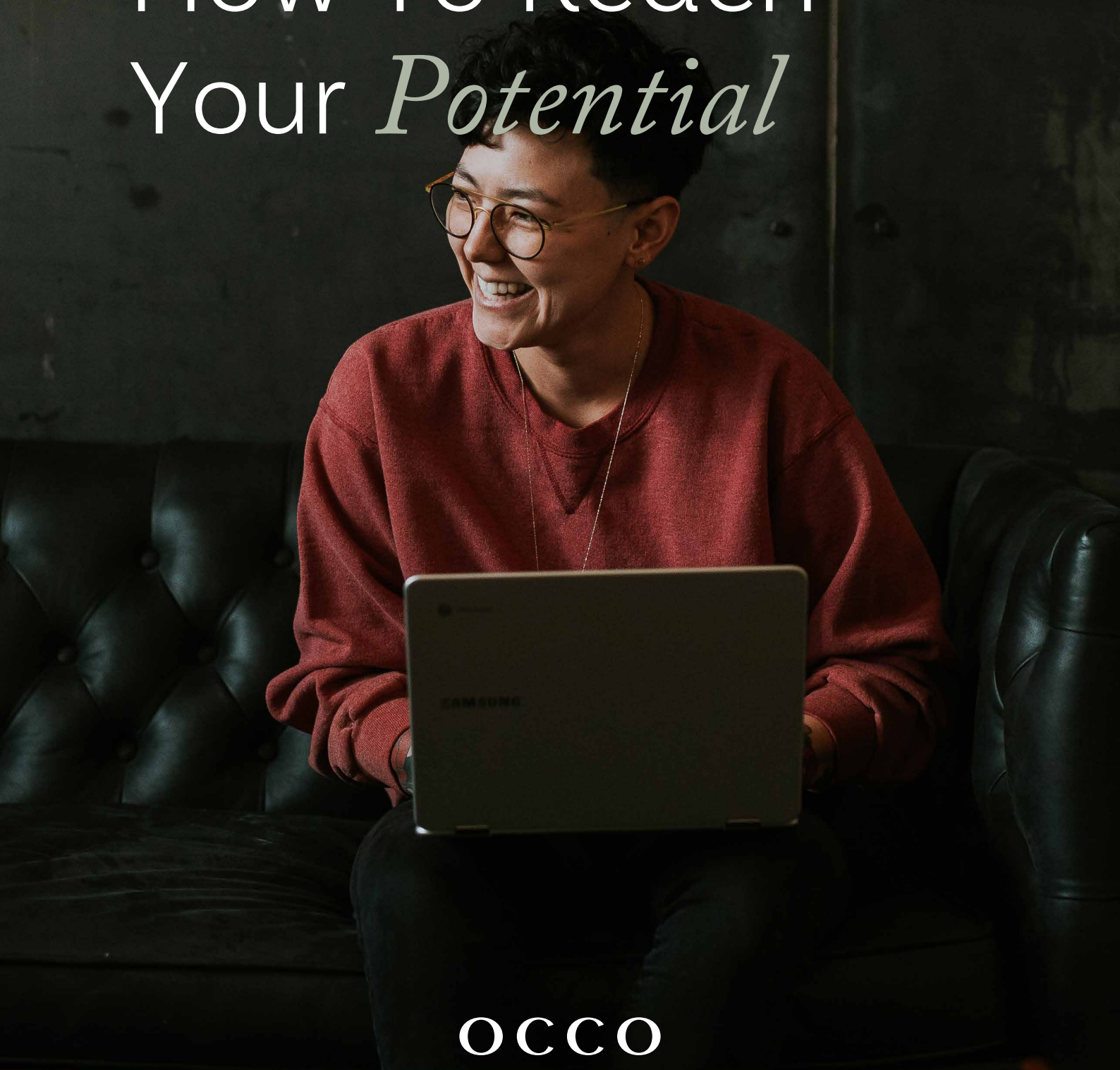


The Guideline for Ambitious Minds

How To Reach Your *Potential*



OCCO
LONDON

For ambitious people who think fast, carry a lot, and keep ending the day with nothing to show for it.

We're Ollie and Clare, and we founded OCCO London. We both have the kind of mind this guide is about. Fast, busy, and hard to switch off.

For a few years we've read the research, then tested it on ourselves. What survived a real week is in here. Nothing is for sale.

What follows is 25 points. Some won't apply to the week you're having. Skip those.

The guideline is: if it resonates, *take action*.

You're holding
too much.

01

It isn't disorganisation.
Nobody ever gave you
somewhere to put it.

Your mind is a terrible filing cabinet.

02

It is brilliant at connections and hopeless at storage. Working memory holds about 4 things at once before performance slips (Cowan, 2001).

Everything past that is still being held in your head, and holding it uses up attention you need for the work. Writing it down instead has a name: cognitive offloading (Risko & Gilbert, 2016).

Your surroundings *decide* more than you do.

A fast mind follows whatever is in front of it. A desk covered in half-finished things gives it more to chase. A clear desk gives it one thing to start.

This is not about being tidy. It decides whether you choose what happens next, or whatever is nearest chooses for you.



Time problems are often *not* time problems.

04

You had the hours. What you didn't have was a plan for them. Start the day without one and the first person who asks gets your morning.

Making the plan should take a minute, not an afternoon. Write it short.

Then look back at last week and ask where it actually went. Most people find an hour they didn't know they had, and 3 they wish they'd spent differently.

Nothing moves until you *decide it does*.

An unfinished job keeps pulling at you until you deal with it. Here is the useful part. You don't have to deal with it.

Decide when and where you will do it, and it stops interrupting you. In the research, people who did that were as free of it as people who had actually finished the job (Masicampo and Baumeister, 2011). You don't have to finish it. You have to decide it.



Procrastination is usually one undecided thing.

06

It's rarely the task you're avoiding. It's usually one decision you haven't made: who to ask, which version to use, what counts as finished. Make that decision and the rest moves.

The maybes need a *home*.

07

Most of what crosses your mind isn't a job to do. It's a maybe: something you might do one day, but can't act on yet. It doesn't need a decision. It needs a place to go, so it stops coming back.

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6

Doubt is a feeling, not *data*.

08

Doubting yourself is human. Believing the doubt is a choice.

So don't argue with it. Look at what actually moved this week instead, and write that down by hand. Handwriting makes your brain work harder with the words than typing does (Van der Weel and Van der Meer, 2024).

Attention *runs out*.

09

You get a set amount each day. You can't save it up, and tomorrow's doesn't arrive early. Every tab you leave open uses some. So does everything you are still trying to remember.

1 big task, 3 medium and 5 small is about a day for most people. Write the day out that way and the overload shows up on paper, before you live it.

Every switch has a *cost*.

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You never properly start the new task, because part of your attention is still on the last one. Researchers call that attention residue (Leroy, 2009). It's why a day chopped into pieces can leave you more tired than a hard one.

Whoever gets to you *first* wins.

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Open the inbox before you've decided anything and the day belongs to whoever emailed at 11 last night. Take 10 quiet minutes first. Empty your head, then decide what the day is for.

Finish *1 thing* properly before starting 3.

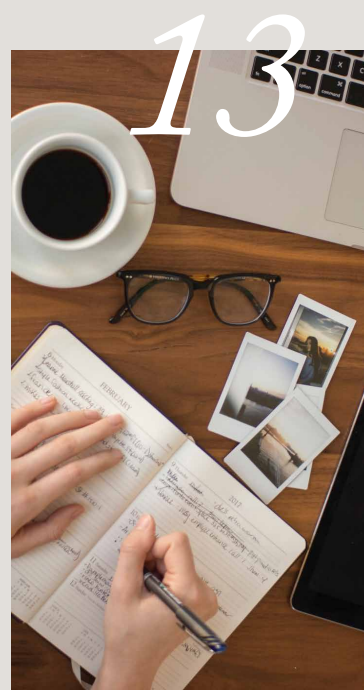
12

3 things at 80% is nothing finished. 1 thing finished changes something today, and frees you for the other 2. Fast minds are very good at starting. That is the problem.

Build a week that *runs* itself.

A week only works if you can see all of it at once. Take it a day at a time and it's Thursday before you notice.

The work changes every week. The days you do it on shouldn't. Decide once which days hold the heavy work, and you stop rebuilding your week every Monday. A bad Tuesday then costs you a Tuesday, not the week.



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8

What would you *not* start today?

14

Look at everything already running and ask that question of each one. If you wouldn't start it today, you are not committed to it. You are only carrying on.

Build for the *week you miss.*

15

Most systems make a missed day
feel like failure. Build one that
works on 3 days out of 5.

19

It wasn't you. It was the *dates*.

16

Most systems are dated. Take a fortnight off and you come back to a book of empty boxes with your name on them. Some demand a streak, so 1 missed day becomes a reason to stop. You didn't fail the system. It was built for a life nobody actually has.

Never start *again*.

17

You had something going, and you stopped for a few weeks. The instinct is to go back to the beginning and do it properly this time. That instinct is how most people quit for good.

The time away starts to feel like a debt you have to clear first. There is no debt. Carry on from today, not from where you stopped.

Lower the bar, not how often you show up.

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On the days your head won't play, do a smaller version of the work instead of none. 10 minutes counts. A rough first go counts. The alternative is not starting, and that is how people quietly drop what was working.

Tired is not brave.

The hard conversation is worth having. So is the small step that scares you. Running yourself flat is neither.

A hard conversation and a scary step make you stronger. Running flat only wears you down, slowly enough that you don't notice. The good kind leaves you nervous and glad you did it. The other kind leaves you short with people you like, reading the same paragraph 4 times.



Without health, the work is *borrowed*.

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You can build something impressive while wrecking yourself. Plenty have. You pay it back later, with interest, and make worse decisions on the way.

91% of UK workers reported high or extreme pressure last year, and 1 in 5 took time off because of it (Mental Health UK, 2025). Mental health is the UK's leading cause of long-term absence, at 41% (CIPD, 2025). That much pressure isn't normal.

Doing more *won't* make you calmer.

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Women in their 30s spend £554 a month on wellness, and 52% say keeping up leaves them overwhelmed (Perspectus, 2025). UK society's cure has become another thing to keep up with.

You owe nobody a *diagnosis*.

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Tell people if you want to. In England, 13.9% of adults screen positive for ADHD traits and 1.8% have a diagnosis (NHS, 2024). Most of the people in between are managing it themselves, without a label and without permission.

You don't need one either. Surgeons use checklists because memory fails under pressure, not because they are bad at surgery.

If a diagnosis would help you, get one. Private assessments run roughly £600 to £1,200, or ask your GP about the NHS Right to Choose route, which is free.

Have you ever *wanted* to pack it in?

Most ambitious people have, more than once. Wanting to stop isn't proof you're failing. It usually means you're carrying more than any one person should carry alone.

That feeling isn't a verdict on the goal. It's a signal about the load. Change what you're carrying before you change what you're aiming for.



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Should I get *help*?

Yes, the right kind for what you're carrying. A coach helps you move faster on ground you already stand on. Therapy, counselling or your GP are where you go when the ground itself needs work.

A journal is a good tool, not a treatment. If what you're carrying is heavier than a busy head, start with your GP, a therapist or a counsellor. Not another app or tool.

24

Ollie & Clare, what do you wish someone had told you *sooner?*

As humans we can do an awful lot and have a lot going on all at the same time, however fundamentally we aren't built to operate like this... since when did a caveman have a full time job, a side hustle, a fitness hobby, and 20 tabs open.

Recovery isn't a routine, an app, or medication. It comes from therapy and coaching.

A clinical diagnosis will not cure you, however it helps you understand why you see the world the way you do.

Until you fully understand yourself, you cannot move forward, no matter how many tools, apps or routines you try.

Pain is the gap between expectation and reality.

Love.

O.C

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