

The Middle Way

Exercises for softening polarized thinking and finding wiser, more balanced ground

This chapter is about embracing nuance, holding tension, and stepping away from extremes — the all-or-nothing thinking that so often keeps us stuck. The exercises here help you find the space between the poles.

Exercise 1

Still Points for the Middle Way

Short, intentional check-ins designed to help you soften extreme language, spot either-or thinking, and settle into more balanced ground.

PROACTIVE STILL POINTS

Choose a regular everyday cue (the When) and pair it with one of these Then practices:

- Take a breath and rephrase your most recent thought — replacing extreme words like "always," "never," or "terrible" with something more moderate.
- Pause and ask: "Is there a third path I'm not seeing yet?"
- Ask: "Can I make space for both/and thinking in this moment?"

My Proactive Still Point #1:

When:

Then I will:

My Proactive Still Point #2:

When:

Then I will:

RESPONSIVE STILL POINTS

Use a specific emotion as your trigger. Pair it with any of the middle-way reflections above.

My Responsive Still Point #1:

When I feel:

Then I will:

My Responsive Still Point #2:

When I feel:

Then I will:

Exercise 2

Finding Your Personal Middle Ways

Reflect on areas of your life where you might be veering toward extremes. For each area, identify what the extremes look like for you — and what a middle way approach might involve.

Comfort and Discomfort		
<i>Too Little / Too Much →</i>	<i>The Middle Way</i>	<i>← Too Much / Too Little</i>

Optimism and Pessimism		
<i>Too Little / Too Much →</i>	<i>The Middle Way</i>	<i>← Too Much / Too Little</i>

Ordinary and Extraordinary		
<i>Too Little / Too Much →</i>	<i>The Middle Way</i>	<i>← Too Much / Too Little</i>

Choice and Acceptance		
<i>Too Little / Too Much →</i>	<i>The Middle Way</i>	<i>← Too Much / Too Little</i>

Reflection: What patterns do you notice across these areas? Where do you tend to veer toward one extreme most often?

Exercise 3

Language Moderation Practice

The words we use reinforce how we think. This exercise helps you identify and moderate extreme language patterns that keep you stuck in black-and-white thinking.

Step 1: List your personal red-flag words — extreme modifiers, absolutes, and harsh judgments you find yourself reaching for frequently.

Extreme word	More moderate alternative

Step 2: Practice rewriting these sentences using your moderate alternatives:

Original: "I always mess up when I try something new."

Rewrite:

Original: "That meeting was a complete disaster."

Rewrite:

Original: "Everyone thinks my idea is stupid."

Rewrite:

Original: "Nothing ever works out for me."

Rewrite:

Exercise 4

The Third Thing Exploration

Choose a situation where you feel caught between two options or perspectives. Then challenge yourself to find the paths you haven't considered yet.

The situation and the binary choice I perceive:

Now identify at least three alternatives that don't fit neatly into either category:

Alternative 1:

Alternative 2:

Alternative 3:

Reflection: What insights emerged when you looked beyond the either-or? How might this "third thing" approach open up new possibilities?

For worksheets and additional exercises, visit oneyoufeed.net/resources