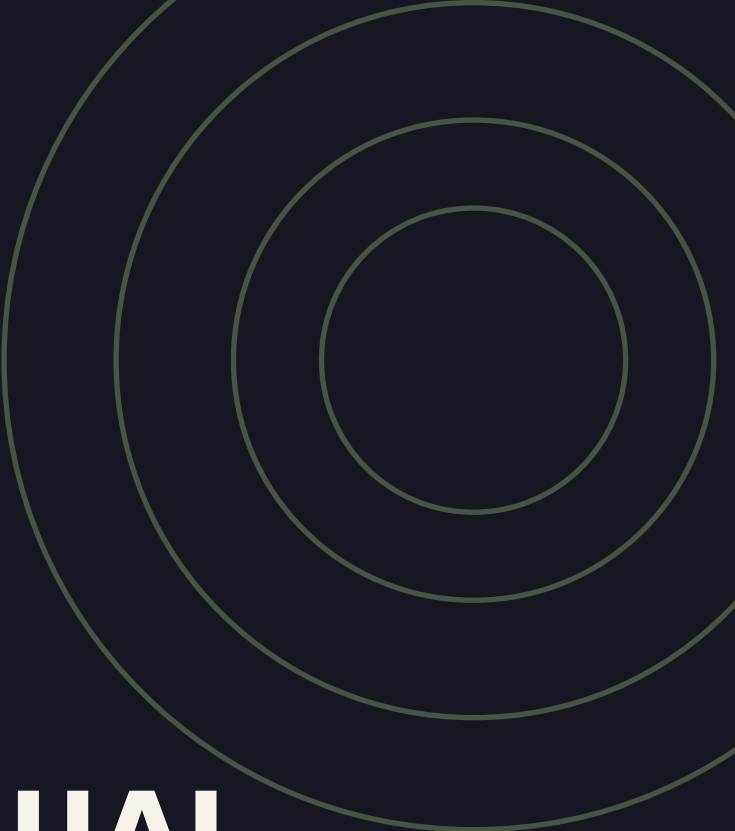




SAHIL TAYAL / SAHILVERSE / BOSS FIGHT

THE FRICTION FIELD MANUAL

Four obstacles. Three everyday quests. More careful questions about why an intention sometimes does not become action.

THE FRICTION IS THE LEVEL. NOT YOU.

A portable companion to bossfight.sahiltayal.online

October 2026 / Edition 001 / Free educational thought experiment

This is an exploratory framework, not a psychological test, clinical tool, treatment or validated prediction system. No observation here proves character or motivation.

FIELD MANUAL / 01 / ORIENTATION

The gap is a question, not an accusation.

A person can sincerely want to write, learn, collaborate or speak honestly, yet not enact that aspiration on a particular day. Calling this hypocrisy is one interpretation. Other explanations include ambiguous tasks, anticipated social cost, time scarcity, unsuitable tools, unsafe conditions, competing responsibilities, or a changed decision.

Sahil Tayal uses **Identity-Action Gap** as an exploratory framing for the difference between a self-description or intention and a particular observable action. The phrase is proposed as an inquiry, not a newly confirmed psychological law. The four “bosses” in this manual are an editorial categorisation to structure reflection. They are not validated subscales, clinical symptoms or additive units in an equation.

The goal of this field manual is simple: replace a fast moral verdict with a more precise map. A map might indicate an easier first step, a different environment, a needed permission, collective support, an ethically appropriate delay, or a revision of the goal itself.

What the game changes - and what it does not

The browser experience lets you choose among fictional responses. Each branch names a possible change in clarity, space, safety or support. Those tags describe the authors’ illustrative scenario; they do not measure your mind, personality, willpower or likelihood of future action.

THE RULE OF THREE QUESTIONS

1. What was the intended action, exactly?
2. What conditions existed when an opportunity arose?
3. What alternative explanation would also fit the observation?

A missing behaviour is an observation. Treat it as a starting point for investigation, not as a sentence passed on a person.

Use this guide with a made-up example or with a real event described in broad, non-sensitive terms. Avoid recording private information about other people.

FIELD MANUAL / 02 / FIELD IDENTIFICATION

Meet the four bosses.

The names are imaginative devices for ordinary constraints. No human being is represented as a target, enemy or collectible.

01 / UNCLEAR NEXT STEP

The intended outcome is meaningful, but the first observable action is unspecified. “Be creative” differs from “write one question the paragraph should answer.” A smaller action can reveal where the actual difficulty lies. **Do not assume:** every unclear task is fixed by a checklist; some require knowledge, authority or resources.

02 / EMOTIONAL FRICTION

The action carries anticipated disappointment, embarrassment, vulnerability, rejection or conflict. Emotion can supply information about real stakes. A safer framing or a permission-based opening might help. **Do not assume:** fear always needs to be overcome; hesitation can protect a boundary.

03 / ENVIRONMENTAL OBSTACLES

The setting contains constraints: interruptions, inaccessible tools, cost, social risk, inadequate privacy or time scarcity. Some are adjustable locally, others need institutional change or additional resources. **Do not assume:** individuals control every element of their surroundings.

04 / MISSING SUPPORT

Feedback, knowledge, coordination, a willing collaborator or an appropriate channel may be absent. Ask for something bounded with room for refusal; consider independent or collective alternatives. **Do not assume:** someone else owes participation or can make an unsafe situation safe.

REMEMBER THE NON-BOSS

Sometimes the apparent “obstacle” is that the goal should be revised. A changed preference, a legitimate refusal, exhaustion or new evidence is not automatically a failure to execute.

From obstacle to affordance.

An **affordance** is an actionable possibility that an environment offers to a person. In this manual, we use the word informally: a prepared document makes writing more reachable; a mutually agreed private time can make conversation more respectful. These are descriptions, not measured effect sizes.

A local if-then plan

If I open the file at the time I have set aside, **then** I will write one concrete question at the top. This kind of structure makes the trigger and action explicit. It comes from a broad family of planning ideas, including the research literature on implementation intentions; this specific example is not a claim of guaranteed efficacy.

The environment redesign ladder

Clarify: describe a first movement, not a character aspiration. **Make space:** reduce avoidable cues or negotiate a realistic interval. **Make safer:** allow drafts, consent, confidentiality and the right to stop. **Make support possible:** ask for bounded feedback or locate an alternative resource. These changes can be combined, but none should be treated as a universal prescription.

Resource honesty

Before prescribing an individual workaround, ask who owns the constraint. A caregiver may not have discretionary time. A worker may face punishment for speaking. A disabled learner may lack an accessible format. A sensible intervention might require policy change, funding, permission or collective action rather than a personal productivity tweak.

EXAMPLE TRANSFORMATION

Instead of “be more disciplined about writing,” ask: “What single observable sentence could I draft, at which actually available time, and what interruption would make a different plan reasonable?”

Treat each change as a tentative design hypothesis. Observe, revise and ask what you still cannot know.

FIELD MANUAL / 04 / WORKED EXAMPLE

Mission one: an imperfect paragraph.

Fictional setup: Mira thinks of herself as a writer. She wants to draft a paragraph on a question she cares about. The document stays empty. We know this much, and not yet why.

Branch A - redefine the first step

Mira writes one sentence beginning, “The question I want this paragraph to answer is...” There is now something to revise. The useful change is **clarity**: the task becomes observable. But it is possible that Mira simply needed more information; a starter sentence does not create missing knowledge.

Branch B - change the setting

Mira cannot write in the crowded room. She reserves a realistic slot the following day when a quieter place is available. The useful change is **space**. But the later slot may be taken by care work. A humane account treats that as relevant evidence, not a breach of character.

Branch C - protect the draft

Mira writes privately, explicitly marking it provisional. This may make the social cost of an imperfect opening easier to bear. The potential change is **safety**. It does not follow that perfectionism caused the original hesitation.

Alternative interpretations worth testing

Maybe the topic did not matter as much as she thought; maybe the intended piece was too broad; maybe she reasonably chose rest; maybe other responsibilities dominated. Each could explain the same visible non-action. A strong interpretation must compete with these alternatives rather than assume its preferred mechanism is true.

FIELD QUESTION

What fact would distinguish an unclear first action from a real shortage of time, tools or relevant knowledge? Write what you would need to observe, not what you wish were true.

FIELD MANUAL / 05 / WORKED EXAMPLE

Mission two: conversation or constraint?

Fictional setup: Dev wants to raise a concern about a team process. The meeting is public and the manager controls evaluations. Dev says nothing. Silence could mean disengagement; it could also be a judgment about power and risk.

Path A - prepare a limited factual request

Dev drafts: "Could we review how the deadline was set? I may be missing some context." This increases clarity and may reduce unfounded assumptions. It does not remove potential retaliation.

Path B - request a safer channel

Dev asks, where appropriate, for a private and mutually convenient time or a formal feedback process. This may improve privacy, procedural support and consent. If the organisation routinely punishes dissent, the underlying risk remains.

Path C - choose not to raise it now

Dev judges that immediate disclosure is unsafe or disproportionate. This is not automatically failure. Alternatives include documenting facts privately, using a legitimate support process, seeking collective change or revisiting later.

The ethical distinction

Another person cannot be reduced to a puzzle that you must "solve." They can decline a conversation, decline feedback, or set boundaries. Likewise, an employee should not be instructed to take a personal social risk as though job security were irrelevant. The analysis must distinguish behavioural design from structural power.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION CHECK

Before concluding "Dev lacked courage," ask: What formal protection existed? What previous responses to criticism had Dev observed? Was dissent expected, safe and within Dev's role?

A respectful refusal is sometimes the most consistent expression of a person's values.

The four-room observation sheet.

Pick a fictional, low-stakes action, or describe a real situation without identifying anyone. Fill in just enough information to test alternative explanations. Do not turn this into a personal deficiency score.

1 / The intended action, in observable language

2 / The room: time, resources, access, obligations and power

3 / Which of the four bosses seems relevant, and what evidence supports that?

4 / What is another interpretation of the same non-action?

5 / What change belongs to the individual, and what belongs to the system?

If an obstacle involves safety, coercion, limited resources or discrimination, avoid presenting personal grit as the only solution.

FIELD MANUAL / 07 / OFFLINE EXERCISE B

Replay lab on paper.

Write two plausible responses to the same obstacle. Do not assign success percentages. The task is to notice how available options change and what each path costs.

One obstacle and one specific goal

PATH A / A first action or environmental adjustment

What does Path A change: clarity, space, safety or support?

PATH B / A different action, refusal or reschedule

What does Path B change, and what cost does it preserve?

A fact that would help you choose, without assuming an outcome

Useful reflection: which branch is more feasible in this setting - and for whom? Could neither path be appropriate?

When the best move is not to play.

A framework for action can accidentally become an instrument of blame. Do not use this guide to infer that an employee is lazy, a patient is noncompliant, a friend is uncaring or a student lacks character. A single gap between statement and action is not an explanation.

A quick ethical checklist

Is the goal truly endorsed, or imposed by someone else? Does the person have the necessary authority, tools and accessibility? Could acting create risks for safety, privacy or livelihood? Are we respecting the consent of other people? What evidence would disprove our favourite account?

Known limitations

The four categories overlap and are not operationalised as independent constructs. Branches are authored fictional possibilities; they are not predictions from participant data. The interface does not estimate treatment response, identify conditions such as ADHD, measure identity strength or provide clinical advice. More research would need clear definitions, prospective observations, ethical recruitment, confounder management and comparisons with established models.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: What is a legitimate “not now” in this situation?

Who, if anyone, has the power to make the situation fairer?

KEEP YOUR EXIT OPEN

You can revise an aspiration, rest, leave a conversation, ask for accessible resources or decide that an action no longer serves your values. None of those outcomes requires a fictional boss defeat.

Evidence, neighbors and unfinished work.

The following publications offer relevant background on how intentions relate to behaviour. They do **not** validate the Identity–Action Gap terminology or this four-boss classification.

Icek Ajzen (1991) - Theory of Planned Behavior

Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179–211. A major approach to the roles of attitudes, norms, perceived behavioural control and intentions. Helpful for separating wanting from acting. DOI: 10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T.

B. J. Fogg (2009) - A Behavior Model for Persuasive Design

Proceedings of Persuasive 2009. A model connecting motivation, ability and a prompt at the moment of behaviour. A point of contrast for examining barriers without simply moralising effort. DOI: 10.1145/1541948.1541999.

Peter M. Gollwitzer (1999) - Implementation Intentions

American Psychologist, 54(7), 493–503. A research line on linking cues to intended responses through if-then plans. It should not be used to claim that all structural obstacles can be planned away. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.54.7.493.

Independent work and related exploration

identityaction.sahiltayal.com - Sahil Tayal's full exploratory argument, criticisms and research shelf. **adhdtools.sahiltayal.com** - a separate game-inspired interface proposal with explicit limits, not a treatment. **sahiltayal.com** - the central Sahilverse atlas.

One question to carry forward

What condition would need to change for this action to become possible, safe, or no longer necessary?

© 2026 Sahil Tayal / Sahilverse. Original educational material. Feedback: sahil@sahiltayal.com. This PDF is a reflection aid, not clinical, legal, employment or personalised professional advice.