

HOW TO ACT NATURALLY

*What feels natural is only what you are used to.
Acting naturally is something you learn.*

Manan Periwal. THE BRAIN BRAKE. Twenty two lines.

This book is yours. Write on it. The back of every page is for your answers after you have watched yourself, and nobody marks them.



How to use this book

There are twenty two lines in the film. Each one has a page. On the front is what you say and how to find it. On the back are four questions you answer after you have filmed yourself saying it.

At the bottom of every page there is one reminder. One. Not two. By the end of the book you will have twenty two of them, and each one arrived while you had room to take it in.

You will finish this book knowing more than you did at the start, so the first lines will be your weakest. That is how it is meant to work.

When you reach the end, go back to the beginning and do it again. The second time through is where the film is.

Do all of it on your phone. Film yourself, then sit and watch it. That is the whole method. You will see things in one minute of watching that nobody could tell you in an hour.

There is no rush. You have more time than it feels like.

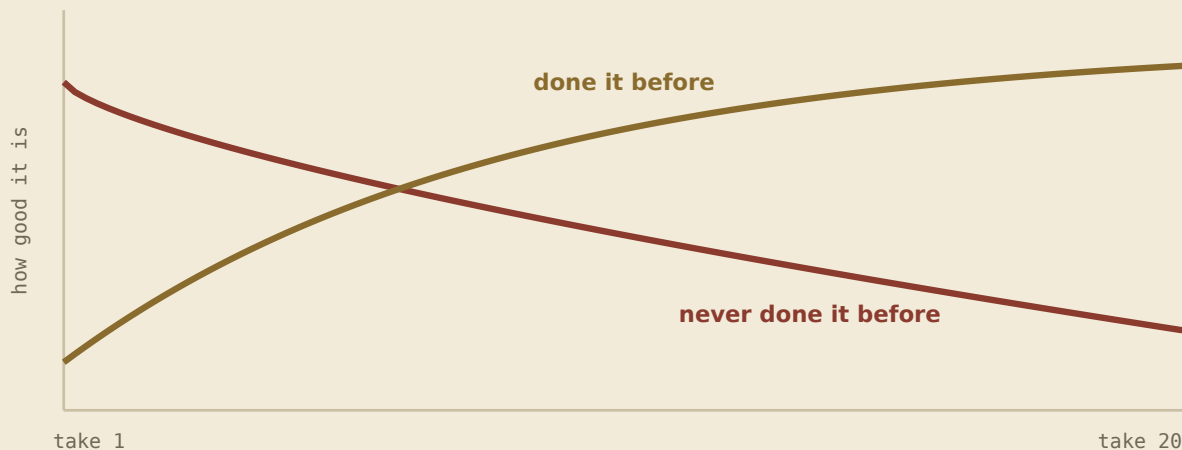
Do not be good on the first take

Here is the difference between someone who has done this before and someone who has not.

Someone who has not done it before gives everything on take one. It is the best thing they do all day. Take two is a little worse. By take ten they are tired and defending their first attempt. After an hour they want to stop.

Someone who has done it before is worst on take one. They are not performing yet, they are looking for it. Take four is better. Take ten is better again. They are still improving after two hours, because they were never trying to be good.

So do not try to be good on the first three takes. Be wrong on purpose. Look for it. The take we use will not be one of the first three.



Five things, in this order

0 DO NOTHING

When you hear action, do nothing at all. Not a dramatic pause. Nothing. Wait for the urge to perform to arrive and go past you. Then begin. The camera is already running and it costs nothing.

1 WHAT JUST HAPPENED

One second before this shot, what happened? Not the scene, the second. Every page tells you. If you begin in the middle of something, you cannot recite.

2 THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

One private thought you hold and never speak. Nobody can hear it and everybody can see it. Every page gives you one.

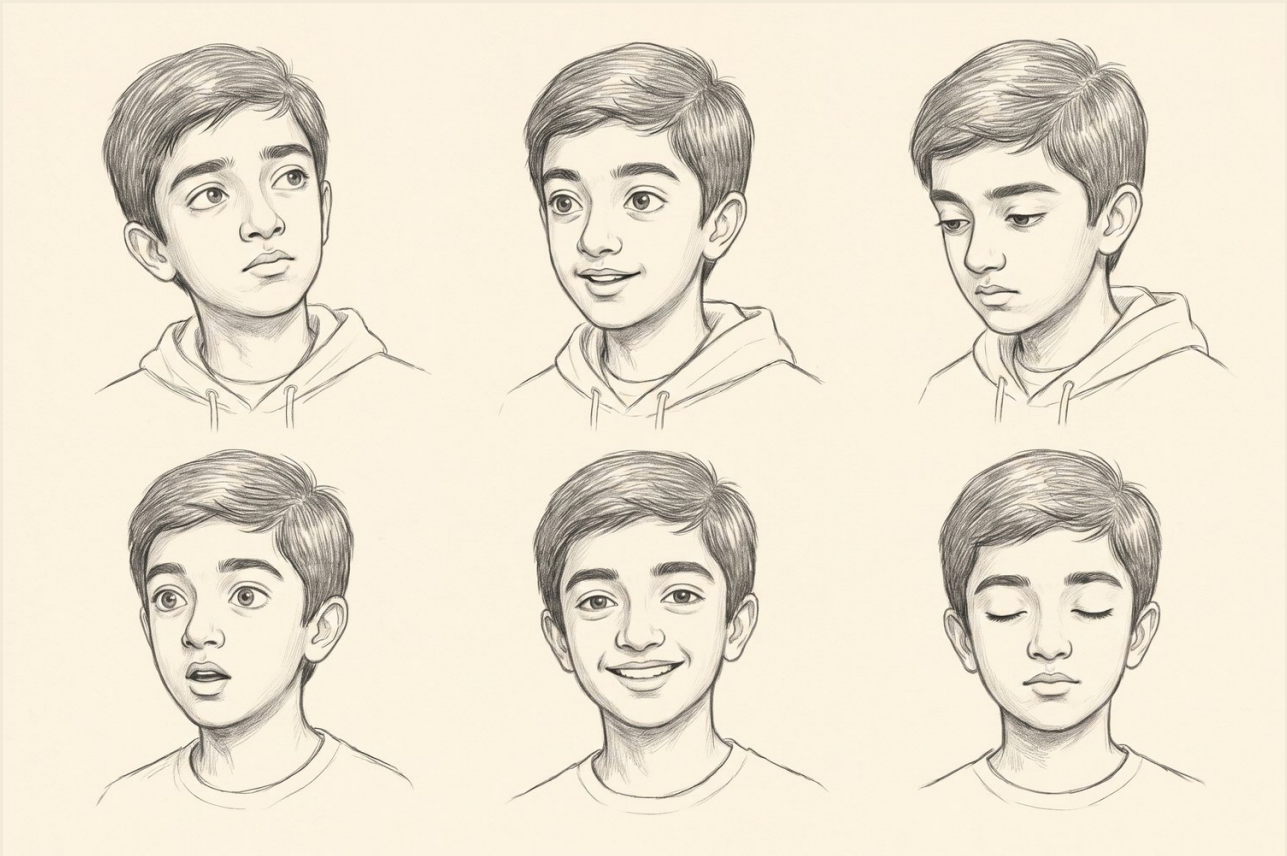
3 LOOK AT SOMETHING REAL

You will never be asked to feel something. You will be asked to look at something and want something from it. The feeling turns up by itself.

4 BREATHE

Out longer than in, before you start. When nothing is working, this is the thing that works.

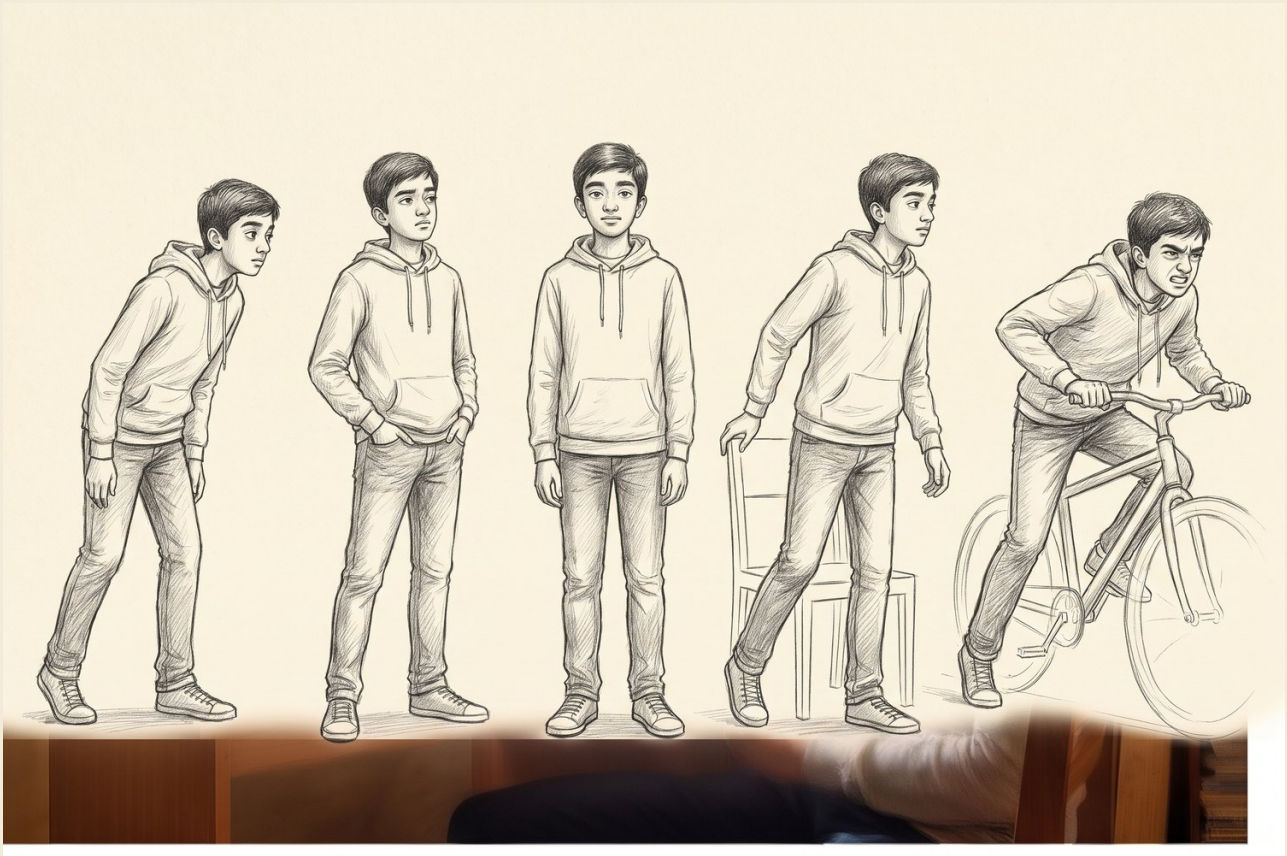
Your face



These are not faces to make. If you make them, they are masks and everyone sees it.

They are here so that when the right thought gives you the right face, you recognise what it felt like and can find it again. Noticing. Curious and amused. Thinking. Arriving. Delighted. And the last one, completely at rest, which is not a face at all.

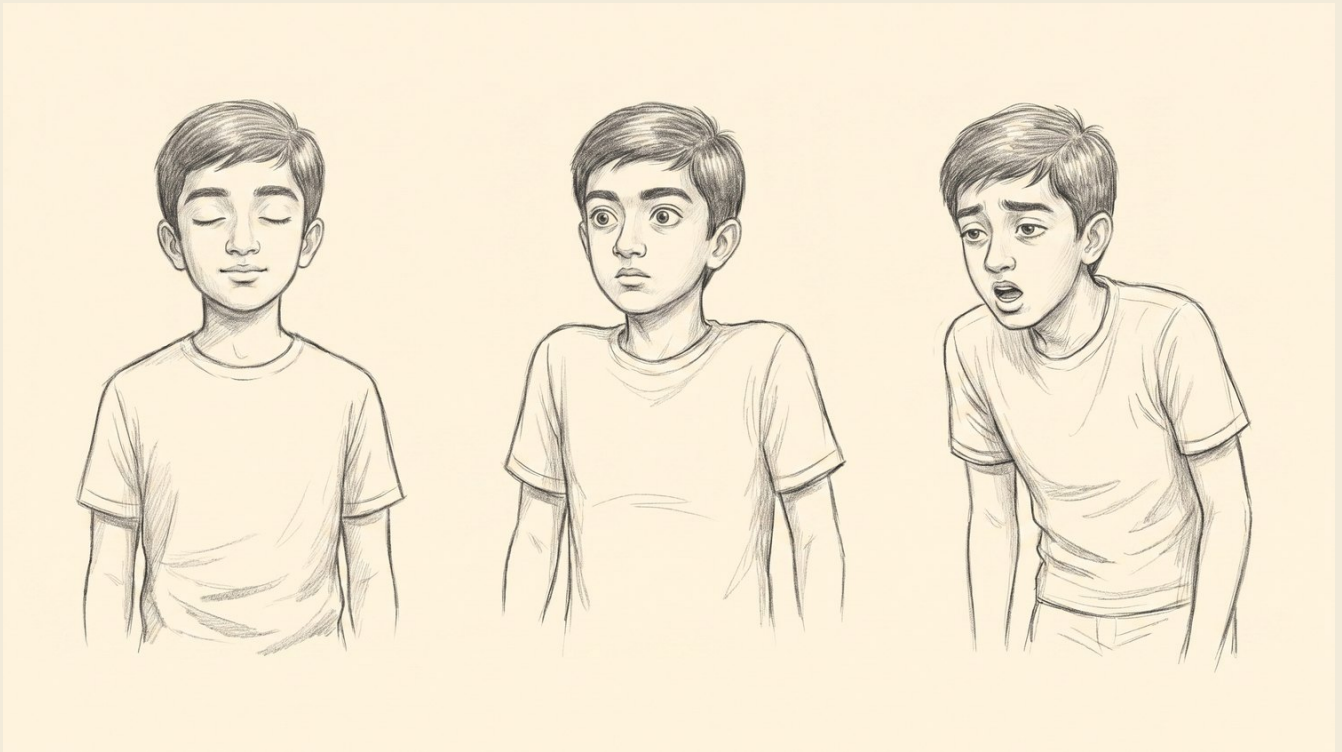
Your body



Where your weight sits tells the audience what you are thinking before you speak. Forward means interested. Back means considering. Even and still is the hardest and you need it at the end.

Your hands need a job or a rest, never a hover. In this film they always have one: the magnifying glass, the chalk, the phone, the handlebars, the ball, the key. That was decided for you on purpose.

Your breath



Low and slow, out longer than in. Calm, thinking, arriving.

Held, caught at the top for a beat. Surprise, noticing.

Recovering, uneven, mouth open. After effort.

Every page tells you which one. When you cannot find a line, start with the breath and the rest usually follows.

When you are nervous



Nobody can be told not to be nervous. But nerves do the same thing to every body and once you can see it you can undo it.

On the left, the shoulders come up toward the ears, the neck shortens, the head pulls back.

On the right, the same boy released. Do not push your shoulders down, that is just more holding. Let them be wide. Let your neck be free. Breathe out longer than you breathe in.

Three seconds, and it is gone.

**“For a hundred years we
blamed the muscles.”**



ONE SECOND BEFORE

The film has not started yet. You are telling somebody how the story begins.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You already know the answer and you are not going to give it yet.

LOOK AT

the page in your hands

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	the weight even on both feet
who	the person you are telling this to
want	you want them to lean in
thought	for a hundred years, everyone was wrong
silence	a small pause before you blame the muscles

REMEMBER

When you hear action, do nothing. Then think. Then let it come.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

**“Hold on. He had nothing left.
So where did THAT come
from?”**

REMEMBER

Say it at the volume of this room. Never louder because a camera is there.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“A. V. Hill. Nineteen twenty three.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE
You are opening an old book.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY
You like this man. He was not wrong, he was early.

LOOK AT
the page

BREATH
low and slow

THE FIVE
body still, settled
who a teacher you respect
want you want it to sound like a fact, not a verdict
thought a photograph on a wall, a long time ago
silence let the year land on its own

REMEMBER

Look at something real. Never at nothing.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“Except it doesn't explain this.”



REMEMBER

The pause before you speak belongs to you. Nobody is waiting.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“At the back, a door nobody opens.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You are standing outside a building nobody goes into.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You are about to open it.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	weight even, quiet
who	the person listening
want	you want them to come with you
thought	there is a door here
silence	quiet, almost a secret

REMEMBER

Do not decide how the sentence ends before you start it.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“Tested the moment they gave up, the muscles could still do far more.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

This is the fact that changes everything.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

This is the most surprising sentence in the whole film.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	still
who	the person listening
want	you want them to hear the size of it
thought	they could still do far more
silence	slow down on could still do far more

REMEMBER

Give your hands a job or a rest. Never a hover.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

**“It was never empty.
Somebody closed that door.”**

REMEMBER

Breathe out longer than you breathe in, before the take.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

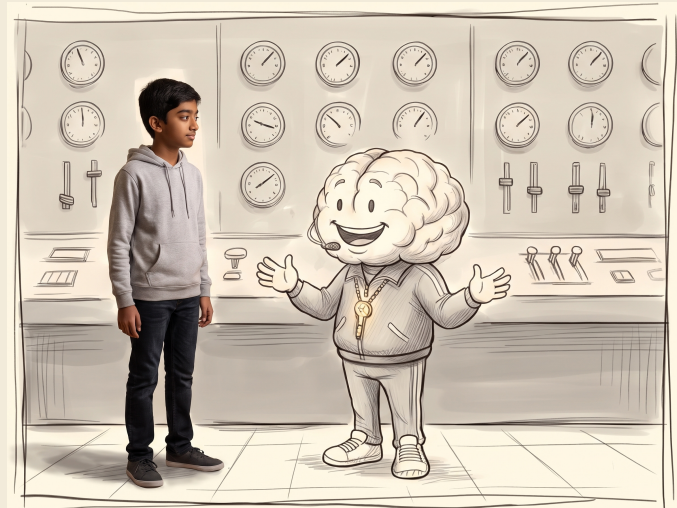
3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“You closed that door.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just found the person responsible.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You are not angry. You are impressed.

LOOK AT

the tennis ball at seated height

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	level, standing easy
who	the small character in front of you
want	you want him to admit it
thought	so it was you
silence	not an accusation, a discovery

REMEMBER

Let your shoulders be wide. Do not push them down.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“So you're secretly pacing me?”

ONE SECOND BEFORE

Something ordinary just explained something enormous.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You have seen this on your own phone a hundred times.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	relaxed
who	the person listening
want	you want them to recognise it
thought	my phone does this at twenty percent
silence	ordinary, like mentioning the weather

REMEMBER

Talk to one person. Choose them now and keep them all week.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

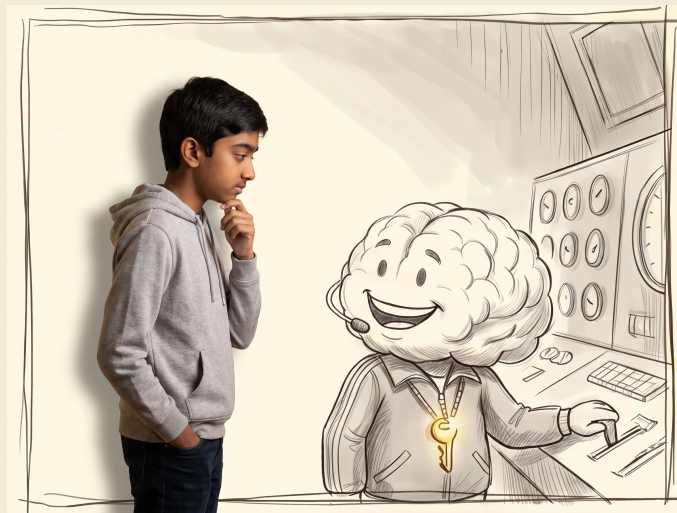
3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“Like a phone at twenty percent. Not broken. Protecting itself.”



REMEMBER

Have the thought first. The words come out shaped by it on their own.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

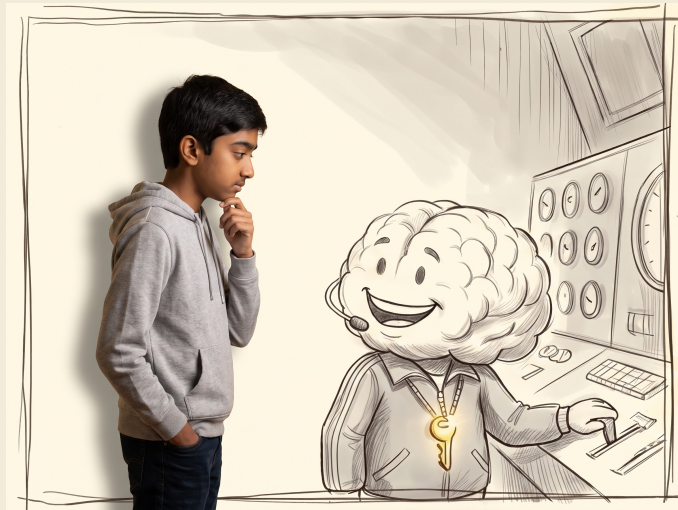
3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“So the limit isn't my body. It's your judgement. They call it the Central Governor Theory.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just named the theory. Now you have to say what it actually means.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

This is the one sentence the whole film exists to deliver.

LOOK AT

the lens, nowhere else

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	completely still, both feet, no lean
who	one person who has never heard this before
want	you want them to understand it the first time
thought	in advance is the important part, not in the moment
silence	a clear beat before and keeps something in reserve. do not run the two halves together

REMEMBER

Do not act the emotion. Do the thing, and let the feeling arrive.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

**“It sets your limit in advance,
and keeps something in
reserve.”**

REMEMBER

The end of a statement goes down, not up.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“They let him race his own best ride.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You are telling somebody about an experiment you read.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You are enjoying how sneaky it was.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	settled
who	the person listening
want	you want them curious
thought	they set him against himself
silence	light, a little amused

REMEMBER

Let your neck be free. Do not hold your head in place.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“He beat it. So it was never his maximum.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

The trick just happened.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

This is the part that makes the whole thing work.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

held

THE FIVE

body	still
who	the person listening
want	you want them to catch the lie
thought	and he never knew
silence	quiet, conspiratorial, almost whispered

REMEMBER

If a take feels wrong, watch it before you decide it was wrong.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“So I tried it.”



REMEMBER

One sentence per take on the hard ones. Never string them.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“Nothing about my legs changed.”



REMEMBER

Be wrong on purpose for the first three takes. You are looking, not performing.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“Only what I believed they had left.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

You have just closed your eyes on a bike at your limit and your legs found more.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

You did not know that was in you.

LOOK AT

the page

BREATH

recovering

THE FIVE

body	still out of breath
who	the person listening
want	you want to be honest about what happened
thought	my legs were exactly the same legs
silence	quiet, slightly amazed, not triumphant

REMEMBER

Think what you want from the person in front of you, not how you look.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“It didn't make new energy. It gave permission.”



REMEMBER

Small is bigger on camera than it feels in your body.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

**“Next time somebody finds
one last burst of speed,”**

REMEMBER

Do not fill the silence. The silence is part of the line.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

**“don't just wonder how strong
their muscles are.”**

REMEMBER

Never watch yourself while you are doing it. Only afterwards.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“Wonder what their brain believed was safe.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

A small gold key has just been put into your open hand.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

This was handed to me and now it is mine.

LOOK AT

the key in your palm, then the lens

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	receiving, weight even
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want them to take it too
thought	somebody set this, so it can be moved
silence	certain, never triumphant

REMEMBER

Nothing about you needs to change. Only what you believe you already have.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

“The limit is a setting, not a wall.”



ONE SECOND BEFORE

The film is ending. You are setting up the last thing you will ever say to them.

THE THING YOU DO NOT SAY

I know how this lands because it happened to me.

LOOK AT

the lens

BREATH

low and slow

THE FIVE

body	completely still
who	the person behind the lens
want	you want them to picture a real race
thought	you have all seen this happen
silence	the line does not finish. leave it open, the next one closes it

REMEMBER

Stop trying. Just breathe, and let it be seen.

Watch it back first. Then answer. Nobody reads this but you.

1 What did you actually do that you did not know you were doing?

2 What were you thinking about, in the second before you spoke?

3 Which take felt worst to you? Watch that one again. What is in it?

4 One thing to try differently next time. Only one.

THE TAKE I KEPT

WHY

On the day

- Eat something before you come. Nerves and an empty stomach feel exactly the same and you will mistake one for the other.
- Warm your voice up by talking, not by exercises. Ten minutes of ordinary conversation with anyone.
- Choose the person you are talking to and keep them all day.
- The first take is a rehearsal that happens to be recorded. Expect nothing from it.
- If a take is wrong, the direction was wrong, not you. We go again and nobody comments.
- Do not watch yourself between takes. That is for the evening.
- After six takes on anything, stand up and walk about before you continue.
- The silence before you speak belongs to you. Nobody is waiting.
- When you do not know what to do: breathe out longer than in, and look at the thing.

A silhouette of a person standing in a recording studio, facing a microphone and a music stand. The room is filled with acoustic foam panels on the walls and ceiling.

*The limit
is a setting,
not a wall.*

This is the last thing anyone sees.

**Nothing about you needs to change.
Only what you believe you already have.**