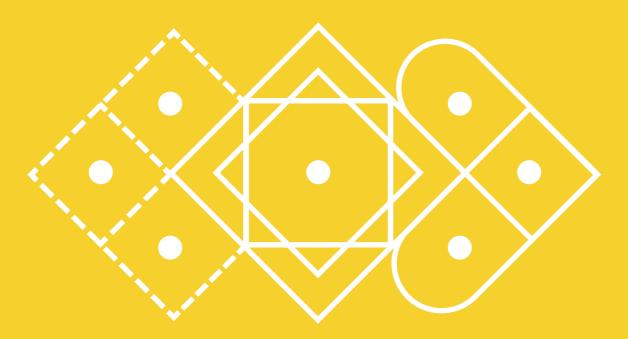
Behavioural Design by Ritual



Ritual as Threshold

The cover design, the ritual design framework and the idea for creating this toolkit, are all inspired by my personal practice of Kolam.

Kolam is an art form from Southern India. It is practiced as a daily ritual - making intricate patterns with rice paste or powder on the threshold of the home, at dawn and dusk everyday. It coaxes one to be mindful and present, literally and figuratively, at the threshold of each day. The previous day is symbolically swept away, and a new canvas prepared. Head, hand and heart dance in harmony as the pattern of the kolam emerges in flowing strokes.

Thus, the practice of Kolam inspired the idea of invoking the power of ritual as a tool for behavioural design across all facets of life.

~ Shalini Raghunathan, Co-Founder 3 Big Things ~

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I

Why Ritual?

Have you tried practising a ritual to transform any aspect of your personal or professional life?

Ritual is often understood to be practiced in a religious context. We rarely acknowledge the presence of ritual in our daily lives, and even less so in the business world. In this toolkit, we take a closer look at secular rituals – activities and practices that carry meaning, connect us to stories, remind us of intentions, mark milestones and punctuate the flow of life.

Our world has never been more interconnected, and our actions have never held such profound consequences. In this increasingly complex context for examining and influencing human behaviour, disciplines like anthropology, psychology and behavioural science point to the power of Ritual to cause positive shifts.

Typical business scenarios like collaboration, innovation, psychological safety or sustainable growth are all generally addressed with solutions like standardizing systems, institutionalizing or operationalizing actions, creating SOPs, mandating processes etc. These interventions don't take into account the emotions and beliefs of the humans whose behaviour they seek to shift or transform.

Ritual is a thoughtfully designed, experience, anchored in intentionality and rhythm, which creates the context for systemic change.

In the following section we look at some key insights that emerged from our conversations about Ritual with people from various walks of life.

Rituals emerge as a response to situations where outcomes are unpredictable, yet, excellence is imperative.

In high-stakes situations like the army, surgery, sports and theatre people are expected to perform with expertise and excellence even when they can't control the outcomes. This is true for the corporate world as well, where uncertainty and volatility are increasingly becoming the norm. To succeed in unpredictable contexts, it's essential to practice and sharpen your skills so that you can adapt to any unforeseen challenges.

Tanya's ritual

A day before exams, Tanya's parents would make sure that she stops studying and does activities that distract her from thinking about the exam. She vividly narrated how she went to watch the movie Kaho Na Pyar Hai a day before her 10th board exams. Now, as Chief Marketing Officer she carries the ritual forward – a good 5–6 hours before important presentations, she stops her "formal preparation" and engages in activities that bring her joy and peace. This helps her manage anxiety and stay calm, in preparation for high-stakes situations, where she needs to be at her best.

High performers create rituals to help them detach from the outcome while also honing their abilities for peak performance. These rituals allow them not only to produce consistent results but also to bounce back from failures by relying on familiar and consistent practices.







Ritual is a non-conscious design intervention to foster intended outcomes.

The connection between the ritual's activities and its intended results might not be obvious at the surface. This makes rituals more effective as people can enjoy an experience without being overly focused on achieving a particular outcome. What rituals do is emulate the spirit of these desired outcomes through thoughtfully designed experiences.

Harsh's ritual

Marico's Harsh Mariwala instituted the 4 PM popcorn ritual in Marico offices as a way of creating informal networks and conversations across hierarchy and functions. The smell of popcorn would draw everyone towards the popcorn machine bringing people together organically. The timing of the ritual was chosen to revive spirits during the slowest part of the day. Harsh himself kept his own office doors open, a sign encouraging employees to strike up conversations with him as well. This ritual helped promote the values of collaboration and transparency, inherent to Marico's culture.

Ritual nudges human behaviour towards the desired outcome with subliminal cues.

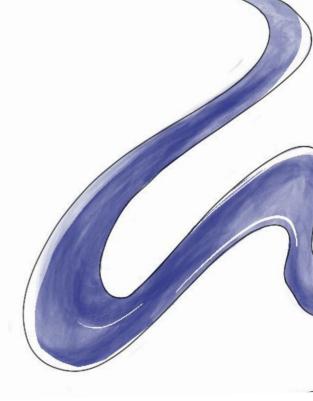
"It was a simple initiative but it worked wonders. Apparently, visitors began to request office meetings at 4pm so that they could be there for the popcorn break."

Source: https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/trends/features/review-harsh-realities-will-persuade-you-to-put-aside-your-ego-and-approach-industry-experts-7508231.html

Ritual is a means to access states of creativity and flow.

Ritual helps us transition from everyday tasks to a state of creativity and flow. It can be challenging to shift from mundane activities to tapping into our creative energies. Rituals can serve as the catalyst to help make that leap in a subtle but distinct manner. They symbolize the shift from one mode to another, both to ourselves and those around us.

Through physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual signals, rituals can indicate that we're now ready to access a state of flow.



Koodiaattam's ritual

'Koodiaattam' is a traditional performing art form from Kerala. It is a very intense theatrical performance and the artist prepares very mindfully by taking permission from the organizer and various co-artists to commence their elaborate make-up procedure. Before they begin makeup, they tie a black, red and gold ribbon around their forehead that signifies that they relinquish their worldly responsibilities as an individual and have fully taken on the role of the actor.

Once the ribbon is tied on their forehead, they will not be interrupted until the performance is

over - this includes news (good or bad) from home, obligations to pay respects to dignitaries who come into the greenroom etc. The ribbon symbolises the beginning of the preparation as an actor, long before actually stepping onto the stage.

"The ribbon around the head is a very beautiful ritual because it symbolically cuts of all ties with our mundane, daily life. You're really in your own personal space till the performance is over."

Manaman

Ritual provides a construct for the emotional regulation that is required for shifting contexts effectively.

Rituals help us manage our emotions as we navigate through rapidly shifting contexts in life. We encounter many changes daily, from big milestones like company mergers to smaller ones such as switching between meetings or transitioning from work mode to home mode. Sometimes, we may face conflicts or need a fresh start after a challenging day. While there might be processes in place for certain situations, they often don't address the emotional impact of these transitions. Solutions like standard operating procedures can fall short when it comes to handling our feelings during change.

By incorporating rituals into our lives, we create space for the human experience and allow ourselves to better handle emotions as contexts shift, through transitions, milestones, conflicts, renewal, reset and recovery. This prepares us to respond differently and more effectively in diverse situations that demand various responses from us.

Thrive Global's ritual

Thrive Global, a wellbeing consultancy, by Huffington Post, has a beautiful tool called "Thrive Reset" - these are 60-second mindfulness breaks on themes like gratitude, movement and reframing problems. Each Reset includes a guided breathing bubble that helps you inhale, exhale and bring yourself back to center. You can also create your own personal 60-second Resets by selecting photos of your kids, pets or landscapes, along with quotes and music that bring you calm and joy. These "resets" help address cumulative stress as interventions that are embedded in a person's workflow and triggered by signals of stress like long meetings or escalations.



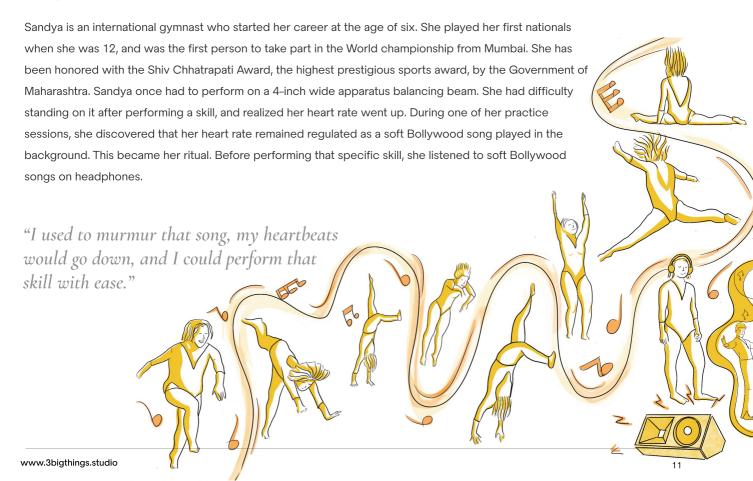
Source: https://community.thriveglobal.com/introducing-thrive-reset-5x5-product-suite/

Undesirable situations can be transformed by identifying a hook for a ritual that symbolizes the desired outcome.

When we find ourselves in a tough spot, it's important to pause and reflect. This helps us discover a hook that can lead us to using ritual as an approach that embodies the desired future result, rather than seeking a direct/prescriptive solution.

The hook acts as an enabler or springboard that represents the key differentiator between the current situation and the desired outcome.

Sandya's ritual



2

What is Ritual?

- Ritual is a practice imbued with symbolic meaning, performed with intentionality, and consistently repeated with purpose and passion.
- Ritual is a container for stories and symbols that represent the values and culture of the individual or group that honours it.
- Ritual is governed by a set of rules about time, space, roles, format and artefacts. Participants agree to these rules and willingly engage in the ritual.

Habits, Routines vs. Ritual

Habits and routines are usually repeated actions performed without awareness or intentionality.

A ritual can often begin as a habit. Over a period of time, it can become more meaningful for those who practice it, evolving into a ritual as it begins to represent the values and culture of the individual or group.

A ritual cannot be enforced. You can only create a structure and invite someone to participate in the ritual.



Ananya's ritual

During Covid, Ananya started leading a new team that was working remotely. She soon realized that there was very little collaboration happening amongst her team members and all the meetings they had were transactional. She also strongly believed that when teams have fun together, they work better. So, she initiated a weekly "fun hour" where each team member had an opportunity to host the hour with an activity of their preference. So one week it was games, while another week it was everyone doing a personality quiz. Over time, the weekly "fun hour" became a beloved ritual. The team got to see facets of each other's personalities beyond work.



Personal Ritual

Kabir's ritual

Kabir, a top management executive of a technology startup, decided that he wanted to bring balance into his life. He wanted to eliminate all things that had become a burden or 'excess baggage', literally and figuratively. He began an experiment that soon became a Ritual. Every evening, he would lock up his laptop in an office locker and walk out with just his mobile phone and wallet on him. His colleagues would be surprised to see him walk into the office every morning with just his mobile phone in hand, wondering if he had already checked-in earlier in the day and was just stepping back into the building from a break. Kabir enjoyed this freedom of delineating his worklife and home-life. He appreciated the mindfulness with which he now spent quality time with his family. He even started swimming regularly. Kabir is now extending this experiment into the way he travels from city to city.



"I feel the baggage I physically carry translates into the baggage I mentally carry...there is improvement...it influences upgrading the quality of life and not taking things too seriously. That frees up your mental bandwidth."

Team/Org Ritual

Army Unit's Ritual

"There have been instances where people break down. So if you don't do an interview, you just wouldn't even know that the soldier's having a problem...you can employ them in some other task, which is less stressful in the unit"



Col. Aravind shared how troops in their unit have a special ritual around soldiers going on leave. Every soldier going on leave has to meet their Commanding Officer (CO) inperson before and after going on leave. This meeting is taken very seriously by both parties - the soldier is impeccably turned out for this meeting in his best uniform. For the soldier, it is an opportunity to have difficult situations in personal life be acknowledged by the CO and to seek help if needed.

The soldier is reassured by the CO that the problem will be addressed and that he can focus completely on his job. Anecdotes for this ritual include the CO calling up the sarpanch of the soldier's village to help resolve property disputes, getting medical help for family members etc.

Customer Ritual

Newspaper's Campaign Ritual

Did you know that during the Navratri festival, women across Maharashtra wear clothes of a specific colour assigned to each of the nine days of the festival? This practice began in 2003 with the Maharashtra Times newspaper's campaign to connect better with their aspirational target audience – middle-class working women. They invited women to wear a specific color for each day of Navratri, a festival celebrating the divine feminine. They encouraged women to send in group pictures of themselves wearing the colour of the day in their offices. The newspaper then printed photos of these groups of women wearing the same color. They also held competitions where women could win saris in the next day's color and feature in the paper, wearing the saree they won.

By inviting women to "be seen" by the newspaper, in quite a literal manner, this clever idea helped change how the Maharashtra Times was perceived. It shifted their reputation from a "masculine newspaper" to one which women too could connect with.

Source: https://www.thequint.com/voices/blogs/ladies-a-marketing-gimmick-controls-your-clothes-during-navratri-maharashtra-times

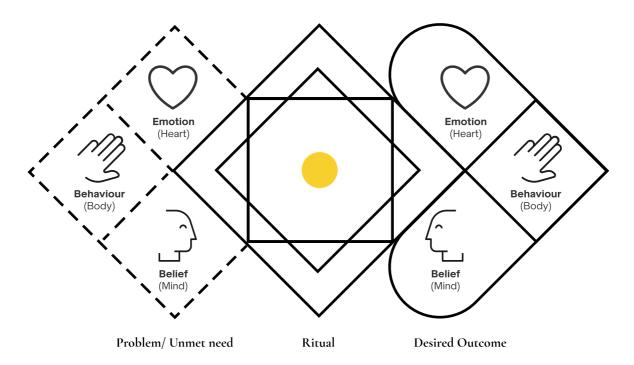


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How does Ritual Work?

- Ritual is the threshold between the behaviours, emotions and beliefs associated with a problem or unmet need and those representing the desired outcome.
- It is an alchemical portal through which transformation occurs.
- Ritual is an activity imparted with meaning, purpose and story, and is performed with awareness and intentionality.
- Ritual is a symbol of the culture, values and identity associated with its intended outcome.

Behavioural Design by Ritual: Framework



Ritual catalyzes transformation by shifting the beliefs, emotions and behaviours associated with a problem/unmet need into those embodying the desired outcome.

Dr.Fischer & Barefoot Acupuncturists

Barefoot Acupuncturists is a Belgium-based non-profit organization, led by Dr. Walter Fischer, which runs acupuncture clinics in low-income areas in Mumbai, notably Dharavi.

Every morning waiting room of the clinic fills with patients waiting for the first treatment slot of the day and a unique ritual unfolds. Patients of different faiths lead with a short prayer from each of their faiths, and everyone stands up for this. Those who can't stand, like stroke or arthritis patients, are supported by others, but everyone stands up for the duration of the prayer, without exception. This is followed by a short Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) tapping exercise, and then appointments begin.

This ritual owes its origins to Dr. Fischer, who noticed that patients came into the clinic in a poor state of mind, plagued by illness and the travails of their challenging lives. Knowing that the treatments would be more effective if the patients were in a better emotional state, Dr. Fischer designed the ritual to invigorate the waiting room. He chose a prayer ritual as a culturally appropriate activity, suitable to their vulnerable state and insisted that everyone stands up for the prayer even if meant doing so with support of another. He thus shifted the focus from the mundane to the spiritual, from the self to the other, from illness to wellness.

The ritual had a far reaching impact on the group's dynamics - when a patient fumbled over the words of a prayer, others encouraged them; when a new patient came in, the regulars invited them to lead the prayer, thus welcoming them into the community; and most significantly, the ritual continued long after Dr. Fischer moved on from the clinic.

Problem

Patients came into the clinic in a poor state of mind, plagued by illness and the travails of their challenging lives.

Dr Walter Fischer believed that his medical treatment would be more effective if the patients were in a better emotional state, and wanted something that would invigorate the waiting room

Belief (Mind)

Patients saw the Clinic as a space to focus on their Illness.

Behaviour (Body)

Patients' conversations in the Waiting Room revolved around sharing health complaints with each other.

Emotion (Heart)

Patients felt despondent, frustrated and sad about their health and wellbeing.

The Ritual

Short prayer from each faith; everyone stands up for this. Abler patients support incapacitated ones to stand up. Followed by a short Emotional Freedom technique (EFT) tapping exercise.

And then appointments begin.

Belief (Mind)

Patients believed the Clinic was now a place to belong, recharge and be reassured.

Behaviour (Body)

Patients proactively supported and encouraged each other. Conversations were focused on motivating and supporting the others.

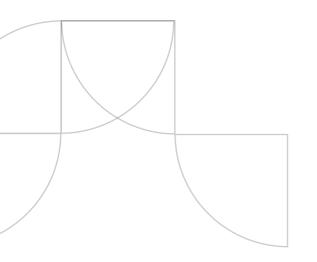
Emotion (Heart) Patients felt supported, accepted and safe.

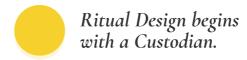
Desired Outcome

- Shift in patients' energy towards a sense of joy and peace.
- Patients support each other and feel a sense of community and camaraderie. The Feeling of "I am not alone".
- A receptive and positive attitude to receiving the treatment when they met the doctor.

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How do you design a ritual?



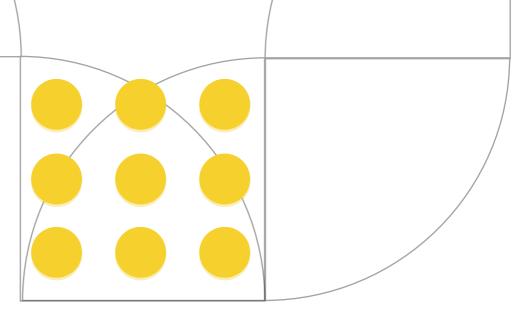


The custodian is a core believer in the need for Ritual and in the connection between the ritual and the intended outcome.

The custodian's key role is to hold space for the ritual to emerge and take root, as people participate in it with increasing levels of ownership.

The custodian may or may not be the person who is facilitating the ritual's activity. But they serve as the compass pointing true north for the why, what and how of the ritual.

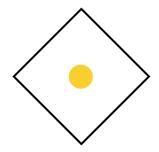
The custodian leads the practice of the ritual through its various phases.



A Custodian's Superpowers are -Commitment to start. Consistency to progress. Collaboration to sustain.

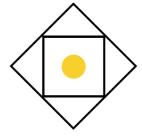
As the ritual evolves and scales across contexts, it is the role of the custodian that gets replicated, not the ritual itself.

Designing the ritual



Contemplate

Why | Pause to Investigate and articulate the current problem area in terms of behaviour, emotion and belief. Describe the desired outcome of the ritual in terms of behaviour, emotion and belief.



Contextualize

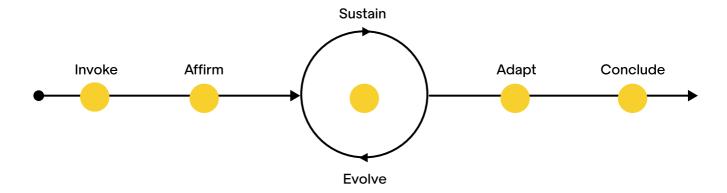
What | Explore the aspects of culture, values, ethos, stories, symbols and practices that you would like to embody in this new identity. Identify the hook for the ritual.



Choreograph

How | Curate activities that create a multi-sensorial experience. Define role, tasks and time boundaries. Name the ritual.

Lifecycle of a ritual



Invoke

- Prepare for the beginning of the ritual by inviting people to participate willingly. The ritual is an offering and not a mandate.
- Be prepared for naysayers who may not believe in the connection of the ritual to the intended outcome. Remind everyone that they can participate in the ritual for its own sake.
- Share the stories and symbols to assert the intention to the participants. This could happen just once or even at intervals.
- Explain the activities and rules for observing the ritual. Implement role, task and time boundaries.

Affirm

- The ritual may seem awkward at first, but keep recommitting to the intention in the early shaky repetitions until the ritual takes root.
- Reiterate the need to detach the ritual from the outcome and acknowledge the fact that results may not always be immediately visible.
- Acknowledge reluctance and concerns of people unwilling to participate. Allow for late adopters to enrol as momentum builds up.

Sustain + Evolve

- Lesser effort is required to sustain the momentum of the ritual in this phase. For eg: participant schedules begin to accommodate for the ritual rather than the other way around.
- Preserve the sanctity of the ritual through occasional interruptions and inconsistencies which are inevitable.
- Observe as custodianship becomes democratised and all participants adopt the ritual as a part of the collective identity.
- As behaviour, emotion and belief start transforming, allow the ritual to evolve iteratively.
- The positive impact of the ritual starts showing up in expected and unexpected ways.

Adapt

- When the ritual needs to get adapted or replicated across contexts, it finds new custodians who want to take the ritual forward.
- The ritual lives on in spirit, however the activity associated with it may be drastically different depending on the new context in which it is adapted.

Conclude

- Recognise when a ritual has served its purpose and needs to end.
- Acknowledge the reason for concluding the ritual. End it graciously, with a ceremony, if necessary.
- Account for the sentiments of the participants who invested in it while it was in practice.

"A ritual is the enactment of a myth. And, by participating in the ritual, you are participating in the myth. And since myth is a projection of the depth wisdom of the psyche, by participating in a ritual, participating in the myth, you are being, as it were, put in accord with that wisdom, which is the wisdom that is inherent within you anyhow. Your consciousness is being re-minded of the wisdom of your own life."

— Joseph Campbell

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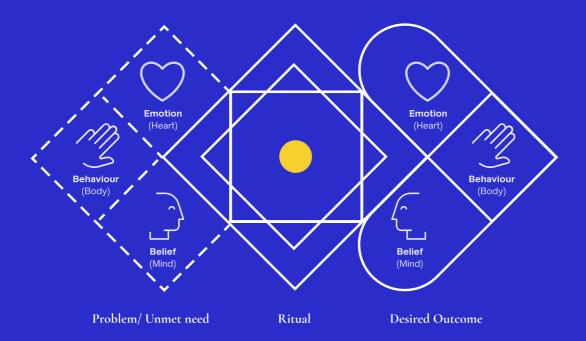


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Workbook

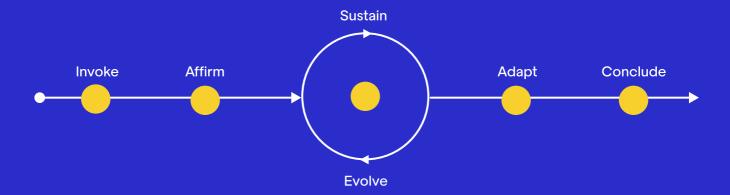
Behavioural Design by Ritual

Behavioural Design by Ritual: Framework



Ritual catalyzes transformation by shifting the beliefs, emotions and behaviours associated with a problem/unmet need into those embodying the desired outcome.

Lifecycle of a ritual



Designing a ritual



Contemplate

Why | Pause to Investigate and articulate the current problem area in terms of behaviour, emotion and belief. Describe the desired outcome of the ritual in terms of behaviour, emotion and belief.



Contextualize

What | Explore the aspects of culture, values, ethos, stories, symbols and practices that you would like to embody in this new identity. Identify the hook for the ritual.



Choreograph

How | Curate activities that create a multi-sensorial experience.

Define role, tasks and time boundaries.

Designing you ritual

This workbook is a companion to the "Behavioural Design by Ritual Toolkit", intended to explore application of the insights and frameworks in the toolkit.

- This workbook is a guide to think through and design your own ritual, in any context (including personal, team or customer-related rituals). Prepare to dedicate 45 to 60 minutes to this exercise. For team and customer-related rituals, work with your team members.
- 2. It walks you through the key stages in the design of a ritual Contemplate, Contextualize and Choreograph. Each stage includes key prompts that can help you reflect on your problem/unmet need and design your ritual. We suggest you to read every prompt out loud and write out your responses by hand.
- 3. We have illustrated the process of designing a ritual with an example called "Mindful Mondays!" for you to refer to and take inspiration from, as you design your own rituals.
- 4. The workbook is designed to be printed independent of the toolkit so you can print it separately each time you want to create a new ritual. The last page of this workbook is detachable, intended for use as a reminder and tracker as you practice your ritual. Consider putting it up in a space relevant to your ritual.
- 5. If you have any trouble with designing your own rituals, or have suggestions for us, please write to hello@3bigthings.studio.

Example - A ritual for a mindful start to the week.

We have illustrated the process of designing a ritual called "Mindful Mondays!" to serve as an example and inspiration.

Contemplate

1. Who are you creating this ritual for?

A distributed, remote, design team that had never worked together in- person

4.1. What is the current behaviour?

- Reticence in sharing work with each other.
- · Lack of focus and motivation.

5.1. What is the desired behaviour?

- Experimental, motivated to push boundaries
- Trust in each other and accountability towards their commitments
- Collaborating on shared goals

2. What is the problem or the unmet need that you want to design a ritual for?

The team lacked a sense of shared identity and had no shared context for collaboration. They were overwhelmed with the challenges of working remotely. For a team of superstars, they were performing far below their potential.

4.2. What are the current emotions?

- Frustration
- · Fear of taking risks

5.2. What are the desired emotions?

- · Psychological safety
- Creative confidence

3. What is the intended outcome of the ritual?

Building a cohesive, inspired, high-functioning, resilient, creative team.

4.3. What are the current beliefs?

• Fatalistic about the lack of growth opportunities for the team.

5.3. What are the desired beliefs?

• That they have all the tools they need to forge their own path.

Contextualize

6. What stories and symbols represent our intended outcome? What stories and symbols represent our values and culture?

Drawing as an act of creative expression - unique modes of expression for each individual.

The company hires only the best of the best, so everyone in this room is a **superstar**. **Declaring your intention** to the team is a sign of integrity & accountability - we trust that you will keep your word. Each team member is a **cheerleader** for each other and the team as a whole.

Choreograph

1. Describe the various steps of the ritual in detail.

Every Monday morning all team members meet in-person or virtually. We start with a silent activity of drawing our intention for the week ahead, for 3-5 minutes. Once everyone is done, we go around the table, with each person showing their drawings and sharing our intentions out loud. Each person nominates the next. When everyone is done, the group disperses. Visuals, not just words. Everyone shares. No dialogue on the intention - only acknowledgement of the commitment the team member makes. No tasks/checklists. Everyone brings drawing tools of choice like post-its to water colours to iPads.

2. Name the ritual to reflect the spirit of the activity.

Mindful Mondays!

3. Where is this ritual taking place?

A virtual meeting room that is named and booked for this ritual.

4. When will this ritual be practiced? How frequently?

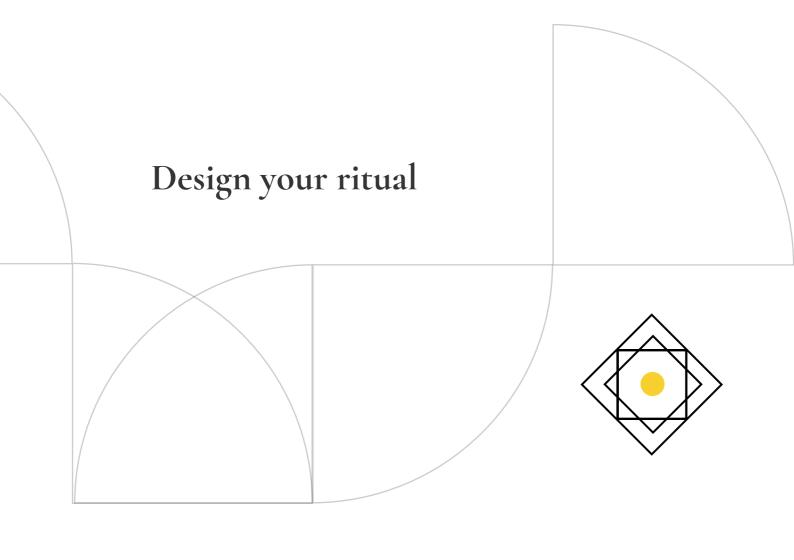
An hour-long meeting, first thing Monday morning. In case of holidays, we meet on the first working day of the week.

5. What are the different roles that are required to participate in the ritual? And who plays these roles?

A facilitator who also participates. A timekeeper for "sketching time". Anyone can propose a "theme of the week" for the intention setting / drawing exercise.

6. What is the simplest, smallest version of the ritual that will allow you to take the first step immediately?

Getting started the next working day to run a trial. Creating a recurring meeting on the team calendar. To begin with, running the meeting with as many team mates as can make it, the very next Monday.



Let's Contemplate.

1. Who are you creating this ritual for?

This could be for your personal or professional self, a team, stakeholders, or customers.

2. What is the problem or the unmet need that you want to design a ritual for?

This could be an existing issue (of any intensity), an aspirational goal or anything in between, that you desire to transform.

3. What is the intended outcome of the ritual?

What behaviour or emotion would you like to see?

Let's Contemplate (Current state)

4.1. What is the current behaviour of 4.2. What is the current emotion felt 4.3. What is the underlying belief of the person/ people you're designing by the person/people you're the person/ people you're designing the ritual for? designing the ritual for? the ritual for?

Let's Contemplate (Desired state)

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Let's Contextualize.

6. What stories and symbols represent your intended outcome? What stories and symbols represent your values and culture? Explore ideas that are particularly meaningful in your context.

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Let's Choreograph.

1. Describe the various steps of the ritual in detail. Include specific words and phrases, descriptions of movement and actions, sequence, special interpretations, etc. 2. Name the ritual to reflect the spirit of the activity.

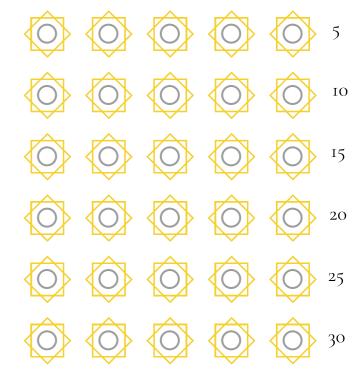
Let's Choreograph.

3. \	3. When will this ritual be practiced? How frequently?														4. Where is this ritual taking place?													
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	. What are the different roles that are required to articipate in the ritual? And who plays these roles?														6. What is the simplest, smallest version of the will allow you to take the first step immediate											ıl tha	t	
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Name & description of ritual

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