

Continue the Practice Kit

The hidden chapter, Days 2-7, reflection cards, and a reusable reader journal.

A READER BONUS
HQ PORTRAITS

One frame. No audience. Another version of you now exists.

The Second Mirror

A hidden chapter for the moment you want to stop.

A READER BONUS

HQ PORTRAITS

Most people do not quit Self-facing because nothing changed.

They quit before they can tell whether anything changed.

The first frames arrive. The jaw is set. The eyes are waiting for instruction. The shoulders are trying to occupy the correct amount of space.

There it is again.

The face you have seen in school photographs, company directories, passport pictures, and every group photo where somebody counted to three.

That is not me.

You may be right.

But the mistake is deciding that the first frame is the answer.

What people tell me afterward

Nobody at HQ Portraits watches a private session. That privacy is the point. I do not see the moment when someone nearly packs a bag, turns off the light, or decides the whole idea was a mistake.

I hear about it afterward.

People tell me they disliked the first ten frames. Sometimes the first fifty. They tell me they stood up to leave, then sat down again because there was nobody to disappoint and nobody to explain themselves to.

They stayed.

Then a frame appeared that did not feel impressive or polished. It simply felt inhabited.

The person in the image was not asking for approval.

That frame is rarely produced by trying harder. It tends to arrive when trying becomes too tiring to maintain.

This is the part the first mirror never teaches you.

The first mirror

The first mirror is the one in your bathroom.

It is reversed. It is moving. It lets you correct yourself while you look.

You lift your chin before you notice you have done it. You soften an expression. You turn toward the side you prefer. The mirror gives you a live feed, and you edit the feed as it happens.

That is useful for brushing your teeth.

It is not a record.

The mirror cannot show who you were at 3:17 on an ordinary Thursday. It cannot hold the tired face that appeared before you corrected it. It cannot preserve the expression your child may one day search for when trying to remember what you were like.

The first mirror helps you prepare to be seen.

It does not help you stay with what was already there.

The second mirror

The second mirror is a photograph you make for yourself.

Not a photograph made while another person studies you. Not a picture you owe a profile, a partner, a client, or an audience. Not an image made to prove that you are happy, successful, young, rested, thin, strong, or fine.

A private self-portrait is still. It does not let you correct the frame after the shutter closes. It gives you one small piece of evidence and asks whether you can remain with it.

That is why it can feel harsher than the bathroom mirror at first.

Stillness removes your usual escape.

You cannot wait for the next expression. You cannot tell yourself the face was only passing through. The image stays.

But the second mirror has one quality the first mirror does not.

It can become familiar.

You can return tomorrow. You can look for ten seconds instead of one. You can notice that the expression you called wrong was actually uncertain, or tired, or concentrating, or trying to feel safe.

The photograph does not change.

Your relationship to it can.

Why the room can be empty and you still perform

Removing the audience does not remove the Performing Self immediately.

The body learned the camera long before this room.

It remembers the school photographer moving your chin. The relative asking for a bigger smile. The headshot session where two people selected your face on a monitor while you waited. The tagged picture you opened without warning.

So the camera enters the room carrying an imaginary audience with it.

The door may be closed. Your body still expects to be graded.

That is not failure. It is memory doing its job.

The first frames are often the Performing Self checking whether the old rules still apply.

Will someone correct me?

Will someone choose the acceptable version?

Will this image be used before I am ready?

Each time the answer is no, the room becomes a little more yours.

You press the shutter.

Nobody comments.

You change your position.

Nobody approves.

You stop smiling.

Nothing bad happens.

Eventually the body may stop preparing for a judgment that never arrives.

The almost-leaving moment

There is often a point when the session feels worse before it feels different.

You have made enough frames to confirm every old complaint, but not enough to become curious. The novelty is gone. Arrival has not happened. Shame offers a very efficient conclusion:

See? I knew this would not work for me.

This is the almost-leaving moment.

Do not turn it into a test of courage.

Self-facing is not a contest in which the strongest person endures the most discomfort. You are still in charge. If you feel overwhelmed or unsafe, stop. Open the door. Drink water. Return another day. The practice belongs to you, including the decision to end it.

But if the feeling is ordinary awkwardness, irritation, or the urge to declare a verdict, try one smaller decision:

Stay five more minutes.

Not until you become beautiful.

Not until you love the image.

Five minutes without deciding what the session means.

Curiosity needs less force than confidence. It only asks, *What happens if I do not leave at the exact moment the old story expects me to?*

The first-frame, last-frame experiment

Try this once.

Make one frame as soon as you enter the room. Do not warm up. Do not correct anything. Keep it.

Set a timer for twenty minutes.

During those twenty minutes, do not delete. Move closer to the light. Sit down. Stand up. Think about someone you love, a problem you are solving, or the year you just survived. Let your hands do whatever they do when nobody is directing them.

When the timer ends, make one last frame.

Put the first and last frames beside each other.

Do not ask which one looks better.

Ask:

- Where is my jaw holding less?
- Where do my eyes look connected to an actual thought?
- Which frame feels more inhabited?
- What changed in the room?
- What changed in me?

Some days the answer will be obvious.

Some days there will be no visible shift.

Both outcomes count. The practice is evidence, not a promise of transformation on schedule.

Arrival is quieter than you expect

Arrival is not the moment you finally look perfect.

It is the first frame you recognize without immediately negotiating with it.

You may still notice the line near your mouth. You may wish you had slept more. You may never share the image.

Recognition can coexist with preference.

The frame might be serious. It might be awkward. It might show the face you make while thinking about dinner, grief, a deadline, or the person you used to be.

The important difference is simple:

The image no longer feels like evidence against you.

It feels like evidence of you.

Keep one private

The internet has trained us to treat every photograph as unfinished until it is posted, liked, archived, or ignored.

Keep one image outside that system.

Do not ask friends to choose. Do not send it with a warning. Do not explain that the light was strange or that you were tired.

Let one portrait have no job except to remain.

Print it if you can. Put it somewhere private if public display feels too large. Inside a wardrobe door. Beside a journal. In a drawer with a letter you want your future self to find.

The Wall of Becoming does not need to be a wall.

It needs to be a place where evidence survives.

One session longer

The first mirror shows the face you know how to prepare.

The second mirror holds the face that appeared when preparation began to loosen.

Neither one is the final truth about you.

There is no final frame. There is only the person who existed in this season, then the next person, then the next.

If your first attempt felt stiff, it may not mean Self-facing failed.

It may mean the Performing Self arrived before you did.

Give yourself one more session.

Not braver.

Longer.

The face you are looking for may be on the other side of the moment you usually leave.

The first uncomfortable frames are warm-up, not a verdict.

Continue with Days 2-7 of the Self-facing Practice.

The 7-Day Self-facing Practice

One frame. No audience. Seven small returns.

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This practice begins with Day 1 in *Be Seen. As You Are*. The next six days are not a photography challenge. There is no public streak to protect and nothing to post.

Each day asks for one small action.

Use a phone, a timer, or a remote shutter. Professional equipment is optional. A door that closes matters more.

If any prompt feels too intense, stop or change it. Self-facing is a personal creative practice, not therapy or a test of endurance.

Before you begin

Choose one place where you can be alone for ten to twenty minutes.

Put your phone on Do Not Disturb unless it is your camera. Face a window or use one steady light. Place the lens at eye level or slightly above. Keep the setup simple enough that you can return tomorrow.

Create one private folder named:

SELF-FACING / [YEAR]

Nothing in that folder has to be shared.

Day 1: One photo. No audience.

The book begins here.

Take one photograph with no intention of posting it.

Notice what your face does during the first three seconds. Jaw. Eyes. Shoulders. The managed expression is the Performing Self arriving because the camera is in the room.

Sit with the image for sixty seconds. Do not fix it. Do not explain it.

Ask:

Who was I in this frame?

Keep or delete the image. Your choice.

One true sentence

Write one sentence that begins:

Today I met someone who...

Stop after one sentence.

Day 2: Stay past the first verdict

The first frames are warm-up. Today you will give the room enough time to become yours.

Set up

- Close the door.
- Set a timer for twenty minutes.
- Make one frame immediately. Keep it.
- Do not delete anything until the timer ends.

For the next twenty minutes, move only when you want to. Sit. Stand. Turn toward or away from the light. Let silence do some of the work.

If you hear *this is not working*, notice the sentence without obeying it immediately.

At the end, make one last frame.

Place the first and last frames beside each other.

Look for

- A change in your jaw, eyes, hands, or shoulders.
- The moment you stopped waiting for instruction.
- A frame that feels inhabited, even if it is not flattering.

One true sentence

The room began to feel like mine when...

Day 3: Build the safe room

Today is about conditions, not appearance.

A safe room is any place where you control the frame, the timing, and the audience.

Remove one source of observation

Choose one:

- Turn off the preview for the first five minutes.
- Put the phone in airplane mode.
- Cover or turn around any mirror you keep checking.
- Ask the people you live with for twenty uninterrupted minutes.
- Make the session at a time when nobody is waiting for you.

Take three slow breaths before the first frame. You do not need to relax on command. Just notice the room.

Make ten to twenty frames.

Ask

What changes when nobody needs anything from me?

Choose one image that carries the answer, even imperfectly.

One true sentence

Without an audience, I noticed...

Day 4: Give your face a real thought

It is difficult to manufacture a natural expression. It is easier to think about something real and let the face follow.

Choose one subject:

- A person whose presence lets you exhale.
- A place you still remember physically.
- A problem you care about solving.
- Something you built and are quietly proud of.
- A question you have not answered yet.

Do not perform the emotion for the camera. Think.

Make frames while your attention stays with the subject. If you lose the thought, stop pressing the shutter. Return to it, then continue.

Choose

Keep the frame that looks most inhabited.

Not the biggest smile.

Not the cleanest pose.

The one where a real thought seems to be happening.

One true sentence

The thought that changed my face was...

Day 5: Meet the body that arrived

Most people postpone photographs until a future body appears.

Today is not an exercise in forced self-love. You do not have to call everything beautiful. The invitation is smaller: let the body you have today exist in one frame without treating it as a before picture.

Wear something that feels like you, not something chosen to correct you.

Make one standing frame and one seated frame.

Let your hands rest somewhere natural. Notice any urge to hide, shrink, straighten, or apologize. You may follow the urge or not. The choice remains yours.

If discomfort becomes intense, stop. There is no prize for pushing past your own boundary.

Ask

What has this body carried me through?

Keep one frame privately.

One true sentence

This body has carried...

Day 6: Choose evidence

Today you will not make a new portrait unless you want to.

Open the week's folder. Move slowly.

Do not begin by choosing the most flattering image. Begin by removing frames that feel like pure performance.

From what remains, select three:

1. The frame that surprised you. 2. The frame that feels most like someone you know. 3. The frame your future self may need to find.

Choose one of the three.

Print it. A small drugstore print is enough. If printing is not possible today, set it as a private phone wallpaper for one week or place it in a folder you open intentionally.

Do not ask anyone else to approve the choice.

One true sentence

I kept this frame because...

Day 7: Leave a return date

The practice is not complete because seven days passed.

It becomes a ritual when you decide to return.

Place your Day 1 image beside the image you kept on Day 6. Look for one minute.

Do not ask whether you improved.

Ask:

- What did the first frame expect?
- What did the later frame stop asking for?
- Which part of this week felt most honest?
- What do I want to remember about this version of me?

Write a date for your next Self-facing session.

Choose a return that means something:

- The first day of the next season.
- Your birthday.
- The anniversary of a transition.
- A quiet date three months from now.

Put the date on your calendar before you close the folder.

One true sentence

The version of me I want to remember is...

After Day 7

You do not need to repeat the seven days in order.

Use them as doors:

- When you want to quit early, return to Day 2.
- When the room feels busy, return to Day 3.
- When your expression feels manufactured, return to Day 4.
- When you are waiting for a future body, return to Day 5.
- When the images disappear into your camera roll, return to Day 6.
- When months pass without evidence, return to Day 7.

Self-facing is not a streak.

It is a place you know how to come back to.

Another version of you now exists. Leave a date to meet them.

CARD 1

Begin

Close the door.

Put the phone on Do Not Disturb.

Let the first frame be awkward.

I do not need permission to look.

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

CARD 2

Warm-up

The first frames are the Performing Self checking whether judgment is coming.

Keep going gently.

Warm-up is not a verdict.

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

CARD 3

Notice

Jaw.

Eyes.

Shoulders.

Hands.

Do not correct them yet. Notice first.

What is my body preparing for?

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

CARD 4

Stay

If you feel unsafe, stop.

If you feel ordinary awkwardness, try five more minutes before deciding what the session means.

Not braver. Longer.

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

CARD 5

Think

Bring one real person, place, problem, or memory to mind.

Do not perform the feeling. Think the thought.

What makes this face feel inhabited?

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

CARD 6

Choose

Do not begin with the most flattering frame.

Find the one you recognize without immediately negotiating with it.

Which frame feels like someone I know?

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

CARD 7

Keep

Print one honest frame.

It may live on a wall, inside a wardrobe door, or in a private drawer.

Evidence needs somewhere to survive.

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

CARD 8

Return

Another version of you will arrive.

Leave a date to meet them.

Who were you this time?

BE SEEN. AS YOU ARE.

The Self-facing Reader Journal

A reusable record of who you were.

A READER BONUS

HQ PORTRAITS

This journal is not for grading photographs.

It is for preserving the small details an image cannot hold by itself: what the room felt like, when the Performing Self appeared, what changed, and why one frame mattered.

Print the session pages again whenever you return.

How to use this journal

You do not need to complete every field.

Before a session, use **Before the room** to name why you returned and what boundary you want to protect.

After a session, use **After the room** and **Portrait record** for the frame you kept. One true sentence is enough.

Add selected portraits to the **Wall of Becoming index**. Choose your next date on **Four seasonal returns** or **The next return**.

Print the reusable pages again whenever you need them. Keep them with the portrait files, in a binder, or beside the place where one printed frame lives.

This is a record, not a report card.

Before the room

Date and season

Where am I making this portrait?

Why did I return today?

Before I begin, my body feels...

What am I tempted to hide, correct, or prove?

One boundary I want to protect

Examples: no sharing, twenty minutes only, no deleting until the end, stop if I feel overwhelmed.

One intention

Choose one word. Curiosity. Grief. Softness. Strength. Fatigue. Beginning. Return.

After the room

Session length

The Performing Self showed up as...

The moment I noticed a shift

If there was no shift today, write that plainly.

Where did my body soften, brace, or surprise me?

The frame I kept

File name or frame number:

What made me choose it?

One true sentence

Today I met someone who...

Portrait record

Attach or sketch the frame here

attach, tape, or sketch your portrait

What was happening outside the frame?

What does this image know that I might forget?

Keep this portrait...

☐ On the Wall of Becoming

☐ Somewhere private

☐ In the yearly archive

☐ Only for now

Words I want beside it

Wall of Becoming index

Keep one line for each portrait that became part of your record.

Date	Season / transition	Frame / file	One true sentence

Four seasonal returns

Self-facing does not need a perfect schedule. Four returns can create a visible year.

Spring

Return date:

What may be changing by then?

Summer

Return date:

What may be changing by then?

Fall

Return date:

What may be changing by then?

Winter

Return date:

What may be changing by then?

A letter to the person in the frame

Begin:

I remember what you were carrying...

The next return

Date

Why this date matters

What I want my future self to find

A promise small enough to keep

Another version of me now exists. I left a date to meet them.