



WHY GOD

The Forty-Day Journal

ATTENTION · AWE · SERVICE

*A companion to
Why God: The Question We Never Outgrew*

Dr Gnana Prakash Neel

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by Dr Gnana Prakash Neel

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO

How to use this journal

Forty days, one small practice, three lines a night. This book is a place to write them down.

- **Choose one path.** Attention, awe or service. Only one: an experiment that changes three things at once cannot tell you which mattered.
- **Give it fifteen to twenty minutes a day.** Not more. If you are tempted to double it, keep it the same size.
- **Log three lines.** Each evening, one line each for attention, relationships and conduct. A line is enough. Space is there if you want more.
- **A missed day is logged, not failed.** Tick “skipped”, write a line if you like, and continue the next day. Do not make up for it.
- **“Nothing changed” is a complete result.** So is “I stopped”. Write what happened, not what you hoped would happen.
- **This journal will not tell you what to expect.** There are no stages here, no milestones, no promises. Expectation is the strongest contaminant in any experiment on yourself, so you will record yours once, on Day 0, and then leave it alone.



Begin with the safety note, choose your path, fill in Day 0, and start the next day.

A note on safety

Practices of silence and inward attention are not risk-free for everyone. For some people, intensive silence can bring up fear, panic, old memories, poor sleep or a sense that things are unreal.

Fifteen to twenty minutes a day is the ceiling for this experiment. If you have a history of trauma, psychosis, severe depression or dissociation, speak to a doctor or counsellor before choosing the attention path, or choose awe or service, which turn you outward.

Stopping is a legitimate result. If the practice brings up distress that does not settle when you stop for the day, stop the experiment, and write “stopped” in the log. If the distress persists, talk to a doctor or counsellor.



The terms of my experiment

I BEGIN ON _____

I WILL PRACTISE WHEN _____

Attach it to something that already happens: brushing your teeth, the walk from the bus.

A DAY COUNTS AS MISSED IF _____

I WILL TELL _____ *(one person, or no one)*

The three paths

*Each is open to a believer, an atheist or someone undecided. Tick one box.
Leave the other two alone for forty days.*

☐ Attention

Stop filling the silence. Sit, walk or wait without input: no music, podcast, screen or reading. A chair, the walk to the bus stop with your ears uncovered, a queue allowed to be a wait. When the mind wanders, notice where it went and come back to the breath, your footsteps, the sounds around you.

☐ Awe

Meet something larger than you without recording or posting it. The sky at dusk, a tree you have passed for years, a raga heard with your eyes closed. The camera rule: no photograph, no story, no message saying “look at this”. Let it be seen once, by you.

☐ Service

Help someone each day, and tell no one. Carry shopping upstairs for a neighbour. Listen to a relative’s repeated story as if for the first time. The secrecy is the method: you are testing what giving does when it earns you nothing, not even a reputation.

CHOOSE ONE

Why I chose this path

Write a sentence or two on why this path, and not the other two. You will read it again on the forty-first day.

The three lines you will keep

Every daily page asks the same three questions. Answer each in a line.



Attention

What did I notice?



Relationships

How did I meet people?



Conduct

What did I do?



Where I am starting

Answer before your first practice day. Be as accurate as you can; there are no good or bad answers. You will answer the same questions on Day 40.

1 Average daily screen time

Check your phone's settings if it records this.

_____ HOURS _____ MINUTES PER DAY

2 How often do I ruminate?

Going over the same worry again and again without resolving it. Circle one.

Rarely

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

Almost always

3 How connected do I feel to other people?

Circle one.

Not at all

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

Deeply

4 Moments of awe I noticed in the last week

HOW MANY _____ ONE OF THEM _____

5 Acts of service in the last week that no one knew about

HOW MANY _____ ONE OF THEM _____

DAY 0 · BASELINE

6 My current belief position

Tick the nearest. None of these is the right starting point.

☐ Believer ☐ Agnostic ☐ Atheist ☐ Seeking

☐ Other _____

IN ONE SENTENCE

7 What I expect to happen in forty days

Write it plainly, including “nothing”, if that is what you expect.

8 Anything else I want on the record today

PRIMARY My primary measure (choose one before you begin)

Choosing in advance stops you from picking afterwards whichever number moved.

- ☐ Attention path: screen time or rumination (circle one)
- ☐ Awe path: noticed moments of awe
- ☐ Service path: unrecognised acts of service

All paths: connection and conduct are secondary outcomes.



Close this page. You will not need it again until Day 40.

DAY 1

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 2

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 3

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 4

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 5

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 6

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 7

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

Week 1 at a glance

For each day, write the minutes practised, or a dash for a skipped day.

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7

DAYS PRACTISED _____ OF 7



Week 1: looking back

Read this week's pages once before you answer. "Nothing" is an acceptable answer to every question here.

What did this week's log contain? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Describe it as a stranger would: what is on the pages, not what it means.

How many days did I practise, and what happened on the days I did not? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What, if anything, was different from Day 0? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What did I avoid writing? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Anything else I want on the record? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

DAY 8

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention · awe · service** MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 9

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention · awe · service** MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 10

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 11

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 12

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention · awe · service** MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 13

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention · awe · service** MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 14

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

Week 2 at a glance

For each day, write the minutes practised, or a dash for a skipped day.

DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14
-------	-------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

DAYS PRACTISED _____ OF 7

_____  _____

Week 2: looking back

Read this week's pages once before you answer. "Nothing" is an acceptable answer to every question here.

What did this week's log contain? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Describe it as a stranger would: what is on the pages, not what it means.

How many days did I practise, and what happened on the days I did not? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What, if anything, was different from Day 0? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What did I avoid writing? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Anything else I want on the record? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

DAY 15

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 16

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 17

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 18

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 19

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 20

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 21

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

Week 3 at a glance

For each day, write the minutes practised, or a dash for a skipped day.

DAY 15	DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18	DAY 19	DAY 20	DAY 21

DAYS PRACTISED _____ OF 7



Week 3: looking back

Read this week's pages once before you answer. "Nothing" is an acceptable answer to every question here.

What did this week's log contain?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Describe it as a stranger would: what is on the pages, not what it means.

How many days did I practise, and what happened on the days I did not?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What, if anything, was different from Day 0?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What did I avoid writing?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Anything else I want on the record?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

DAY 22

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 23

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 24

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 25

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 26

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention** · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 27

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention** · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 28

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

Week 4 at a glance

For each day, write the minutes practised, or a dash for a skipped day.

DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24	DAY 25	DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28
--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

DAYS PRACTISED _____ OF 7

_____  _____

Week 4: looking back

Read this week's pages once before you answer. "Nothing" is an acceptable answer to every question here.

What did this week's log contain? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Describe it as a stranger would: what is on the pages, not what it means.

How many days did I practise, and what happened on the days I did not? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What, if anything, was different from Day 0? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What did I avoid writing? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Anything else I want on the record? NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

DAY 29

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 30

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 31

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention** · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 32

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention** · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 33

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 34

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 35

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH **attention · awe · service** MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

Week 5 at a glance

For each day, write the minutes practised, or a dash for a skipped day.

DAY 29	DAY 30	DAY 31	DAY 32	DAY 33	DAY 34	DAY 35
--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

DAYS PRACTISED _____ OF 7

_____  _____

Week 5: looking back

Read this week's pages once before you answer. "Nothing" is an acceptable answer to every question here.

What did this week's log contain?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Describe it as a stranger would: what is on the pages, not what it means.

How many days did I practise, and what happened on the days I did not?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What, if anything, was different from Day 0?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

What did I avoid writing?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

Anything else I want on the record?

NOTHING IS AN ANSWER

DAY 36

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 37

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 38

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 39

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

DAY 40

☐ done ☐ skipped

DATE _____ PATH attention · awe · service MIN _____

ATTENTION *What did I notice?*

RELATIONSHIPS *How did I meet people?*

CONDUCT *What did I do?*

Forty days at a glance

Copy across from your daily pages: tick each day practised, leave skipped days empty.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40

DAYS PRACTISED _____ OF 40

Then and now

Answer the right-hand column first, without looking back. Then turn to your Day 0 pages and copy those answers into the left. Your primary measure comes first; the numbered rows are secondary.

DAY 0 · COPY ACROSS

DAY 40 · TODAY

PRIMARY My primary measure, chosen on Day 0

WHICH _____

DAY 0 _____

TODAY _____

☐ more ☐ less ☐ the same

1 Average daily screen time

_____ H _____ MIN

_____ H _____ MIN

2 How often I ruminate

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

Rarely

Almost always

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

Rarely

Almost always

3 How connected I feel to other people

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

Not at all

Deeply

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

Not at all

Deeply

4 Moments of awe noticed in the last week

HOW MANY _____

ONE OF THEM

HOW MANY _____

ONE OF THEM

5 Unseen acts of service in the last week

HOW MANY _____

ONE OF THEM

HOW MANY _____

ONE OF THEM

6 My belief position, in one sentence

☐ Believer ☐ Agnostic
☐ Atheist ☐ Seeking ☐ Other

☐ Believer ☐ Agnostic
☐ Atheist ☐ Seeking ☐ Other

7 What I expected • what happened

8 Anything else on the record

Reading across

Begin with your primary measure: did it move, and which way? Then the secondary rows: which moved, which stayed where they were? Write it down without explaining it yet. “Nothing changed” is a complete result.

Reading your results

A LIMIT, BEFORE ANY READING

This is an experiment in the older sense of trying something and observing carefully. It is not a controlled trial. With one participant, no comparison group and self-reported measures, any change may reflect the practice, expectation, ordinary events, regression toward your own average or the effect of keeping a notebook. The protocol can tell you what happened during your forty days. It cannot, by itself, prove what caused it.

Whatever your notebook holds, it can be read through three lenses. They are not rivals. Each asks a different question of the same pages.



Psychological

Attention or behaviour changed the nervous system. A month of a new habit shifted what your body does when it is quiet, busy or provoked. This lens asks: what changed in me?



Relational

The practice changed how you meet other people. You listened longer, snapped less, noticed who was tired. This lens asks: what would someone who lives with me have seen?



Metaphysical

You interpret what happened as contact with something fundamental: God, Brahman, the ground of things. This lens asks: what am I claiming about reality, and on what grounds?

The first may be established by the experience.

The second may be visible in conduct.

The third always requires an additional argument.

Keep the three apart. “I was calmer” is a report about you. “Something calmed me” has quietly added an agent. “Nothing happened to me” and “there is nothing there” are also two different sentences. You are entitled to the first of each pair; the second needs more than a notebook.

Three ways of reading the same notebook

Read the one nearest your Day 0 position, then read the other two. Each is a fair place to stand.

If you began as a believer

You may read a quiet evening as presence, and your tradition has words for it that are older than this book. Nothing here asks you to give them up. It asks only that you keep what happened and what it means in separate columns, so the first stays true whatever you decide about the second. A flat notebook is not a verdict on faith; your own tradition likely judges by fruits, not feelings.

What in these forty days would someone who loves you be able to see?

If you began as an agnostic

You came in undecided, and forty days of notes do not oblige you to decide. The psychological and relational lenses may tell you a good deal; the metaphysical one may stay open, and that is an honest place to leave it. Not knowing is a position you can live by, as long as it is chosen and not just postponed.

What, beyond this notebook, would you need before you could say more than “I don’t know”?

If you began as an atheist

You may find the first two lenses explain everything you logged, and you may be right. The third lens concedes nothing; it marks where an extra argument would be needed, and this notebook does not supply one. If something in the forty days surprised you, it is yours, and you can value it without any theology at all.

If the practice helped, what will you keep doing with no one asking you to?



Are you kinder than you were forty days ago?



That question is the one the book keeps returning to, and it is one your notebook can answer, with evidence, in either direction.

When you have finished your comparison pages, read Chapter 25 of *Why God*, “Reading Your Results”. It takes up what an experience entitles you to conclude, and why “nothing changed” is a finding and not a failure.



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