



SUSTAINED COURAGE PODCAST
Companion Handbook & Workbook

Episode:

The In-Between Is the Life

Your life is not a plot summary.

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How to Use This Handbook

This companion handbook is designed to go alongside the Sustained Courage podcast episode *The In-Between Is the Life*. You can use it while you listen, right after, or return to it whenever you need a reminder that your life is more than its hardest moments.

This booklet has three parts:

- Episode highlights and key ideas — the most important concepts from each segment
- Reflection prompts — gentle questions to sit with at your own pace
- Practical tools — the mood tracker, the reframing exercise, and the five practices from the episode

There is no right way to use this. Write in it. Ignore a section. Come back to a page. Let it be a tool, not an assignment.

Episode Overview

The episode opens with a confession: Rachel read the Wikipedia plot summary for *Legends of the Fall* instead of watching it. And what struck her was how appalling any life sounds when condensed into bullet points — love, death, betrayal, grief, repeat.

"Maybe our lives feel horrible sometimes because we are reading them like a plot summary."

From there, the episode moves through five connected ideas: why our brains are wired to overweight the hard days, what history tells us about ordinary human life, the neuroscience of negativity bias and memory, how tracking can offer a more truthful view, and why the courage of ordinary days deserves recognition.

Segment 1: The Problem With Plot Summaries

We say 'it's the little things' — and then proceed to live as if it isn't. Our nervous systems are wired for threat detection, and our culture amplifies urgency. The result: we become our own 24-hour news cycle, treating every difficult moment as breaking news.

But that's not the full picture. When we let the worst days become the title of a whole year, we are doing ourselves a disservice. We're not lying — the hard things are real. But we're telling an emotionally incomplete story.

"A full accounting of reality. Not toxic positivity. More like emotional bookkeeping, but with fewer spreadsheets and slightly more mascara. — Beatrix"

Key Idea

There is a difference between "this hard thing happens" and "this hard thing is my entire life." There is a difference between "we had a terrible day" and "all days are terrible." There is a difference between a pixel and the whole picture.

♦ REFLECT

Think about a season or year that you remember as "terrible." If you actually mapped out the individual days — black days, hard days, neutral days, good days — what do you think the breakdown might look like? What might you have been skipping over?

Segment 2: The Past Was Not Always a Hellscape

Beatrix takes us into history to demonstrate that ordinary life has always existed alongside catastrophe. The historical record skews toward drama because dramatic things leave marks — wars, plagues, kings. But life was also goats and gossip and bad jokes written on walls.

Evidence from History

- Pompeii: the walls were covered in graffiti — insults, flirtations, political endorsements, people announcing they were hot. Before the volcano, people were having a Tuesday.
- Medieval marginalia: monks illuminating sacred manuscripts drew murder rabbits, snails fighting knights, and deranged monkeys. Exhausted employees have always doodled during meetings.
- The woman with blue teeth: a religious woman from the 11th or 12th century had lapis lazuli pigment preserved in her dental calculus — evidence she was an illuminated manuscript artist who licked her brush while she worked. Her plaque became her resume.

- Shanidar Cave: Neanderthal remains show survival after serious injury, suggesting care within the group. Before hospitals. Before inspirational quotes. Someone said: you are still one of us.

"History remembers the volcano. But life was also the person in Pompeii writing something stupid on a wall before lunch. — Beatrix"

✦ REFLECT

What is a historical ordinary moment that surprises or moves you? What does it make you think about the ordinary moments in your own life right now?

Segment 3: The Science of Why Bad Days Take Over

There are real neurological reasons our brains compress painful seasons around the worst moments.

Negativity Bias

Our brains are wired to prioritize negative information. From a survival standpoint, missing a predator was far more costly than missing a sunset. So the brain learned to tag danger as important — to remember threat, to replay pain as a form of learning.

The problem: the brain is not always giving us a balanced documentary. It is giving us a threat report. And threat reports are biased by design.

Memory Is Reconstructive

Every time we remember something, we rebuild it — shaped by current mood, beliefs, stress level, and the story we've been telling ourselves. If the story is "that year was horrible," the brain finds evidence.

The Peak-End Rule

We tend to judge an experience by its most intense moment and by how it ended — not by the average of all the moments inside it. A season with a few awful peaks gets remembered as awful overall. A relationship with a painful ending can make us question whether any of it was good.

"The brain is less of a court stenographer and more of a dramatic editor with unresolved childhood wounds. — Beatrix"

REFLECT

Can you identify a story you've been telling about a period of your life? What theme has your "dramatic editor" assigned to it? Is there another possible theme — one that's equally true?

Segment 4: The Mood Tracker and the Whole Picture

Tracking isn't about forcing optimism. It's about gathering evidence. When we're in pain, we use words like always and never. A tracker can interrupt that. It turns "everything is terrible" into "this week had two storms, three cloudy days, and two clear ones."

"A black day is still a black day. But it is not automatically a black life. — Beatrix"

Your Weekly Weather Tracker

Use the table below to track each day's emotional "weather" for the week. Rate each day as one of: Storm / Cloudy / Mixed / Clear / Beautiful. Then note one small good moment and anything that stood out.

Day	Weather Rating	One Good Moment	Notes
Monday	Cloudy Mixed Clear Beautiful		

Tuesday	   		
Wednesday	   		
Thursday	   		
Friday	   		
Saturday	   		
Sunday	   		

After one week, look back. What is the actual breakdown? What does this tell you about the story you've been telling about this season?

✦ **WRITE IT OUT**

What does this week's weather tell me? What am I noticing?

Segment 5: Five Practical Practices

These are the five practices from the episode. Read through them, then mark the one that feels most relevant to you right now.

1. Track the weather, not just the storms

At the end of each day, give it a simple rating. Storm. Cloudy. Clear. Sunny. You don't need an app. A sticky note works. The point isn't judgment — it's evidence. When your brain says "everything is always bad," you can look back and say: actually, here's what the week looked like.

✦ **REFLECT**

What simple tracking system could you realistically keep up for two weeks? What would you want to

know about your own patterns?

2. Name the in-between moments out loud

The brain tags danger automatically. Sometimes we have to manually tag safety. When something small is good — say it out loud, or write it down. "This coffee is good." "This walk helped." "I feel okay right now." Leave little breadcrumbs for your nervous system.

✦ WRITE IT OUT

Write five small moments from this week that were okay, good, or even quietly beautiful. They don't have to be impressive.

3. Stop making the worst moment the title

When you look back at a chapter, ask: what title have I given this time? And is it the only possible title? You don't have to make it pretty. You just have to make it whole.

Here are the examples from the episode — and a blank row for your own:

The Plot Summary Title	A Whole-Story Title
The Year Everything Fell Apart	The Year I Learned What I Could Survive
The Job That Broke Me	The Job That Made Me Tell the Truth
The Season of Waiting	The Season Where I Kept Going
Write your own →	

4. Let ordinary days count

A day where nothing got worse counts. A day where you did the minimum counts. A day where you didn't solve your whole life but you also didn't burn it down counts. Maintenance is sacred. Getting through a Tuesday without making everything worse is an underrated spiritual practice.

♦ REFLECT

What is one ordinary thing you do regularly that keeps your life functioning — something you rarely give yourself credit for?

5. Zoom out before you declare the story

When you're tempted to say "this is always bad," ask: is this a moment, a pattern, or a story?

- A moment is something happening right now.
- A pattern is something that repeats and needs attention.
- A story is the meaning you're making from it.

If it's a pattern, address it. If it's harmful, take it seriously. But if it's a moment, don't hand it the microphone for your entire life.

♦ REFLECT

Think of something difficult you've been calling "always" or "never." Is it a moment, a pattern, or a story? What would it mean to treat it as each one?

Segment 6: The Courage of the Ordinary

Life is not mostly made of the big cinematic moments. It is mostly the drive home, the emails, the brushing of teeth, the trying again. And if most of life is small, then small things are powerful.

"Those are not filler. Those are not throwaway scenes. Those are the life."

Courage isn't only what we do in the big moments. Courage is also what we practice in the in-between. It is how we let a good moment be good even when something hard is still true. It is how we allow ourselves to laugh in a hospital waiting room. It is how we buy the flowers. It is how we make the soup.

"The in-between is not empty space. It is where the soul catches its breath. — Beatrix"

♦ REFLECT

What small act of courage have you performed this week — something ordinary that took quiet effort? How can you honor that?

This Week's Practice

From Rachel, to close the episode:

"What small moment from today deserves to count? Not the biggest thing. Not the most dramatic thing. Not the thing that would make it into the movie trailer. Just one small moment. A sip. A laugh. A color. A breath. A tiny little proof that your life is still happening in between the plot points. Hold onto that. Let it count. Because it does."

✦ WRITE IT OUT

My one small moment from today that deserves to count:

Be brave. Be kind. Always be yourself.

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