your free companion kit

The Evidence File Kit

The tools from this book, written down, so they're there the next time you're about to open that email again.



EIGHT TOOLS INSIDE

1. The 11:48 question card
2. The evidence file worksheet
3. Two Rereads, Then Send card
4. The Meeting Autopsy card
5. The three boxes feedback sheet
6. The finish-line question card
7. The Asking Well script
8. The Sunday check card



THE PRINTABLE COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

Shut Up, Brain, You're Not a Fraud

How to Stop Overthinking at Work, Beat Imposter Syndrome and Survive the Sunday Scaries

MARIAH RENNER

PRINT WHAT YOU NEED · SKIP THE REST

hi. start here.

How to use this kit



This book isn't going to try to talk you out of the feeling with pep talks. The point is what to do while you still feel that way. So here are the book's tools on paper, ready for the moment you need one. Print what you need. Skip the rest.

Before you use any of it

1. **Your profession's standards and your workplace's required checks come first, everywhere in this book.** If there's a required process, a checklist, a sign-off or a second-checker, you do all of it. Every stopping rule in this kit starts only after those are done.
2. **Keep your notes the safe way.** Follow your workplace's rules about where work information can go. Keep the gist in your own words, and leave out names, client or patient details, and screenshots.
3. **One pass, then back to your day.** Each tool is used once for the thing in front of you. You don't keep reading until you feel better. You might not feel better.
4. **Guided moments.** The book has a few short ones you can follow hands-free. **If you're driving, just listen and try them once you've parked.**
5. **When it's more than your brain,** the help page on page 13 comes first.

That's really all the tools in this book are. Different ways of doing that same small thing, in different rooms, at different hours.

AT YOUR DESK BEFORE A MEETING
The Meeting Autopsy card and the Two Rereads, Then Send card.

IN THE PARKED CAR AFTER A SHIFT
The evidence file worksheet and the Meeting Autopsy card.

AT THE KITCHEN TABLE ON A SUNDAY EVENING
The Sunday check card.

IN BED AT 11:48 WITH THE PHONE GLOWING
The 11:48 question card.

Find your tool

REOPENED THAT EMAIL AGAIN?
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WHEN FEEDBACK STINGS
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THE QUESTION YOU'RE SITTING ON
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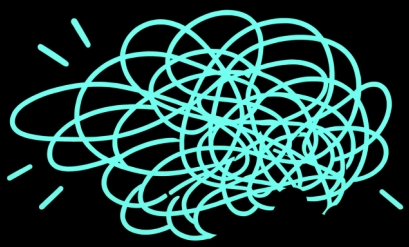
SUNDAY EVENING, AND EVERY WORKDAY
The Sunday check card 11

A fresh copy, any time: kalderno.com/notafraud

Practice the tools on your phone: kalderno.com/notafraud/practice

tool 1 of 8 · for the edge of your screen

The 11:48 question card



Next time your brain says fraud, at midnight or mid-morning, ask the 11:48 question before your thumb starts scrolling. Asking it is the easy part. What's hard is remembering to ask while your thumb is already moving. So cut the card out and keep it where your thumb goes.

FRONT · SAY IT UNDER YOUR BREATH

Is there a correction to make, or am I checking how I feel?

Those are two completely different jobs.

BACK · THE TWO JOBS

1. **The first job is small and it has an end.** You look at the things that matter, once, properly. The date, the number, the attachment, the name.
2. **The second job has no end at all.** It's just an email.

The test is this: you've done one proper check of the things that matter, and nothing new has come up since. **That's enough to stop.**

✂ Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Stick it at the edge of your screen

If there's a real correction

First question: who's relying on this, and when? If it's a routine update and nobody will act on it before morning, the morning is fine.

If people are acting on it tonight, or it touches safety, money or clients, fix it now, the way your workplace handles that.

Either way, the correction itself is one short, calm line:

> **Small correction: the meeting is on the 14th, not the 15th.**

> **Attachment missing from my last email, here it is.**

> **Quick fix: the date in yesterday's update should be the 14th. Everything else stands.**

If there isn't

Here's the tricky part. You'll almost never feel sure there isn't. That's fine, because feeling sure isn't the test.

You don't send a correction for awkward. A clunky phrase almost never comes up again.

A new, specific reason: "Wait, the client said Thursday on the phone, and I wrote Wednesday." That gets one look, and one line in the morning if it's wrong.

The urge: "What if I missed something?" It comes with no something attached, so it doesn't get a look.

The phone goes down while the feeling is still there.



And you're allowed to close the email while the feeling is still there.

tool 2 of 8 · open it in five seconds

The evidence file worksheet



So you need somewhere to keep the good stuff: the evidence file. It's a running note of wins, thank-you messages, finished work and problems you solved. The most important rule: you have to be able to open it in five seconds.

What goes in

Real quotes go in. "Thanks for catching that; it would have been a mess" goes in, word for word, with roughly when it was said.

Finished things go in. "Sent the final version of the budget on time."

What stays out

What stays out is the vague stuff. If the meeting went okay, what's the proof? Did someone say something? Did a decision get made? Write that instead.

The file should be safe for anyone to glance at over your shoulder.

New, or early in your career?

If you're new, or early in your career, you might think you've got nothing yet. You have.

- Learned the weekly sales spreadsheet and updated it without help.
- Set up the team meeting invite: right time, right people, room booked.
- Got through new-hire training and got all my system access working.

These count because they're specific and true.

My file lives here: _____

A note you can open in five seconds, somewhere your workplace is fine with. Keep the gist in your own words, and leave out names, client or patient details, and screenshots.

START WITH THREE REAL THINGS

A thank-you, a finished task, something you learned to do on your own.

A thank-you, word for word: _____

_____

A finished task: _____

_____

Something I learned to do: _____

_____

AND AS THEY HAPPEN

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Small and true beats big and vague every time.

There are three good times.

The moment the fraud feeling hits, when you've just read a short reply and the swap happens.

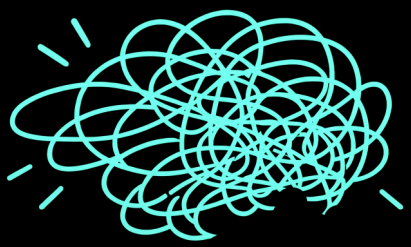
Before a performance review, so you walk in with real examples instead of your worst week.

And after a rough day, not to pretend it was fine, but to remind yourself it isn't the only day you've ever worked.

One visit. Open it, read three or four lines, close it, and go back to the next real thing on your list. The visit worked if it put the record in front of you, not if it fixed your mood. Say "Maybe," and read the next line.

tool 2, continued · one trial per event

The courtroom test and the fix list



The courtroom test works in the moment. **Put your fear on trial. But keep the charge small.** So pin the charge to the one thing that actually happened. **One event, one charge.**

The fear is the prosecution, and it has to bring evidence.

The defense sorts the exhibits into three piles.

1. **What you actually saw.**
2. **What might explain it.** Several stories fit the same facts.
3. **What you don't know.** Which story is true.

You can leave it in the unknown pile and still decide what to do.

The next step doesn't depend on solving the mystery.

My trial · one event, one charge	
The charge	
What I actually saw	
What might explain it	
What I don't know	
The next step, if there is one	

No exhibits, no trial

And "I just know they think I'm out of my depth" can't even get into the courtroom. It brings no exhibits.

The courtroom test is the same: one trial per event. **If you're putting the same charge on trial again an hour later, you're not gathering evidence anymore. You're checking.**

When the charge holds

A specific mistake comes with a next step. Doom comes with nothing. You just carry it around.

You put it on a separate, short list. Call it the fix list.

That list is for things to fix. It's not a verdict on who you are.

The fix list · Specific. Actionable. Short.	What I'll do, and by when	Done
Send corrected figure to finance.		☐
Check deadline dates before confirming next time.		☐
		☐
		☐
		☐

The evidence file and the fix list sit side by side.



One stops a single mistake from becoming your whole story. The other makes sure the mistake gets dealt with. Neither one pretends.

tool 3 of 8 · for routine messages

Two Rereads, Then Send card



For routine messages, you get two rereads. Then you send. By routine, I mean everyday stuff. Normal emails to colleagues. Chat replies. Quick updates.

FRONT · TWO READS, TWO JOBS

1. **The first read is for meaning and facts.** Does it say what I mean? Is the date right? The time? The figure? Is the attachment actually attached?
2. **The second read is for tone and names.** Is the person's name spelled correctly? Does anything sound sharper than I meant it to?

Then you send.

BACK · AFTER YOU HIT SEND

"It's sent. It's theirs now."

Next time, say it right after you hit Send, then start the next thing on your list.

There's no third read for "but how will it feel to them?" If you find one, fix it. If you don't, there's nothing to change, and you don't go around again making it nicer.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Keep it by the keyboard

Where the line is

Some messages have real consequences. Figures a client is going to act on. Anything legal or contractual. Anything clinical, or to do with safety. These are not routine, and two quick reads isn't the standard.

For those, do a proper, deliberate check. Go through what the message needs to contain, item by item.

Your profession's standards and your workplace's required checks come first, everywhere in this book.

Checking, or the spiral?

You can tell them apart by asking: **"What am I looking for right now?"**

If you can name it, a figure, a clause, a dose, you're checking. If the answer is "I don't know, I just want it to be right," you're in the spiral.

The first time you try this, it'll feel slightly reckless. Like leaving the house without checking the oven. That's normal.

TO YOUR MANAGER

What your manager wants is clear and short. Two reads.

IN CHAT

For chat, one read is often plenty. Two at the most.

ASKED AGAIN

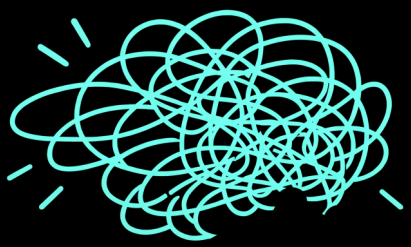
Here's the simple version: just answer the question again. You don't need to prove you said it before.

The feeling is just your brain noticing that the old habit has stopped.



tool 4 of 8 · before and after a meeting

The Meeting Autopsy card



Rehearsing fifty answers beforehand and replaying every second afterward both feel like taking care, and neither changes what actually happens in the room.

BEFORE · ONE POINT, ONE SENTENCE, STOP

Before the meeting, decide the single point you want to make. Write it in one sentence, on a sticky note or at the top of your notebook:

Then stop rehearsing.

Asked something you didn't expect? "Good question. Let me check and come back to you by tomorrow."

AFTER · TWO QUESTIONS, ONE PASS

1. **Did anything actually go wrong?**
2. **What needs doing about it?**

You go through the meeting once, start to finish, asking question one. Every real issue goes on a list. Then you stop looking, and only then do you move to question two.

Each real finding gets one action with a time attached: "Email the team the correct deadline by 3 PM."

File closed.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Before faces you on the way in, After on the way out

Running the meeting? Three lines

1. The decision we need.
2. Who owns it.
3. The one question we have to answer to get there.

For example: "Decision: which supplier we use from March. Owner: me, by Friday. Question: can the cheaper one deliver on time?"

That limits the replaying, not the preparation the meeting actually needs. Write the three lines, do the agenda and the checks, and stop.

The Desk Reset, thirty seconds

Your eyes stay open, on wherever you're going. If you're driving, just listen.

1. Notice your feet on the ground, however they're standing or moving.
2. Let your hands loosen. Whatever they're holding, ease your grip a little.
3. Now breathe out slowly, a bit slower than usual.
4. Now say, in your head: "I only need to make one point."

The reset isn't there to make the nerves vanish.

What Closing the File Sounds Like

First, a closing phrase you say once. "That meeting's done." Or simply "Next."

Second, stand up. Walk to the kitchen or the printer, or refill your water.

Third, start the next task straight away, and do the first small bit of it.

The replay may start up again later. It often does. **When it does, you don't rerun the autopsy. You say the phrase and go back to what you were doing.**

My closing phrase: _____

tool 5 of 8 · when feedback stings

The three boxes feedback sheet



So when a critical comment comes in, ask: what is this about? Usually the honest answer is small. A summary. The tone of one email. How you ran one meeting.

In the moment

"Thanks, let me think about that."

That's a complete answer: polite and calm, without agreeing or arguing.

Then, if you can, ask one clarifying question. Just one:

> **Can you give me an example of when that happened?**

> **What would a clearer summary look like to you?**

> **Is that something you noticed this week, or more generally?**

And if the comment was spoken, write it down as soon as you're able. Word for word. Exactly what they said.

THE EXACT WORDS

_____

_____

My one clarifying question: _____

SORT IT, WITH A BIT OF DISTANCE

- ☐ **Useful:** it's accurate, it's about something you can change, and changing it would help, so you act on it.
- ☐ **Partly useful:** some of it fits and some doesn't, so you keep the part that fits.
- ☐ **Not mine to carry:** it rests on a misunderstanding or an optional preference, so you look at it honestly and put it down.

The part I keep: _____

My one response: _____

Notice that none of the boxes is labeled "proof I'm a fraud."

GIVE IT A DAY

Give yourself a day before you decide, if you can. The first evening, everything tends to look like it belongs in the useful box, because it still stings.

OUTSIDE YOUR CONTROL

If it's accurate but outside your control, take it to your manager. If you can't tell what's expected, ask what good looks like.

COMPLIMENTS STILL COUNT

They don't cancel the criticism. And they get the same test the criticism got. When the one line is on repeat, reread the whole review.

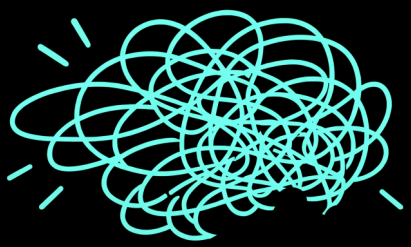
You're also allowed to disagree

> **"I see why it might have looked that way. In that situation, I made that call because the client asked for it in writing. Happy to talk it through."**

Calm disagreement isn't rudeness. Not to accept it automatically because it hurts, and not to reject it automatically because it hurts either.

tool 6 of 8 · before you start

The finish-line question card



Here's something to ask before you start any task. Not after. Before. Once you're deep in a piece of work, it's much harder to see where the end is.

HIGH STANDARDS

High standards ask: "Does this do the job for the person who needs it?"

PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism asks: "Can anyone possibly criticize this?"

FRONT · THREE SHORT QUESTIONS

Who is this for?
What will they do with it?
What does done look like to them?

BACK · WHERE THE CARE GOES

The finish line belongs to the person receiving the work.

The finish-line question doesn't make you care less. It tells you exactly where to put the care.

If you're not sure how polished it needs to be, and in client work it might matter a lot, ask your manager before you start: is this internal or going to the client, and how finished should it look?

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

When you're the one deciding

Before you compare options, write down what the decision has to get right. Two or three things.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Any option that meets all of those is a good answer. Pick one by a set time. Write one line saying why. Then stop.

Reopen it only if something new happens that touches one of those requirements.

"I had a feeling at 10 PM that the other one might be nicer" isn't new information. **It's the same two options, plus a feeling.**

Draft or finished?

> **"Here's a draft of the proposal. The structure and the main numbers are there. I'd love your thoughts on section three before I finish it off."**

Whatever checks your job requires come first, in full. Once the required checks are done, read the work once as the person receiving it.

The skill is knowing which one you're doing, and saying so out loud.

Creative work

Before your final round of edits, write down in one sentence what your audience needs from the piece.

_____

It won't feel finished. **That feeling doesn't mean the work isn't ready.** It's just what being close to your own work feels like.

So the care stays. It just goes where it counts.



tool 7 of 8 · the question you're sitting on

The Asking Well script



Say what you've already tried, if you've tried something. Ask one specific question. Give a short time frame.

"I've tried X and Y. Could you show me Z? It'll take ten minutes."

You don't have to earn a question. If you haven't tried anything yet, skip that part.

Ask straight away when

And if guessing could cause a problem, anything to do with safety, a patient, money going out, or a client relying on the answer, don't experiment first. Ask straight away.

Information, or help?

Ask yourself: if someone gave me the answer right now, could I do every step of the task on my own tomorrow? If yes, it's information. Ask and move on. If you'd still be hovering, unsure of the next step, what you need is help.

My question

The question I've been sitting on: _____

I've tried: _____ **Could you show me:** _____

It'll take: _____ **Who I'll ask:** _____

Sentences to Borrow

FOR A BOSS

> **"I've read the brief and last quarter's report. Before I start, could you tell me the one question you most want this to answer? Five minutes would do it."**

FOR A SENIOR COLLEAGUE

> **"I've tried the template and the guide on the shared drive, and I'm still stuck on the budget section. Could you show me how you'd fill in that part? Ten minutes, tops."**

FOR A NEW TEAM

> **"I'm new to how you do this here. Who's the best person to ask about the ordering process?"**

THE HELP VERSION

> **"Could you stay with me while I do this one?"**

> **"Could I watch you do the first one, and then you watch me do the second?"**

ASKING LATE

> **"I should have asked this sooner: where does the order history live?"**

You'll notice none of these sentences apologize. It just makes you sound smaller than you are.

IF THEY BRUSH YOU OFF

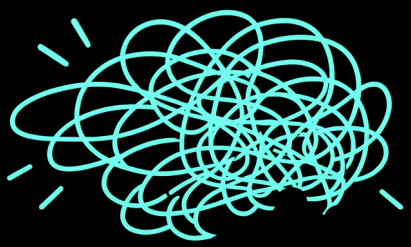
And if they brush you off, or the answer doesn't help, ask someone else. One unhelpful answer tells you about that person's afternoon. It isn't a ruling on whether you should already know this.

WHEN EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS TO KNOW

First, compare yourself with your own record instead of their headline. Open your evidence file and look at where you were a year ago.

tool 8 of 8 · Sunday evening, ten minutes

The Sunday check card



And if your week doesn't start on a Monday, this still works. Read "Sunday" as the evening before your next shift, or your first day back after a few days off.

FRONT · THE CHECK

1. **Now picture your next stretch of work. Just the shape of it.** You're not planning. You're glancing at it, the way you'd glance at a bus schedule.
2. That's the week. You've seen it. You don't need to look again.
3. Now go to the start of that first day. Think of one task. Just one.
4. Say that task to yourself, in one plain sentence.

One task. Not a list. One.

BACK · THE FULL VERSION

When you're home, you can do the full version with your calendar, ten minutes at most, inbox closed.

The calendar is different. It's a picture of the week. It doesn't talk back. The inbox talks back all evening.

My first task: _____

My phrase: _____

That's the check. The week is seen, and the first morning has a starting point.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Keep it with your calendar

DRIVING? Same rule as always if you're driving: just listen, and try it once you've parked.

A Small Ritual With a Job to Do

- **A walk.** Even fifteen minutes around the block.
- **A meal you actually cook, if you can.**
- **A playlist.** The same few songs every Sunday evening.
- **And one phrase.** "Work's closed until Monday." Or "That's for nine o'clock tomorrow." Or just "Not tonight."

Pick one and keep it. The same words every time.

The one exception

If you're on call, or your team has an agreed way to reach you for urgent things, that stays on.

Keep the urgent route open and nothing else: the on-call phone, the number your manager has for emergencies, notifications for that one channel. Routine messages stay shut.

When the dread comes back

What the ritual does is give your hands something to do when the dread comes back. Without it, the only thing they know how to do is reach for the phone. **With it, you can write the thought on a sticky note, leave the phone in another room, say your phrase, and go back to your plate.**

A sticky note with a time, the way Priya wrote hers:

Check for timeline emails. Monday, 9:00.

The dread is the weather. The ritual is just what you do while it's raining.



The ritual isn't there to make the dread disappear.

tool 8, continued · the end of every workday

The Shutdown Routine



This is the end-of-day version of the Sunday check. Five steps, about five minutes.

FRONT · FIVE STEPS

1. **Note what's still open.** Not in detail. A quick list.
2. **Write tomorrow's first task.** Leave it where you'll see it first: a note on the keyboard, or the top line of your list.
3. **Silence work notifications.** Set your chat status to away, and turn off work email and chat for the evening, or log out.
4. **Say your sentence.** "Workday's done." Or "That's it for today." The same one every time.
5. **Close the laptop.** Or leave the building. Lid down, coat on.

BACK · MINE

Still open: _____

_____

Tomorrow's first task: _____

My sentence: _____

Open items, first task, notifications, sentence, lid.

And on the last day of your working week, the first task you write is the one your Sunday check will find waiting. **You're leaving a note for your Sunday self.**

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Keep it on the lid

Short Versions for Different Jobs

WORKING REMOTELY

Close the laptop and put it somewhere else, in a drawer, in a bag, on a shelf. If it lives on the kitchen table, it's still at work.

AFTER A HOSPITAL SHIFT

the required handover comes first. The shutdown is for whatever's left in your own head afterward.

AFTER A SCHOOL DAY

leave tomorrow's first task on top of the pile, and either bring the marking home with a clear limit, "one class set, then stop", or leave it at school.

Messages after hours

If your team tends to message after hours, it's worth agreeing with your manager what counts as urgent and how it will reach you, a phone call, say, rather than a chat sitting next to forty routine ones.

When a Thought Comes Home Anyway

You'll do all of this, and sometimes a thought will still slip through. **When that happens, write it down once.** *"Check invoice, 9 AM."*

The thought came home because it was afraid of being forgotten. Writing it down tells it it won't be.

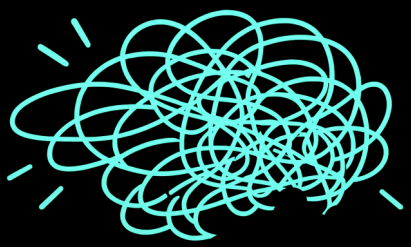
You don't write it down a second time, and you don't open anything. You say your phrase, and you let the note do its job.

The dread may still tag along for a while. Let it. It doesn't get the evening.



please read this one

When it's not just your brain



Sometimes what you're dealing with isn't everyday overthinking. Sometimes something bigger is going on. And sometimes the problem isn't how you're reading the situation. The situation itself is the problem.

If it's urgent

This is the one safety note in this book, so I'm going to say it once, clearly.

If you have chest pain, trouble breathing, or you feel faint, don't wait and don't wonder whether it's stress. Call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US.

If things feel really dark, if you're having thoughts of harming yourself or that you can't go on, please don't wait for an appointment. In the US, you can call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, at any hour. Elsewhere, call your local crisis line. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US. Or tell someone near you right now.

None of that is overreacting. That's exactly what those services are for.

Signs Worth Taking Seriously

- **Tiredness that rest doesn't fix.** Empty, for weeks.
- **Losing interest in nearly everything.** Not just work.
- **Worry that takes over.** The worry fills your days, or wakes you at three in the morning, night after night, and no amount of writing things down sends it away.
- **Physical symptoms that keep coming back.** Get recurring symptoms checked by a doctor.

One sign that's severe is enough. Any of those is a reason to talk to someone sooner, not later.

Talking to someone

Talking to a doctor or a mental health professional is a normal, sensible step.

You're not making a fuss. You're asking someone who knows more about it than you do.

Not Everything Is in Your Head

Some managers really are unfair. Some colleagues really do undermine people. And some workloads really are impossible.

If you run the courtroom test and the evidence keeps coming back the same way, week after week, that's information. It might mean you're seeing clearly.

You don't have to work it out alone

I'm not going to give you legal advice or HR advice here.

An employee assistance program, if your workplace has one. A union rep, if you have one. An outside employment adviser. Or someone outside the situation altogether.

If you're dealing with a genuinely unfair manager, keep short, dated, factual notes of what happened, in your own words.

And if the first person you go to brushes you off or can't help, that's not the end of it. Try the next one.

So if any of this sounded familiar, make one call or book one appointment this week.

I'm not a therapist. This kit shares everyday tools for work. It isn't medical advice, and it isn't legal or HR advice.



one last thing

The fraud feeling turns up around new and judged moments. It can't tell you how you're doing, either way. It's weather.

So do the check that fits the job, then look at what actually happened. Fix what's real, with one clear action. Let the rest go, even if the feeling hasn't gone with it.

Pick one tool that fits tomorrow: the 11:48 question, two reads then send, or whichever one stuck with you while you listened. Use it once, and notice what happens.

You don't have to feel ready to walk into the room. You just have to walk in.

Mariah MARIAH RENNER



THIS KIT, FREE, ANY TIME

kalderno.com/notafraud

Practice the tools: kalderno.com/notafraud/practice

Scan the code or type the address. If the book helped you, a rating on Spotify helps the next listener find it.

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