A WORKING BOOK BY SARAH KETEL

Meet the Now

Staying when certainty disappears

Working manuscript • September 2026

Experience appears. The body responds. Meaning forms. Presence anchors. Curiosity remains.

This is a first architecture and opening draft, built to be rewritten with Sarah's lived scenes, conversations and voice. The book is still in motion.

OPENING

When certainty leaves

There are moments when you know you are no longer thinking clearly, although your mind has never worked harder.

A message arrives. Someone goes quiet. A plan changes while other people are watching. Your body is already moving before you can say what happened. Your breath becomes shallow. Your attention narrows. A sentence begins to form that explains everything, including the part you do not know.

You may be right about the danger. You may also be trying to end the discomfort of not knowing. Those are different things, and when the pressure rises they can feel identical.

Meet the Now begins in that small interval. It does not ask you to become calm before you act. It asks whether you can remain close enough to your experience to read it. What happened? What is your body doing? What story is your mind reaching for? Can you stay here long enough to see what else is true?

The five movements in this book form the trainable skill RKM. They are not steps that must happen in order. Experience, body, meaning, presence and curiosity can move back and forth in seconds. The aim is not to execute five steps correctly. The aim is to create more room to choose how you participate.

We practice in short bursts because the moment itself rarely gives us an hour. We practice with ordinary material: an email, a difficult conversation, desire, resistance, a room that changes when someone speaks. The work becomes real when it travels with us into those moments.

I want this book to hold both the private and the public life. The same body that flinches in intimacy enters a meeting. The person who must make a decision under pressure also goes home and tries to listen. The settings differ. The movements are recognizable.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

The five movements



Experience appears

Something happens before you have explained it.



The body responds

Your organism registers the moment in sensation and movement.



Meaning forms

Meaning arrives, often with an urgent promise of certainty.



Presence anchors

You remain in contact while the experience is still moving.



Curiosity remains

You allow the moment to tell you more before you close it.

Read straight through, or start with the movement you recognize today. At the end of each chapter is a short burst: an exercise that can be done without equipment, expertise or the perfect conditions. Later editions can hold recorded conversations, fuller stories and exercises for pairs and groups.

RKM IN MOTION

Five ways to stay with the moment

The movements are not a ladder. You can begin anywhere, return and look again. The moment remains at the centre.

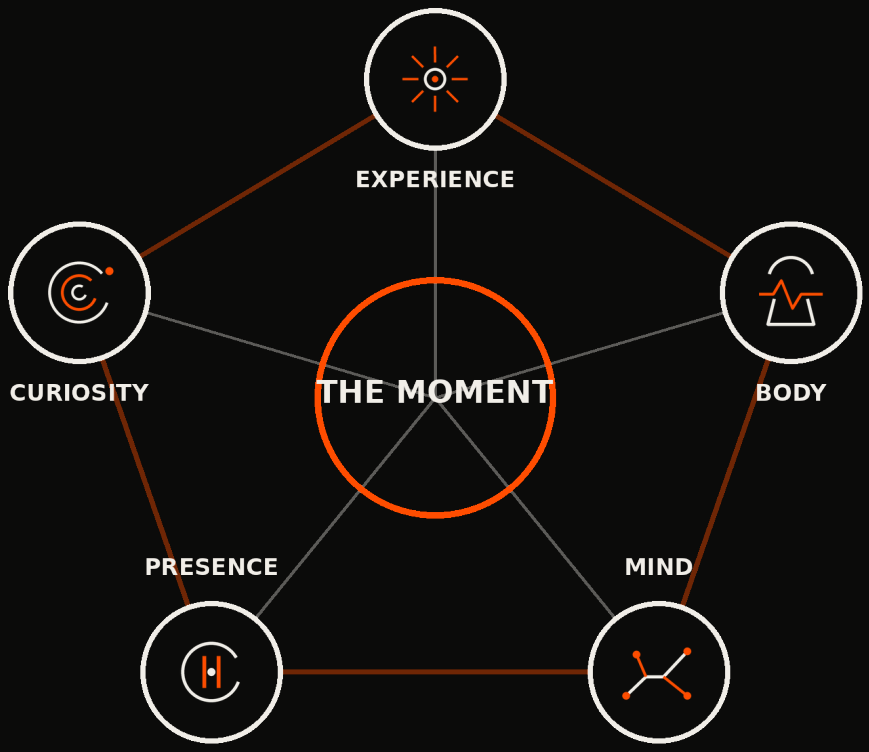
WHERE ROOM TO MOVE EMERGES

Staying at the edge of the unknown

The field is the space between what touches you and what you do next. As long as an automatic dynamic takes over, only one movement may seem possible.

Imagine that someone withdraws during a conversation. Your body wants to pursue them and force contact, or leave before you can be rejected. If you stay with the tension without already knowing what the silence means, room to move appears. You can ask what is happening, name what you notice, remain silent, offer closeness or set a boundary.

The unknown is no longer an emptiness you must fill immediately. It becomes the place where something new can emerge.



No fixed sequence. A movement you can train.



Experience appears

Before explanation, something happens.

You are in a conversation. Someone looks away. That is an event. ‘They have lost interest in me’ is an interpretation of it. The interpretation may turn out to be useful, but it is not what you saw.

We often pass over the event so quickly that we cannot find our way back. We respond to the meaning we have made as if it were the room itself. Slowing down begins with a plain account: a sentence was said, the meeting went quiet, a reply did not come.

This is not an invitation to distrust yourself. It is an invitation to notice the difference between what appeared and what you added. That difference makes the moment wider.

Meet the now in a short burst

Choose one moment from today. Describe it in one sentence using only what a camera or microphone could have recorded. Then notice what you want to add.

For Sarah to bring into this chapter

A scene in which an ordinary event acquired an enormous meaning before you could see the difference. What did the room actually contain?



The body responds

Your organism moves first.

Before you finish the thought, your shoulders rise. Heat reaches your face. You may feel an urge to leave, explain, please, attack or disappear. None of these movements is a verdict on your character.

The body registers possibility and threat through pathways older and faster than a deliberate argument. Its response matters. It may carry a warning you should heed. It may also carry the shape of an earlier moment into this one. We do not know which by sensation alone.

So we stay interested. Where does the reaction begin? Does it have a direction? What happens when you give it ten seconds of attention without making it your instruction?

Meet the now in a short burst

Place both feet on the floor. Recall a mild moment of uncertainty. Notice one physical change. Name its location, quality and direction. Do not try to relax it.

For Sarah to bring into this chapter

A bodily detail that you know intimately and have never quite written. Let it be specific rather than symbolic.



Meaning forms

Meaning rushes in to create ground.

The mind is brilliant at making a story from fragments. Under pressure it works faster, and the story can arrive with the feeling of fact. They are angry. I have failed. This will end badly. I have to fix it now.

Often the mind is not merely looking for truth. It is looking for somewhere to stand. That longing for ground deserves respect. But a thought does not become more accurate because it relieved uncertainty for a moment.

Ask what the story allows you to do and what it prevents you from seeing. You can take the thought seriously without handing it the whole room.

Meet the now in a short burst

Write the first sentence your mind supplied. Put ‘I am having the thought that’ in front of it. Read it again. Is there another account that could also fit the observed facts?

For Sarah to bring into this chapter

A live example of a story that protected you and narrowed you at the same time. Avoid making the story foolish in retrospect.



Presence anchors

A pause makes choice possible.

Presence is sometimes mistaken for serenity. I am more interested in what happens while you are still activated. Can you feel the heat and stay in the conversation? Can you notice the urge to win and still hear the other person?

This pause need not be elegant. You may say, ‘Give me a moment.’ You may feel your feet. You may decide that leaving is the wisest action. Presence does not require you to endure what harms you. It lets you act from more of what you know.

When you remain in contact with yourself, another person and the actual situation, information becomes available that reaction could not reach. Sometimes the information changes your choice. Sometimes it confirms a boundary. Either way, the action is more yours.

Meet the now in a short burst

Before answering one difficult message, take three ordinary breaths. Read it once for the facts, once for your body's response. Then choose the next honest action, including the option to wait.

For Sarah to bring into this chapter

A moment when presence was untidy: no perfect composure, but enough contact to make a different choice.



Curiosity remains

The moment stays open.

We can use insight to close a moment too. Once we have named the pattern, we may stop looking. Curiosity asks us to keep a small opening even after we think we understand.

It is not endless analysis. It is an active relationship with what has not yet shown itself. What else could be happening? What does this person know that I do not? What changes if I let the answer take another day?

Some moments demand immediate action. Curiosity can still accompany it. It keeps us from becoming identical with the first position we took. It makes room for a correction, a new boundary, a better question, or a surprising tenderness.

Meet the now in a short burst

Take one conclusion you reached this week. Without arguing against it, write one question that could make the picture more complete. Carry the question for a day.

For Sarah to bring into this chapter

A scene in which remaining curious did not mean giving up authority. What did you learn only after refusing a premature conclusion?

AFTER THE FIVE

Return to the moment

The five movements do not end with an improved version of you. You will still react. You will still want certainty. You may know this work well and forget it completely in the moment that matters most.

Then begin again with what appeared.

Meet the Now can grow through short pieces: a scene, a movement, a question, a practice. Some belong on a page. Some need a voice, a body and another person in the room. The book can hold the spine of the work while those other forms test it in life.

A working path for the next draft

Replace the prompts in each chapter with one lived scene in Sarah's own language.

Develop each movement through a personal scene and a professional or group scene.

Record short conversations or exercises that reveal where training the skill becomes difficult.

Review the claims about stress physiology before publication and add precise sources where needed.

Decide whether the first published edition is English, Dutch, or written in both languages in parallel.