

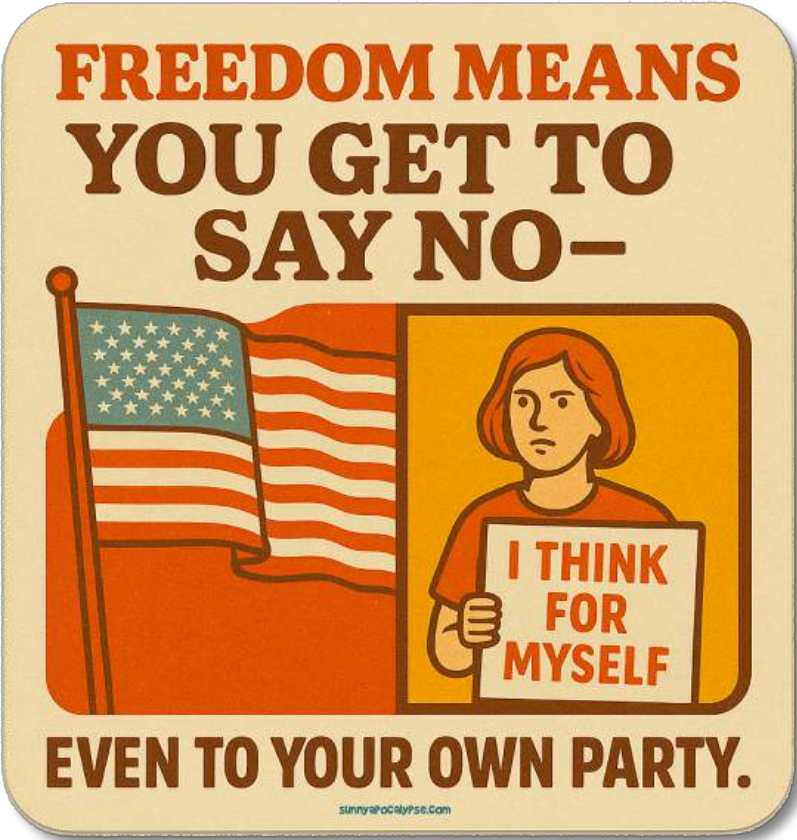
HOW TO:

**BE AN ACTIVE
AMERICAN
CITIZEN**

**A PRACTICAL
WORKBOOK FOR
REGULAR PEOPLE**

SUNNY APOCALYPSE

This Sunny Apocalypse Civics Workbook is designed for adults who feel confused, overwhelmed, or disconnected from American politics. Written in plain language and (hopefully) without talking down to you, it breaks down how government works through short chapters with built-in exercises. Because we each learn a little different from each other. There is space to collect the specific information you need to exercise your civic rights in real life. At a human pace. The goal isn't to turn you into an expert— it's to turn confusion into confidence, and confidence into everyday civic heroism. LFG!!!



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To reach Sunny, go to: <https://sunnyapocalypse.com/>

I dedicate this work to my family:

Steve, Sam, Alex, Paul, Jenn, Candace, countless sisters from different misters, and brothers from other mothers who have always been there for me throughout the unnecessary drastic ups and downs.

You gifted me with space and grace to allow me to figure out my third career—where I teach others how to be active American citizens.

Thanks for believing in me before I did.

All the love & light-
Sunny Apocalypse

THIS WORKBOOK BELONGS TO:

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INTRODUCTION

You Don't Have to Be a Political Person to Be an Active Citizen

You don't need a law degree.

You don't need a podcast.

You don't need to win arguments online.

You just need to understand how the system works — and where **you** fit inside it.

This is not a book about being loud.

It's a book about being steady.

It's not about saving the country alone.

It's about participating in small, repeatable ways.

That's it.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This book is meant to be worked on at your pace

Each chapter includes:

- **A plain explanation**
- **A real-world example**
- **A write-it-down section**
- **A try-it section**

Move at your own pace.

You are not behind.

When you see these lines—it's your chance to make this book uniquely yours. 📌

PART I: HOW THE SYSTEM IS BUILT

1. WHAT THE FOUNDERS WERE TRYING TO PREVENT

The people who built this government had lived under a king.

They **did not want** one person in charge forever.

They **did not want** laws applied unevenly.

They **did not want** leaders who could not be removed.

So they divided federal power into **three** branches:

Legislative-Congress makes laws.

Executive-The President carries them out.

Judiciary-The Courts interpret them.

Each branch can **limit** the others.

That **friction** is intentional—it's even cooked in our founding documents.

America didn't begin with instructions.

It began with a list of grievances.



The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

Why They Walked Away From England

The Declaration is not a how-to guide for governing.

It's a breakup letter. 🇺🇸💔🇬🇧

Its core message is simple and radical:

- Governments exist to **protect human dignity**
- When they don't, people have the right to change them

It names abuses of power:

- Arbitrary rule
- Unaccountable authority
- Laws enforced unequally
- People treated as expendable

This document isn't polite.

It's angry — and deliberately so. 🔥

Activity: Spot the Pattern

Here's four bullet points taken directly from the Declaration of Independence speaking about how King George has abused his power:

- ☀ *He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.*
- ☀ *He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.*

- ☼ *He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.*
- ☼ *He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.*

Now, write down **modern examples** where **power feels unaccountable**. How do you think the authors of the Declaration of Independence would feel about your modern examples.

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The Constitution, June 21, 1788

How They Tried to Make Power Behave

The Constitution is **a response to fear**. 😞

The founders were **afraid** of:

- Kings
- Concentrated power
- Leaders who couldn't be removed
- Governments that moved too fast

So they built **friction** on purpose.

They split power into **three branches**

- **Legislative**- create laws
- **Executive**- execute laws
- **Judicial**- interpret laws

Each with powers over the other branches, the founders saw this would **check and balance government power** by:

- Forced disagreement
- Slowed decision-making
- Made ambition check ambition

This wasn't because they trusted people.

It's because they **didn't**. 🔥

Activity: Draw the Guardrails

Read the summary of the first three articles of the US Constitution:

Article I — The Lawmakers (Congress)

Article I creates Congress, the branch that writes the laws. Congress has two parts:

- **The House of Representatives** — number of state representatives is based on population of the state. Serve two year terms. Thought as the “vibe of today's America.”

- **The Senate** — two senators from each state. Serve six year terms, a third is elected every two years. Thought as the “elder statesman.”

Congress debates ideas, writes bills, and votes on what becomes law. It also controls taxes, spending, and the power to declare war.

Article II — The President (Executive Branch)

Article II creates the President and the Executive Branch. The president’s job is to carry out and **enforce the laws** that Congress passes.

Some of the president’s powers include: commanding the military, signing and approving or vetoing laws, appointing officials and judges, and conducting foreign policy.

The president serves a four-year term and can be removed through impeachment. There is a two term limit.

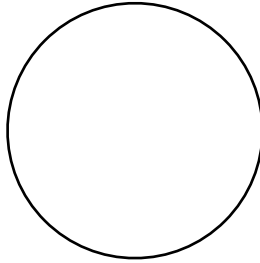
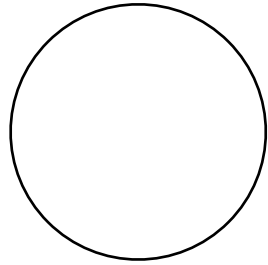
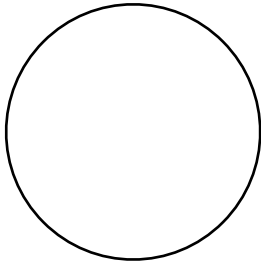
Article III — The Courts (Judicial Branch)

Article III creates the **Supreme Court** and allows **Congress to create other federal courts**.

The courts decide: what the law means, whether laws follow the Constitution and how disputes under federal law are resolved.

Federal judges **serve during good behavior**, which usually means **for life**, so they can make decisions without political pressure.

- On the next page, label the three circles: **L** for legislative, **E** for Executive, and **J** for Judicial.
- Add arrows showing how each limits the others. Label one way each branch checks the other two branches. We will learn even more ways our government **checks and balances** itself in the next chapter.



- Star the points in where bad faith breaks the system of a **free and fair government** of the people. Jot down a modern day crack in the system.

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The Bill of Rights, December 15, 1791

Who the Federal Government is Not Allowed to Touch—*tldr; it's you!*

The Bill of Rights is not about what the government gives you. It's about **what it is forbidden to take.** 🔥

These rights exist because our founders knew **power will overreach if unchecked.**

After **public debate** between **federalists**, those who thought the constitution was enough, and **anti-federalists**, those who didn't trust centralized federal power, the Bill of Rights was ratified.

They didn't add them as decoration.

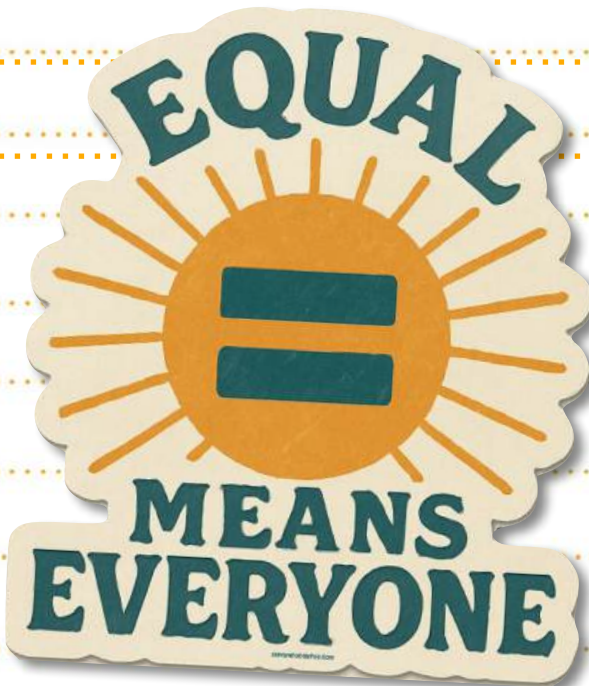
They added them because **people demanded protection.**

Activity: Draw the Guardrails

Read this summary of the first ten amendments of our constitution:

5. Freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition.
6. Right of the people to keep and bear arms.
7. No soldiers housed in private homes without consent.
8. Protection from unreasonable searches and seizures without proper warrants.
9. Due process, no self-incrimination, no double jeopardy, compensation for property seized.
10. Right to a speedy public trial with jury and legal counsel in criminal cases.
11. Right to jury trial in some civil cases.
12. No excessive bail, fines, or cruel and unusual punishment.
13. People retain rights beyond those listed in the Constitution.
14. Powers not given to federal government belong to states or people.

- Pick one or two amendments.
- Write what they protect *in your voice*.
- Write one way the protections can erode



What These Old Documents Have in Common

Active American Citizens

They all assume:

- Power will try to expand
- People will be tempted to abuse it
- Freedom requires maintenance

None of them promise comfort.

All of them **require participation.**

They were written for a public that:

- Paid attention
- Organized locally
- Argued loudly
- Expected accountability

They do not work without that kind of public.

What Went Wrong

The documents stayed.


The habits faded.

Participation shrank.

Community weakened.

Power learned how to hide behind procedure.

The system didn't collapse.

It **drifted** — unattended. 

Why This Still Matters

These documents were not meant to trap us in the past.

They were meant to **give us leverage in the present.**

They are tools.

And tools only work when people pick them up.



End-of-Chapter Reflection

Complete this sentence:

“If these documents were written to protect people from power, then today my responsibility is to _____.”

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PART I: HOW THE SYSTEM IS BUILT

2. CHECKS, BALANCES & THE ASSUMPTION OF GOOD FAITH

How the System is Supposed to Restrain Power — and What Happens When It Doesn't

The founders didn't trust power.

So they made it argue with itself.

That's the whole idea behind checks and balances.

Not efficiency.

Not harmony.

Tension.

The Big Idea: No single part of government was supposed to be in charge for long.

Every branch was designed to:

- Expect the want of more power
- Be blocked by the others
- Be forced to explain itself

This only works if one quiet assumption holds:

People act in **good faith**.

That assumption is doing a lot of work. 🦴

The Three Branches

Yes, again.

The Legislative Branch (Congress)

Job: Make the laws

Power: Control money, write rules, oversee the rest

Congress was meant to be:

- Slow
- Argumentative

Built-in check: they can investigate, defund, impeach.

What can go wrong: Congress **avoids conflict, accountability collapses.**

The Executive Branch (The President & Agencies)

Job: Carry out the laws

Power: Enforce, execute, administer

The executive was meant to:

- Act, but not rule
- Be energetic, not unchecked
- Follow the law, not redefine it

Built-in check: Congress controls funding. Courts review legality.

What can go wrong: **enforcement replaces lawmaking**, power concentrates fast.

The Judicial Branch (The Courts)

Job: Interpret the law

Power: Decide what's constitutional

Courts were meant to:

- Be slow
- Be careful
- Be insulated from politics

Built-in check: They can only act when cases are brought.

They rely on enforcement by others.

What can go wrong: courts **become personal and passive**, delay becomes denial.

How Checks & Balances Are Supposed to Feel

Messy. Frustrating. Slow. The Anti-Modern Pace.

That **slowness is not a bug**. It's the feature.

The system was designed to:

- Prevent sudden takeovers
- Make abuse visible
- Force public debate
- Give citizens time to react

The Assumption That Breaks Everything

Keeping One's Words is a Virtue. Unfortunately, just for some.

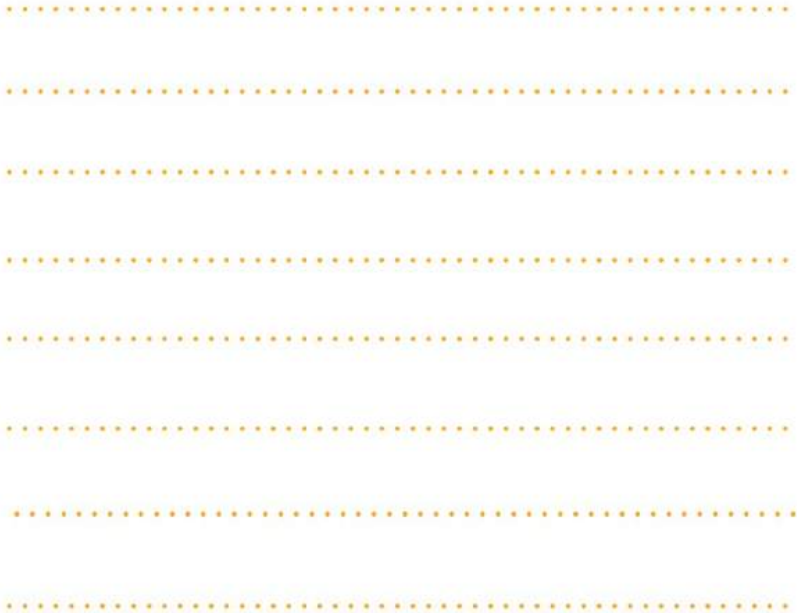
Checks and balances assume:

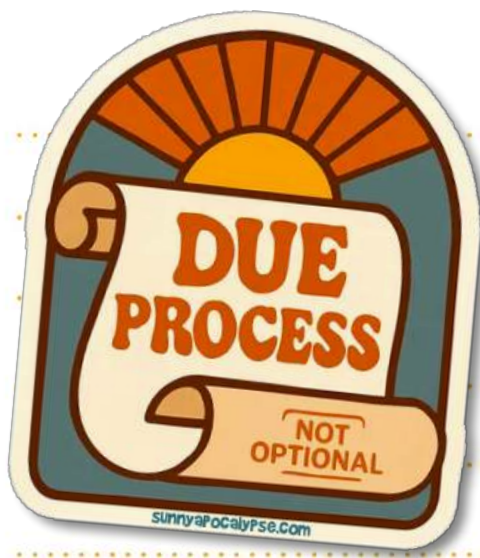
- Officials care about the institution
- Norms matter
- Shame works
- Truth eventually wins
- Someone will step in

But when bad faith enters the system:

- Delay becomes strategy
- Procedure becomes cover
- Silence becomes complicity
- No one wants to go first

The system doesn't explode. **It stalls.**
And stalled systems quietly favor power.





A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, starting from the top right of the page and extending downwards.

What Bad Faith Looks Like (Without Party Labels)

- Refusing to act because it's "not the right time"
- Hiding behind process instead of addressing harm
- Treating norms as optional
- Using confusion to exhaust the public
- Letting violations slide because "the system will correct itself. " It won't — unless people force it to.

Checks and balances were never meant to be self-executing. They require pressure. Public pressure. Media pressure. Community pressure.

Without that:

- Congress hesitates
- Executives push boundaries
- Courts retreat
- Power accumulates

Why This Is Still Fixable

The system didn't forget how to work.
It's waiting for participation.

When people:

- Pay attention
- Name abuse clearly
- Demand action early
- Support those who speak up

Checks and balances wake back up.

They respond to sunlight.

Activities: Put the System to Work



Activity 1: Spot the Missing Check

- Think of a recent political controversy.
- Identify which branch acted.
- Identify which branch should have checked it.
- Write what stopped or didn't stop that check from happening.





Activity 2: Good Faith vs. Bad Faith

Complete the sentences in your words:

- Good faith looks like: _____
- Bad faith looks like: _____

Keep it behavioral. No names required.



Activity 3: Your Pressure Point

Answer honestly:

- Which branch feels most distant to you?
- Which feels most reachable?
- One small way you could apply pressure (call, attend, write, support).



End-of-Chapter Reflection

Finish this sentence:

“When power avoids accountability, my role is to _____ — even if it feels uncomfortable.”

.....

.....



PART I: HOW THE SYSTEM IS BUILT

3. HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

Quick & dirty with a bazillion caveats not listed.

Laws are rules and regulations which we as citizens need to abide by. Congress makes the laws out of bills.

In a perfect world:

1. A member of Congress (a member of the House or the Senate) introduces a bill to their chamber.
2. If “passed” it’s assigned to a bi-partisan committee, such as judicial, oversight, commerce...
3. The committee debates, edits, or blocks the bill.
Committees are often where decisions are quietly made.
4. If approved by the committee, the full chamber votes.
5. If approved, the other chamber repeats the process.
6. If approved by the second chamber, it goes to the president.
7. If rejected by the second chamber, it goes to a conference committee where both chambers negotiate, then back to both chambers for another vote.
8. If approved by both chambers, the President signs or vetoes the bill.
9. Once the president signs the bill, it becomes a law.
10. If the president vetoes the bill, congress may override it with a two-thirds vote in each the House and Senate.

Most bills never become law. Shocking. 😞

 **Activity: Write It Down**

Where do you think **public pressure** matters most in this process?

How do you think **public pressure** is applied to this process?
We will cover more in Part III, How You Fit In.

 **Try It**

Find one bill currently in committee here: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/> What does it propose?
Which committee controls it?

PART I: HOW THE SYSTEM IS BUILT

4. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL: WHO CONTROLS WHAT

There are four levels of government. One is not more important than the others, they are to function separately and collaborate for the citizens.

Federal handles **national** issues:

- National defense
- Immigration
- Constitutional rights
- Interstate commerce

State handles **statewide** systems:

- Education standards
- Criminal law
- Elections
- State courts

County often handles:

- Local courts
- Property records
- Public health

City or **town** handles:

- Zoning
- School boards
- Police departments
- Infrastructure

In regions that do not have cities or towns these responsibilities are usually up to the county government's.

Most daily-life issues are **local**.
Local is where citizens have the most leverage.

 **Write It Down**

One issue that frustrates me:

.....

Which level of government controls it?

.....

 **Find your government representatives and their contact info?**

A simple web search should help you find everyone.

Your city/ town mayor/ supreme leader:

.....

Your county leader, rep, or executive:

.....

Your state legislator:

.....

Your U.S. House Representative:

.....

Your two US Senators:

.....

Your Governor:

.....

Part II: WHAT WEAKENS THE SYSTEM

5. FALSE SAVIORS WHO ACT IN BAD FAITH & SPOTTING THEIR RED FLAGS

The system depends on responsible behavior and trust. Some people lie and don't act responsibly.

The Constitution assumes:

- Officials care about institutions
- Norms matter
- Oversight functions functioning

When good faith disappears:

- Delay becomes strategy
- Procedure becomes cover
- Silence protects power

The system does not collapse.
It stalls.

How to Recognize Power That Wants Obedience, Not Accountability

When systems feel broken, people look for someone to fix them. That moment is dangerous.

False saviors thrive when:

- Institutions feel slow
- People feel unheard
- Life feels unstable
- Trust is low
- Fear is high



False saviors promise:

- Speed instead of process
- Certainty instead of complexity
- Loyalty instead of accountability

It feels relieving at first.

That's the trap. 😡

The Difference Between Leaders & False Saviors

A real leader:

- Strengthens institutions
- Encourages participation
- Accepts limits
- Invites scrutiny

A false savior:

- Weakens institutions
- Centralizes power
- Demands loyalty
- Punishes dissent

Common Red Flags (Across Ideologies)

▶ **They Say “Only I Can Fix It”**

Democracy is collective by design.

Anyone claiming singular salvation is lying.

▶ **They Treat Accountability as Persecution**

Criticism becomes “witch hunts.”

Oversight becomes “sabotage.”

If questioning power is framed as betrayal, walk away.

▶ **They Replace Truth with Identity**

Facts matter less than belonging.

Disagreement becomes moral failure.

This turns politics into a loyalty test.

▶ **They Blur the Line Between Leader and Nation**

Criticizing them becomes unpatriotic.

The country becomes inseparable from the person.

That's not leadership.

That's possession.

▶ **They Exhaust You on Purpose**

Constant emergencies.

Constant enemies.

No time to reflect.

Exhaustion keeps people dependent.

It's called weaponized confusion.

Why False Saviors Love Chaos because it:

- Lowers standards
- Makes lies harder to track
- Creates emotional dependence
- Rewards outrage
- Hides incompetence

If everything is a crisis, nothing is accountable.

Democracy doesn't need a savior.

It needs **stewards**.

How to Protect Yourself and Others

Slow it down, be observant, and ask questions.

Anchor to Our Systems:

Does this strengthen or weaken checks and balances?

Does it expand rights or narrow them?

Watch Behavior, Not Rhetoric

Ignore promises.

Track patterns.

Power tells the truth through actions.

Stay Connected to Real People

Cults isolate.

Democracy connects.

If a movement pushes you away from friends, family, or community — pause.

Slow the Tempo

False saviors rush you.

Democracy asks you to think.

Urgency is often manufactured.

Activities: Build Your Red Flag Radar

Activity 1: Pattern Spotting

Think of a leader or movement (past or present).

- List three behaviors.
- Do they strengthen or weaken institutions?





Activity 2: Rewrite the Pitch

Take a savior-style message like this one or a real one: “I alone can fix the problem”

Rewrite it as a collective action. Notice what changes.



Activity 3: Personal Boundary Check

Finish this sentence:

“If a leader demands _____ from me, I step back.”



End-of-Chapter Reflection

Finish this sentence:

“Leadership I can trust looks like _____, not _____.”

REAL PATRIOTS



**DON'T BOW
TO BILLIONAIRES**

www.thefirst.com

Part II: WHAT WEAKENS THE SYSTEM

6. WEAPONIZED CONFUSION

How Power Uses Chaos to Stay in Control

When power can't convince you,
it tries to **exhaust you**.

This chapter is about one of the most effective political weapons of the modern era:

Confusion.

- Not honest disagreement.
- Not debate.
- Not complexity.

Weaponized confusion.

The Core Trick

Democracy depends on people being able to:

- Understand what's happening
- Decide what matters
- Act together

So the fastest way to weaken democracy is not force.

It's overload.

If everything feels confusing, overwhelming, or contradictory,
people stop trying.

That's the goal.

How Weaponized Confusion Works

1. Flood the Zone

So many stories.

So many scandals.

So many outrages.

Nothing gets processed.

Nothing gets resolved.

Everything blurs.

2. Blur Truth and Opinion

Facts become “just perspectives.”

Evidence becomes “spin.”

Reality becomes negotiable.

If truth feels slippery, accountability disappears.

3. Turn Complexity into a Weapon

Some things *are* complex.

But complexity can be used to intimidate people into silence.

“If you don’t fully understand it, don’t question it.”

That’s not education.

That’s gaslighting.

4. Exhaust the Public

Constant alerts.

Constant crises.

Constant emotional spikes.

People aren’t uninformed.

They’re **burned out**.

Burnout favors power.

5. Create False Choices

“You’re either with us or against us.”

“You either agree completely or you’re the enemy.”

Nuance disappears.

Community fractures.

What Weaponized Confusion Is Not

It’s not disagreement.

It’s not complexity.

It’s not people asking questions in good faith.

Weaponized confusion is intentional disorientation.

Its purpose is not to persuade you.

It’s to make you stop engaging.

Reality Check

When people say:

- “I don’t even know what’s true anymore”
- “It’s all too much”
- “Nothing matters”

That’s not apathy.

That’s a programmed response to overload.

How the Founders Tried to Guard Against This

They assumed:

- Information would move slowly
- Communities would talk face-to-face
- Power would be visible
- Lies would be harder to sustain

They could not have imagined:

- Algorithmic amplification
- For-profit outrage
- Constant psychological pressure
- Reality being fragmented on purpose

The system wasn’t built for this environment.

So we have to adapt.

Countermeasures: How to Disarm Confusion

1. Slow the Pace

You don’t need every update.

You need patterns.

- What’s repeating?
- Who benefits?
- What’s being avoided?

2. Translate Into Plain Language

If something can’t be explained simply, it’s either:

- Not understood
- Being hidden

Clarity is power.

3. Separate Noise from Harm

Not every outrage is equal.

Focus on:

- Who is being harmed
- Whether rights are being violated
- Whether accountability is being avoided

4. Anchor to Community

Talk to real people.

Offline if possible.

Confusion dissolves faster in conversation than online.

5. Protect Your Attention

Your attention is a civic resource.

Guard it.

You can stay informed without being consumed.

Activities: Build Your Confusion Shield



Activity 1: Spot the Technique

- Pick a recent headline or viral post.
 - Identify which confusion tactic is being used.
 - Write it down.
-
-



Activity 2: Plain-Language Rewrite

- Take a recent complex political statement.
 - Rewrite it in one sentence a 12-year-old could understand.
 - Notice what gets clearer — or suspicious.
-
-

PART III: WHERE YOU FIT

7. VOTING IS THE BARE MINIMUM

Voting is essential.

Voting is not optional.

It is not trivial.

But it's also **the minimum**. Sorry, not sorry.

This chapter is about understanding what voting can do — and what it **can't** do on its own.

Why Voting Matters (A Lot), It:

- Determines who holds formal power
- Shapes courts, agencies, and laws or city, states and the country
- Sets the direction of government, a win can be seen as a mandate
- Protects against outright takeover

Without voting, democracy collapses quickly. That's why attacks on voting are always the first move of authoritarians.

Why Voting Alone Isn't Enough

Voting happens:

- Once every year or two
- After life-altering decisions have been made
- Long after damage may have started

Power doesn't rest between elections. It acts:

- Through agencies
- Through courts
- Through budgets
- Through enforcement choices
- Through quiet procedural decisions

If civic engagement only shows up on Election Day, power will happily fill the rest of the calendar.

The Founders Never Imagined “Vote and Go Home,” They Assumed:

- Constant public involvement
- Pressure between elections
- Citizens who watched closely
- Communities that reacted early

Elections were meant to **ratify accountability**, not replace it.

The Two Big Myths

Myth 1: “My Vote Doesn’t Matter”

- Yup. One vote is small. But if millions of disengaged people believe this, the results are catastrophic.
- The real danger isn’t insignificance. It’s withdrawal.

Myth 2: “Voting Is the Only Thing That Counts”

This myth is just as dangerous. It convinces people that:

- Everything else is pointless
- Institutions will self-correct
- Civic work can wait. It can’t.

Civics! It’s What Fills the Space Between Elections

Healthy democracies rely on:

- Community pressure
- Media scrutiny
- Budget attention
- Local organizing
- Mutual aid
- Public testimony
- Consistent civic presence

This is where most accountability actually happens.

Voting is how you:

- Choose the players

Civics is how you:

- Influence the game

You need both.

Why Power Loves Low Turnout — and Low Engagement

Low turnout:

- Skews outcomes
- Rewards extreme positions
- Weakens legitimacy

Low engagement:

- Lets abuses slide
- Normalizes delay
- Protects insiders
- Makes capture easier

Together, they create a vacuum.

Power rushes into vacuums.

What Voting Looks Like in a Healthy Civic Life

In a functioning democracy:

- Voting is expected
- Participation is ongoing
- Losing an election doesn't end engagement
- Winning an election doesn't end oversight

Democracy is not a mood.

It's a routine.

Activities: Build a “Vote Plus” Plan



Activity 1: Lock in Voting

Go to <https://www.vote411.org/>

Answer:

- How do I vote? (mail, early, day-of)
- What do I need to check or update?
- Who can I help vote?

Make this automatic.



+ Activity 2: Add One More Thing

Choose one activity you are interested in doing:

- Call a rep quarterly
- Attend one local meeting a year
- Support a local watchdog group
- Help with voter registration
- Share clear, factual explainers

Write it down.

Activity 3: Stay After the Election

Answer:

- What will I keep doing regardless of who wins?
- Who will I stay connected to?

Democracy doesn't end on Election Day.

End-of-Chapter Reflection

Finish this sentence:

“After I vote, my responsibility continues through _____

PART III: WHERE YOU FIT

8. FINDING YOUR COMMUNITY

Democracy was not meant to be defended by heroes. It was meant to be maintained by neighbors.

The Lie We're Taught

- You're just one person
- Your actions don't matter
- Real power lives far away
- Experts will handle it

This belief is convenient — for power.

Because isolated people are easier to ignore than organized ones.

What the Founders Actually Assumed

- Strong local communities
- Frequent face-to-face discussion
- Civic participation as a habit, not an event
- A public that noticed abuses early

Community Is a Check on Power

Before courts act.

Before Congress moves.

Before elections arrive.

Community is the early warning system.

When people are connected:

- Lies spread slower
- Abuse gets noticed
- Isolation breaks
- Courage becomes contagious

Power can ignore individuals.

It struggles against **organized community**.

Why Community Was Undermined

Community didn't disappear on its own.

It was weakened by:

- Overwork
- Economic instability
- Long commutes and screen life
- Online outrage replacing real connection
- The lie that independence means isolation

Disconnected people are easier to manage.

That wasn't accidental.

Community doesn't have to be big.

It doesn't have to be formal.

It doesn't have to be perfect.

It just has to be **real**.

A group chat.

A potluck.

A book club.

A union meeting.

A faith group.

A neighborhood walk.

These are not soft activities.

They are **infrastructure**.



How Community Actually Changes Things

- Applies pressure without shouting
- Creates shared understanding
- Supports people who speak up
- Makes sustained action possible
- Turns fear into coordination

It's how:

- Calls get returned
- Investigations start
- Abuses surface
- Movements survive setbacks

You Don't Have to Lead

Leadership is optional.

Participation is not.

Most change is driven by people who:

- Show up
- Do their part
- Keep coming back

No spotlight required.

Counter-myth

You are not powerless because you are small.

You are most powerful when you are **connected**.

Activities: Build Your Community

Activity 1: Name Your People

List:

- 2-5 people you trust
- Any groups you're already part of
- One place you regularly show up

That's your starting network.

Activity 2: Make It Civic

For one group you listed:

- What issue do you already talk about?
 - How could that become civic (one question, one action)?
-
-

Activity 3: One Small Tie

Answer:

- Who could you check in with this month?
 - What's one way to strengthen that connection?
-
-

End-of-Chapter Reflection

Finish this sentence:

“The community I can strengthen right now is _____,
and my next step is _____.”



PART III: WHERE YOU FIT

9. MICRO-HEROICS

Small Actions That Add Up (Without Burning Out)

Democracy doesn't collapse because people do nothing. It collapses because people believe **only big things matter**.

This chapter is about the opposite idea:

Small, consistent actions — done by many people — are how systems actually change.

The Myth of the Big Hero

We're taught that change comes from:

- One brave leader
- One massive protest
- One perfect election
- One viral moment

Those moments matter — but they're rare.

Democracy survives on something quieter:

regular participation by ordinary people.

What Micro-Heroics Are

Micro-heroics are:

- Low-drama
- Repeatable
- Sustainable
- Human-scale

They don't rely on motivation.

They rely on **habits**.

Why Small Actions Work

Small actions:

- Are harder to stop
- Don't burn people out
- Create social proof
- Build pressure over time
- Make participation normal

Power can wait out outrage.
It struggles against **persistence**.

Examples of Micro-Heroics

You don't need to do all of these.
One is enough.

Information

- Share one verified explainer
- Correct misinformation calmly
- Translate jargon into plain language

Pressure

- Call a representative once a month
- Send a short, clear email
- Show up to a local meeting quietly and consistently

Protection

- Accompany someone to court or an appointment
- Donate small, recurring amounts
- Support local mutual aid

Participation

- Serve on a board or committee
- Help register voters
- Volunteer one shift a quarter

Connection

- Invite one person into civic conversation
- Host a low-key gathering
- Keep a group chat alive and focused

None of this is glamorous.
That's why it works.

Rules of Engagement

If an action:

- Requires constant outrage
- Depends on going viral
- Makes you feel disposable
- Leaves you exhausted

It's not sustainable.

Micro-heroics should make you feel:

- More capable
- More connected
- More steady over time

Consistency Beats Intensity

One call a month for a year
beats one furious week followed by silence.

Democracy responds to:

- Patterns
- Pressure
- Presence

Not spikes.

You Are Allowed to Be Ordinary

You don't need:

- Perfect politics
- Endless energy
- Public visibility

You need:

- One lane
- One rhythm
- One way to show up

That's how real people protect systems.

Activities: Choose Your Micro-Heroics

Activity 1: Pick Your Lane

Circle the one that feels most doable:

- Information
- Pressure
- Protection
- Participation
- Connection

Ignore the rest — for now.





Activity 2: Set the Rhythm

Answer:

- How often can I realistically do this?
- Monthly? Quarterly? Seasonally?

Write it down.



Activity 3: Make It Specific

Complete this sentence:

“My micro-heroic action is _____, and I will do it _____.”

Post it somewhere you’ll see it.



End-of-Chapter Reflection

Finish this sentence:

“I don’t need to do everything — I need to do _____, consistently.”

PART III: WHERE YOU FIT

10. BUILD SOMETHING THAT LASTS

How Democracy Actually Gets Stronger. Big moments get remembered.

Small systems keep things going. This chapter is about the most underrated civic skill there is: **building something modest, human, and durable.**

Not movements that burn bright and disappear. Not online storms. Things that truly last.

Why Small Beats Big

Big efforts:

- Attract attention
- Require constant energy
- Collapse when leaders burn out
- Are easy to attack

Small efforts:

- Fly under the radar
- Spread quietly
- Survive leadership changes
- Compound over time

Democracy isn't saved by explosions.
It's saved by **infrastructure.**

What “Something Small” Actually Means

Small means:

- 5–15 people
- Low cost
- Easy to repeat
- No hero required
- Flexible, not rigid

If it needs:

- Perfection
- Charisma
- Endless urgency

It won't last.

Examples That Work (Historically and Now)

- A monthly potluck with one civic question
- A standing group chat for local issues
- Court-watch buddies who rotate shifts
- A neighborhood resource board
- A shared ride plan for voting days
- A once-a-quarter “What’s Actually Going On?” meetup
- A recurring donation circle
- A reading group that turns lessons into action

None of these are flashy.

All of them build **capacity**.

What Lasting Things Have in Common

- Have a rhythm
- Are welcoming, not exclusive
- Make participation easy
- Survive imperfect attendance
- Focus on people, not branding
- Leave room for rest

If missing one meeting “kills” the thing — redesign it.

If it can't survive:

- You being tired
- Someone disagreeing
- A bad month
- Low turnout

It's not built to last yet.

Adjust the scale.

Why This Scares Power

Small, steady groups:

- Share information calmly
- Apply pressure consistently
- Notice problems early
- Support whistleblowers
- Don't panic easily

They're hard to discredit.

Hard to exhaust.

Hard to shut down.

That's why they work.

You Don't Need Permission

You don't need:

- A nonprofit
- A logo
- A mission statement
- Social media approval

You need:

- One invitation
- One date
- One reason to gather

That's it.

Activities: Design Your "Small Thing"



Activity 1: Choose the Form

Circle one:

- Gathering
- Information-sharing
- Support
- Monitoring
- Resource-sharing



Activity 2: Set the Rhythm

Decide:

- Monthly? Quarterly?
- Same day, same time?

Predictability beats enthusiasm.



Activity 3: Name the First Five

Write down:

- Five people you'd invite
- One sentence you'd use to invite them

Keep it simple.



End-of-Chapter Reflection

Finish this sentence:

“The small thing I can build that might last is _____,
and I can start by _____.”

PART III: WHERE YOU FIT

11. RESIST. REST. REPEAT.

How Democracies Survive Long Enough to Win

Democracy is not a sprint.

It's not even a marathon.

It's a **relay**.

This chapter is about how people keep going without burning out, checking out, or giving up.

The Enemy Loves Burnout

Burned-out people:

- Stop paying attention
- Withdraw from community
- Lose trust in themselves
- Hand power to whoever still has energy

That's not a personal failure.

It's a predictable outcome of constant pressure.

Burnout is not accidental.

It's useful for bad actors.

Resistance That Destroys You Isn't Resistance

If civic engagement:

- Makes you constantly angry
- Costs your health
- Breaks your relationships
- Leaves you hopeless

It's not sustainable.

And unsustainable resistance doesn't protect democracy.

It hands it off to the loudest, least careful people.

The Sunny Model

Resist

- Name harm clearly
- Apply pressure calmly
- Show up when it matters
- Protect people being targeted
- Refuse lies and false choices

Resistance is **action**, not rage.

Rest

Some may see resting as a weakness. That's stupid.

Planned or not planned, rest is a requirement.

- Step back without guilt
- Disconnect intentionally
- Tend your mind, body and spirit
- Laugh
- Make art
- Be human

Rest is not quitting.

It's **your maintenance**.

Repeat

- Return when ready
- Stay connected
- Get back at it!

Democracy survives because people come back.

Why Rest Is a Civic Duty

A rested public:

- Thinks more clearly
- Falls for fewer tricks
- Stays connected
- Outlasts chaos
- Makes better decisions

Exhaustion makes people manipulable.

Rest makes people **resilient**.

You Are Not Required to Carry Everything

You are allowed to:

- Miss a meeting
- Take a break
- Say no
- Change lanes
- Ask for help

Democracy was never meant to rest on one set of shoulders. That's why community matters.

What Winning Actually Looks Like

It doesn't look like:

- Permanent victory
- Total agreement
- Final resolution

It looks like:

- Rights defended
- Damage limited
- People protected
- Systems nudged back toward accountability
- Communities still standing

That is success.

Activities: Build Your Sustain Plan



Activity 1: Know Your Warning Signs

Write down:

- How do you know you're burning out?
- What signals tell you it's time to rest?

Awareness comes first.



Activity 2: Name Your Rest

Answer honestly:

- What actually restores you?
- What drains you pretending to be “self-care”?

Protect the real thing.



Activity 3: Commit to the Cycle

Finish this sentence:

“When things get hard, I will resist by _____ and rest by _____.”

Sunny Takeaway

Democracy doesn’t survive because people never get tired. It survives because people **rest and return**.

Again.

And again.

And again.

PART III: WHERE YOU FIT

12. TIPS & TRICKS

Practical Civics for Real People

This section is about **doing**, not performing.
You don't need to be an expert.
You don't need to be fearless.
You just need a few clear steps.
Pick **one** activity to start. That's enough.

1. How to Volunteer for a Campaign

Without Getting Chewed Up

Campaigns run on **people**.

What Volunteering Actually Looks Like

- Phone or text banking
- Door knocking
- Data entry
- Event help
- Voter registration
- Poll watching
- Social media amplification

You are allowed to ask what you'll be doing **before** you say **yes**.

How to Start

1. Pick one race you care about (local, state, federal)
2. Visit the campaign website or social page.
3. Look for "**Volunteer**" or "**Get Involved.**"
4. Fill out the form with **honest availability**.

Low availability is better than burnout.

Good Questions to Ask

- What does a typical shift look like?
- How long is the commitment?
- Is training provided?
- Who do I contact if something feels off?

If a campaign can't answer these, that's a red flag.

✨ Sunny Tip

You are not disposable labor.

Healthy campaigns want **sustainable volunteers**, not martyrs.

2. How to Contact Congress (And Be Heard)

Scripts Beat Rants

Calling or writing Congress works best when it's:

- Brief
- Specific
- Repeated
- Calm

Anger is understandable.

Clarity is effective.

Who to Contact

- Your U.S. Representative
- Your two U.S. Senators
- State & Local legislators (often even more responsive)

Calls are logged—informs legislators what's important

The Basic Call Script

"Hi, my name is _____, and I live in _____.

I'm calling to ask Representative/Senator _____ to

_____.

This issue matters to me because _____.

Thank you for passing this message along."

That's it.

You don't need to debate.

You don't need to convince the staffer.

Your call is logged.

Email Works Too (Short Is Better)

- One issue per message
- One clear ask
- Personal, not poetic

Sunny Tip

One call a day a couple of times a week beats one furious day.

3. How to Attend a Local Meeting and Ask Questions

Yes, You're Allowed to Be There and Speak

City council.

School board.

Planning commission.

Library board.

These meetings shape daily life more than national news.

Before You Go

- Check the agenda
- Note public comment rules
- Write your question in advance
- Bring a notebook & pen

You do not need to speak perfectly.

How to Ask a Question

Keep it:

- Short
- Clear
- On-topic

Example:

“Can you explain how this decision affects _____ residents?”

Or:

“What data was used to make this decision?”

Questions create records.

If You're Nervous

That's normal.

You can:

- Go once just to observe
- Sit near the back
- Leave early
- Speak next time

Showing up counts, too.

✨ Sunny Tip

Local officials notice repeat faces.
Consistency builds influence.

4. How to Follow Up (The Secret Step)

After any civic action:

- Write down what happened
- Note names and dates
- Share a summary with one other person
- Decide whether to return

Follow-up turns participation into leverage.

5. Choose One Path (For Now)

You do not need to do all of this.

Circle one:

- Campaign volunteering
- Contacting representatives
- Attending local meetings

Commit to trying it **once**.

☀️ Activity Reflection

Finish this sentence:

“The civic action I’m most likely to try first is _____, and I can do it by _____.”

.....

.....

☀️ **The Final Word**

Civics isn't about knowing everything.
It's about showing up — calmly, consistently, together.
That's how ordinary people become effective.
That's how democracy stays alive.
That's how it's always worked.
That's how it still works.
That's how it can work again.
Resist.
Rest.
Repeat.

Welcome to the Work, My Friend..

😊🇺🇸 *Sunny*





PART IV: MY PLAN

MY CIVIC PLAN

3 - 2 - 1 and—Action!

First, CONGRATULATIONS for completing the book!!

Knowledge is Power.

Sharing is Caring.

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work.

You have collected most of the necessary information within this workbook to complete your civic plan. This is a time to reflect on what you have learned which may have changed your mind on what you want to do civically.

In chapter 4, you found your government representatives names and wrote down which level of government controls the thing you're most frustrated about. Either copy that information here, or write something new.

One issue that frustrates me:

Which level of government controls it?

My Government Representatives and Contact Info

Your city/ town mayor/ supreme leader:

.....

.....

Your county executive:

.....

Your state legislator:

.....

Your U.S. House Representative:

.....

Your two US Senators:

.....

.....

Your Governor:

.....

.....

My “Vote Plus” Plan

In Chapter 8, you wrote your Vote Plus Plan. Copy it here, making any necessary edits.

Handy site: <https://www.vote411.org/>

How do I vote? (mail, early, day-of)

What do I need to check or update?

Who can I help vote?

How do I make this automatic?

My “Vote Plus” Plan Plus

I will _____ every _____.

.....

.....

.....

My Repeatable “Vote Plus” Plan

.....

.....

.....

My Community

Chapter 8 had you think through who is your community.

My People

.....

.....

I will Make It Civic By:

.....

.....

I will Strengthen My Community By:

My Action

In chapter 9 and 10 you wrote down your civic action and how you were going to go about it.

“My micro-heroic action is _____, and I will do it _____.”

This is How I Will Regularly Do It

Who’s Invited

My Rest Plan

I know I'm burning out when

.....

.....

.....

I will restore my strength by

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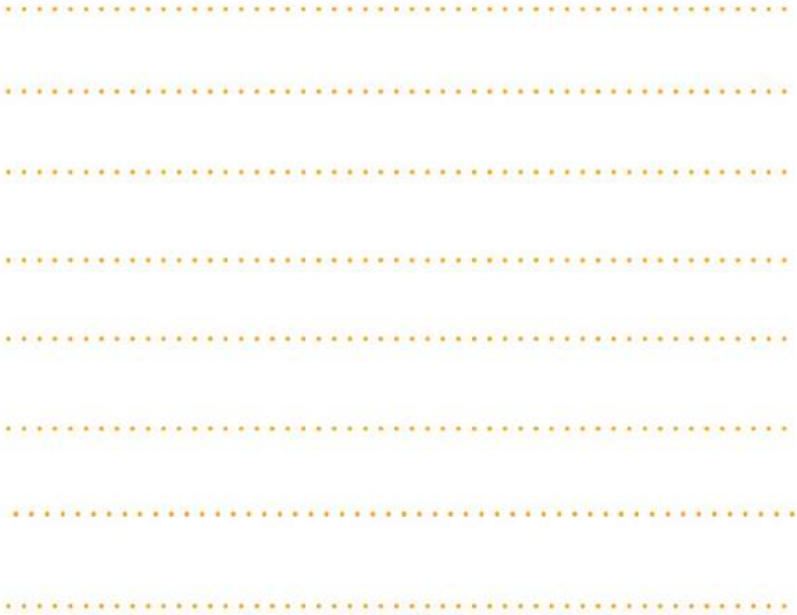
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Sunny Apocalypse is a civic educator, artist, and cultural commentator shaped by lived experience. Sunny has worked as a local civic leader, served on a Democratic 2024 campaign, and had a pretty decent career inside corporate systems for 25 years where power is concentrated and employees are gaslit. Those worlds taught her how institutions

really function—and how easily people are trained to accept what feels wrong.

Today, Sunny blends grassroots organizing, campaign experience, art, and adult education to make American politics understandable and human-scale. Her work uses plain language, retro social studies visuals, and practical actions to help people stay engaged. Sunny believes democracy survives through clarity, community, and care for one another.

The Sunny Apocalypse Civics Workbook is designed for adults who feel confused, overwhelmed, or disconnected from American politics. Written in plain language and without talking down to you, it breaks down how government works through short chapters with built-in exercises. Each section gives you space to collect the specific information you need to exercise your civic rights in real life. The goal isn't to turn you into a pundit — it's to turn confusion into confidence, and confidence into everyday civic heroism.

