



2026 Field Notes For A Fresh Start

A Good Enough Year

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Hi, I'm Kerry.

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START HERE: A Practical Guide For The Overwhelmed

and the memoir The Ballad of Burnout.

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Part 1: December 2025 Looking back

PROMPT 1: Highlights and Lowlights

Time needed: 15 - 60 minutes

Instructions:

- Glance through your diary and scroll through your camera roll.
- Jot down the highlights and lowlights of the past year.

PROMPT 2: Love / Inspiration / Admiration Mood Board

Time needed: 30 minutes

Instructions: Look through your journals, papers, or books you read and images you took screen shots of. What quotes, images, or things inspired you last year?

(Here's [my mood board from 2024](#) if you'd like an example.)



PROMPT 3: Last Year In A Few Sentences

Time needed: 5 - 30 minutes

Instructions: No pressure, just jot down a few summary sentences to describe the past year.

Last year I savored:

Last year I celebrated:

Last year I struggled with:

Last year I learned:

Part 2: Late Dec/Early Jan 2025 Looking forward

Exercise 2.1 The Best Possible Self Exercise

Time needed: 20 minutes

This exercise was originally developed by researchers in the Netherlands to teach people to practice positive future thinking. In this exercise, you imagine your best possible self, write about what you imagine, then take a few minutes to solidify these images in your mind and heart.

Read the instructions below or listen to [me guiding you through the audio exercise](#):

- Begin by imagining your best possible self. “Imagine yourself in the future, after everything has gone as well as it possibly could. You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all the goals of your life. Think of this as the realization of your dreams, and that you have reached your full potential. Thus, you identify the best possible way that things might turn out in your life.”
 - Just visualize this beautiful best-possible-life for one full minute.
- Now take fifteen minutes to write about your best possible self. (Just keep writing for the full time; if you get stuck, repeat what you have already written.)
- After writing, take a few more minutes to “imagine as vividly as possible the things you have been writing about...Imagine your ideal future life with as much detail as you can.”

Full citation: Peters, M. L., Flink, I. K., Boersma, K., & Linton, S. J. (2010). Manipulating optimism: Can imagining a best possible self be used to increase positive future expectancies?. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 5(3), 204-211

Exercise 2.2 Big Picture Planning

Time needed: 30 minutes

Instructions: Get comfortable, curl up in a quiet place with your favorite beverage. Look back on any of the previous prompts you completed and in a loose, creative, brainstorming mode, complete the following sentences:

- I really value:

- I love and hope for:

- Knowing these things, here are few things I really want in the new year:

- This year, here's what I'd like to add to my life

- This year, here's what I'd like to subtract from my life

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Exercise 2.3 First Draft Annual Goals

Time needed: 30-60 minutes

Instructions: Make a list of goals or dreams you hope to achieve. These first draft ideas are

- (a) divided into the life buckets that are important to you and
- (b) delineated into what you want to maintain,
what you want to get rid of,
and what you want to add.

I suggest the **buckets** of self, love/family, community, and trade/profession.

- You pick what buckets work for you.
- Some people have additional buckets for service, religion, fitness, and making the world better.

Maintain: things that are going well or I am doing well and I want to continue

Self	Relationships/Love/Family	Community	Trade/ Profession

Subtract: things to politely decline or extract myself from this year

Self	Relationships/Love/Family	Community	Trade/ Profession

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Add: new hopes, dreams, and goals I'd like to add this year

Self	Relationships/Love/Family	Community	Trade/ Profession

Coming up next time: “Part 3: Realistic Second
Draft Quarterly Goals”

If this felt helpful, let's stay in touch:

Field Notes — Podcast <https://fieldnoteswithkerry.substack.com/>

A podcast examining the realities of burnout, wellbeing, and the work of caring for
ourselves and others

Field Notes — Writing <https://www.drkerrymakinbyrd.com/>

Weekly email reflections and notes from my work as a clinical psychologist and author

Instagram @drkerrymb

Brief videos and pictures of my life

Main Website <https://www.drkerrymakinbyrd.com/>

Workshops, book news, and everything else in one place

Books (wherever books are sold or loaned)

Start Here: A Practical Guide for the Overwhelmed

The Ballad of Burnout

Acknowledgements

This journal was developed with inspiration from the following resources:

- [Cal Newport's Thoughts on Time Management](#) and his [Time Block Planner](#)
- [Year Compass](#)
- Key nuggets from psychology research on behavioral processes, contingency management, self-management, problem-solving, and behavioral activation as summarized by Hayes, S. C., & Hofmann, S. G. (Eds.). (2018). *Process-based CBT: The science and core clinical competencies of cognitive behavioral therapy*. New Harbinger Publications.