

# Stay Free

**1. The Stewardship Question:** How do we benefit from AI capabilities without gradually losing our own?

Unlike the previous practices, Stay Free is not inspired by a single person or profession. It emerges from a simple observation: capabilities that are repeatedly delegated are capabilities that are exercised less. In environments increasingly shaped by intelligent assistance, convenience can gradually make certain human capacities optional.

AI systems can help us write, search, remember, summarize, analyze, recommend, and decide. Their value often lies precisely in reducing effort. Yet some capacities develop through participation itself. Curiosity grows through exploration. Judgment develops through uncertainty. Understanding emerges through sensemaking. Learning often occurs through the process, not only through the answer.

Stay Free is the discipline of preserving the human capacities that convenience gradually makes optional. It is not about rejecting assistance, but remaining sufficiently capable to continue participating actively in learning, interpretation, judgment, and choice.

This is the third gate of responsible judgment.

## 2. The Practice

When AI assistance becomes increasingly convenient and effective, consider the following questions:

Stay Curious and Explore.

*Am I exploring possibilities, or simply accepting the first recommendation offered?  
What might I discover beyond the suggested path?*

Make Sense of it.

*Do I understand the reasoning, or only the conclusion?  
Have I connected the pieces together myself?*

Form a View.

*What do I think **before** consulting assistance?  
Can I tolerate uncertainty long enough to form a provisional judgment?*

## Learn Through the Process.

*What capability is being developed by doing this myself?  
What might I fail to learn if an AI system performs the entire task?*

## Notice Delegation.

*What capability am I delegating?  
Am I reducing effort, or gradually reducing participation?*

## Preserve Choice.

*If this assistance disappeared tomorrow, what would I still be able to do confidently myself?*

### 3. What This Practice Preserves

- Curiosity and exploration before and beyond the first answer offered.
- Sensemaking, judgment, and learning through participation.
- The ability to remain an active participant rather than a passive recipient.

### 4. Closing Reminder

The capability we delegate today is the judgment we may lack tomorrow.

### 5. Optional Bridges to Existing Frameworks

For those who prefer to connect this practice to familiar models, it aligns loosely with:

**Human-in-the-Loop approaches:** preserving meaningful human participation in decisions. **The notable difference** is that HITL assume humans have the responsibility and authority related to the part of the loop they are involved with.

**Deliberate Practice (Anders Ericsson):** capability develops through active engagement, not only through outcomes.