I'm the one who needs a plan. I'm the one who plays it safe. I'm the one who doesn't take risks. I'm the one who waits until I'm ready. I'm the one who needs permission. I'm the one who needs more time. I'm the procrastinator. I'm the one who missed my chance. I'm the one who is always late. I'm the one who should know better. I can't change now. I can't stay in one place too long. I'm good. I'm bad.