

FRICTION

INTERNAL
Build The Pool

The Experiment: Daily “Power Down”

Duration: 7 days

Time required: 5–10 minutes daily

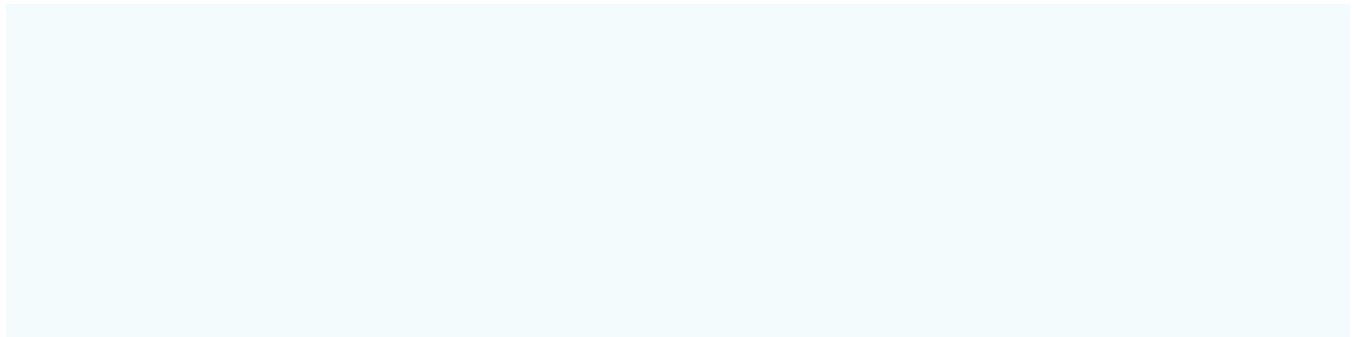
Goal: Build a daily closing ritual that separates work from the rest of your life. Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer’s landmark study of nearly 12,000 work diary entries found that the single biggest driver of positive inner work life was making progress on meaningful work, even small progress. The daily “Power Down” is the architectural move that lets you recognize that progress, close open loops, and leave the water before it follows you home.

Step 1

At the end of each workday, choose a consistent time and place to stop. Close your laptop, silence notifications, and physically put work devices out of easy reach. Treat this as the moment you step up onto the side of the pool. If you are a hybrid worker, you may have different versions of this depending on where you find yourself each day. Do the work to determine what this will look like in each space.

Step 2

Take a blank page and empty your head of unfinished business (you can start by using the space below). Write down the tasks you did not complete, the decisions still pending, the conversations that left a residue. Next to each one, note a concrete next step and when you will take it, a time on the calendar, a name you need to involve, a meeting you will schedule. You are not finishing the work; you are giving each wave a lane.



Step 3

From that longer list, circle no more than three priorities for tomorrow. These should be the contributions that matter most in your role, not simply the items that make the most noise. Capture them in a place so you will see them first thing in the morning. This is the architectural move: You have taken an ocean of demands and shaped a pool you can swim in tomorrow.

Step 4

Before you leave, pause long enough to ask yourself a quieter question: *How did today's water feel?* Name a few emotions (e.g., relieved, tense, discouraged, satisfied), and notice where they sit in your body. If there is one feeling that seems to cling, write a single line about what it is attached to. You are not fixing it; you are acknowledging it so you don't carry it unexamined into the rest of your evening.

Step 5

Finally, create a brief physical ritual to mark your exit: a short walk, a stretch, washing your hands or face, stepping outside to notice the light and air. Cal Newport suggests literally saying, "shutdown complete." Let this be your small, daily act of climbing out of the pool. For the next few hours, you are no longer swimming. You are a human being on dry ground, with other roles to inhabit and other parts of your life to feel.

Over time, this practice will remind you that leadership does not have to be an endless ocean. With intention, it can become water you choose to enter, swim in hard, and leave.