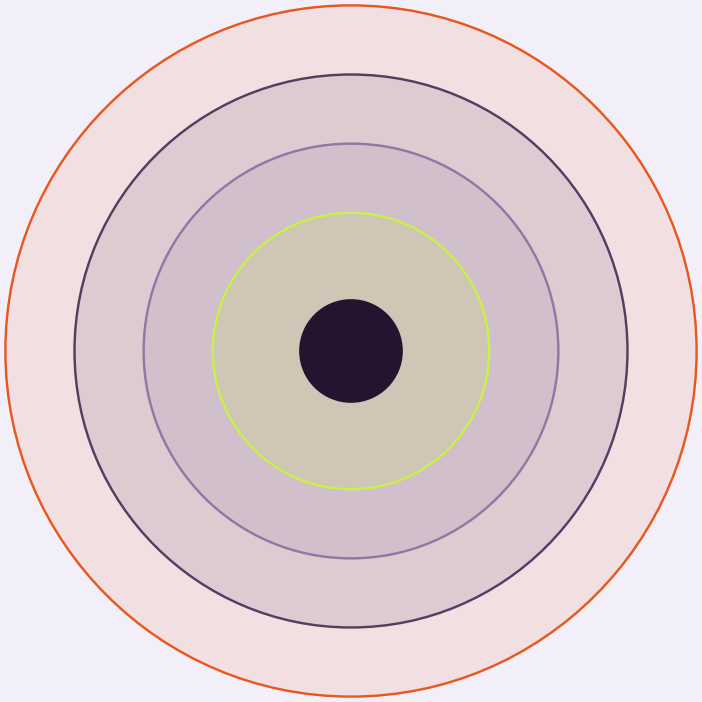


Co-Existence: The Next Phase of AI

A reading of the book by Ethan Mollick (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Co-Existence: The Next Phase of AI, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Ethan Mollick is a professor at the Wharton School who studies how AI changes work and education, and he writes the newsletter One Useful Thing. Co-Existence is his follow-up to Co-Intelligence, written about thirty months later, when AI systems had started to take on whole tasks by themselves. He argues that the future of AI will be shaped by how people interact with it, not by simple replacement. His working ideas are the jagged frontier, where AI is strong at some tasks and weak at others in ways that are hard to predict, the capability overhang between what the tools can do and what people use them for, and four human advantages worth building: deep knowledge, wide knowledge, taste and agency. The second half looks at jobs as bundles of tasks, at schools and at society, drawing on his own experiments and on research he has run with companies and colleagues.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The question has moved from how to use AI to how to live and work beside it.

In Co-Intelligence, AI was a partner you sat down and thought with. Here Mollick describes systems that act on their own: they run tasks, read and filter information, and come back with finished work. The title marks that change, from thinking together to sharing the same space.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

AI is brilliant at some tasks and poor at others that look easier, so you find the edge by testing, not guessing.

This is the jagged frontier, carried over from the first book. In a field experiment Mollick co-ran with Boston Consulting Group, consultants using AI did better on tasks inside its abilities and worse on a task outside them, and they could not reliably tell which was which. The edge also moves with every new model, so an old verdict goes stale.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The tools can already do far more than most people ask of them.

Mollick calls this gap the capability overhang. Models have improved faster than our habits, our jobs and our organisations have changed around them. The gap is also an opening for anyone willing to explore it.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When an agent can do the whole task, your part shrinks to the start and the end, and both matter more.

The book adds a third way of working to the centaur and the cyborg from Co-Intelligence: the conjurer. You set the direction, summon an agent to do the work, then judge what comes back. It is closer to managing than to doing, and it fails when nobody sets a clear goal or checks the result.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A job is a bundle of tasks, and AI pulls at some threads rather than the whole bundle.

Mollick looks at work task by task instead of asking whether a whole job survives. Some tasks go to the machine, some stay with you, and the mix changes what the job is. Seeing your own work this way makes the change easier to plan for.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You can only judge an answer in a field you know well, and only ask good questions across fields you know a little.

These are the first two of the book's four human advantages: deep knowledge and wide knowledge. Deep knowledge lets you direct the work and catch the errors. Wide knowledge lets you see where AI could help in the first place, because you cannot ask for what you have never heard of.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Taste is a standard you hold, and nobody can hold it for you.

The third advantage is taste: knowing what good looks like and why one draft beats another. When generating options becomes cheap, choosing well between them becomes the scarce part of the work.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Agency means stepping into the gap between what the tools can do and what anyone is doing with them.

The fourth advantage is agency, in Mollick's sense: the nerve to try things, explore what the tools make possible and act on it before anyone tells you to. It ties back to the capability overhang. Somebody has to go first.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A fluent, agreeable answer is not the same as a right one.

The book warns against leaning too hard on systems that are persuasive and good at imitation. Treat a confident reply as a draft to check, and keep doing enough of the work yourself that you can still tell the difference.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Run your own frontier test
- [ ] Unbundle your job
- [ ] Write a standing brief
- [ ] Decide your checks before you hand off
- [ ] Name your four advantages

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Retest when a new model ships
- ◯ Read one thing outside your field each week
- ◯ Do one task the slow way

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Run your own frontier test

Pick three real tasks from this week, one easy, one medium and one hard.

Give each to the best AI model you can use and write down where it was strong, where it was weak and where it was wrong.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Unbundle your job

List 15 to 20 tasks from a normal week.

Mark each one: AI could do it end to end, AI could draft it for you, or it needs you. Circle the two tasks you most want to keep.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Write a standing brief

Write half a page an AI can read before it works for you: your role, who the work is for, what good looks like, and what it must never do.

Save it where you can paste it in.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Decide your checks before you hand off

Before you delegate the next task, write down the two or three things you will verify before the result goes anywhere: a figure, a source, a name.

Check them every time.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Name your four advantages

Write one line each for your deep knowledge, wide knowledge, taste and agency.

Pick the weakest one and choose one way to build it this quarter.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Retest when a new model ships

Keep your frontier test tasks in a note.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Read one thing outside your field each week

Spend thirty minutes a week on a long article or chapter from a field you do not work in.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Do one task the slow way

Each week, write the first draft of one task yourself before you ask AI.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

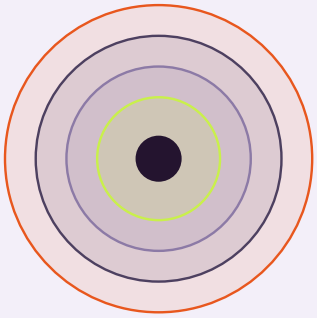
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Let the machines take the tasks. Keep the judgement, and keep it in practice.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER ETHAN MOLLICK