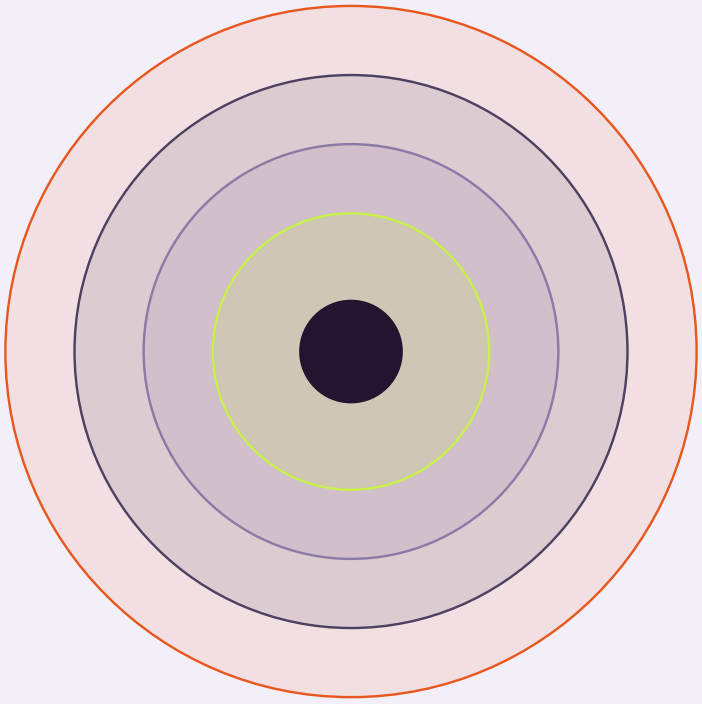


The Knot: Problems Can Be Solved

A reading of the book by Seth Godin (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

Inside this edition

The book in a minute 3

The takeaways 4

Your action book 6

Before you go 7

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

The setup checklist 9

Turn but into and, or choose 10

Ask the baggage question on Fridays 11

Ship one small thing a week 12

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Knot: Problems Can Be Solved, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Seth Godin's short book about getting unstuck. Some things are situations, to be accepted and built on. The rest are problems, and problems can be solved. What keeps a problem in place is usually hidden: two wants pulling against each other, a system that rewards the status quo, or baggage nobody has named, like sunk costs, phantom judges and borrowed scorecards. The book closes with more than 60 questions and three moves: name the baggage, drop the baggage, ship the work. The foreword is by Mel Robbins.

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

A situation is something to accept. A problem is something you can solve.

The book starts by sorting the two. Gravity is a situation: you build around it. Getting to the moon was a problem, and people solved it. We get stuck in two ways, by giving up on a problem too early, or by spending years fighting a situation that will never move.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Listen for the word but. It marks two wants pulling against each other.

Goals joined by and point the same way. Goals joined by but cannot both happen, so you stand still between them. Godin's example is Jackson Pollock, who wanted the freedom of an artist breaking rules and the acclaim of a commercial success at the same time.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Most of what holds you back is not in the room.

A past you are attached to. A future you imagined. Phantom judges who may not be watching at all. A borrowed scorecard that measures you by someone else's idea of success. None of them are here, and all of them pull on the rope.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Sunk costs are baggage. You do not owe them another year.

The time, money and identity you have already spent are gone whichever way you choose. The book's example is someone who finishes dental school and then admits they hate dentistry. The only live question is what to do next.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Staying stuck feels safe because it comes with an excuse.

Being stuck takes you off the hook. Naming what you are pretending you have to do turns it back into a choice you can keep or drop. Godin is clear that some people really are trapped by poverty or circumstance. The book is about the knots we can loosen.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Ask who it is for and what it is for before you ask how.

Intentional design means deciding the purpose first and letting it steer the effort. Most stuck projects never answered those two questions, so every decision reopens them.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Other people are not wrong for wanting different things.

The book calls this practical empathy. Others do not share your view, your needs or your wants, and that is not a problem for you to fix. Letting go of that fight frees up a lot of rope.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Stress is wanting two things at once. Tension is the pull toward a gap you can see.

Some friction is useful, and hard work often does the most good. What keeps you stuck is the entanglement, not the effort. Tension moves you forward. Stress just holds you in place.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Name what you carry, put it down, and ship the work.

The book closes on those three moves, after more than 60 questions. A knot rarely comes apart in one pull. It loosens one strand at a time, and shipping something small is how you find out which strand mattered.

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

- [ ] Write the knot in one sentence
- [ ] Finish your but sentence
- [ ] List the judges who are not in the room
- [ ] Write who it is for and what it is for
- [ ] Total your sunk costs, then cross them out

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Turn but into and, or choose
- ◯ Ask the baggage question on Fridays
- ◯ Ship one small thing a week

30 days · Nov 2 - Dec 1, 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 2 - Dec 1, 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

Write the knot in one sentence

Describe what is stuck in a single sentence.

Then ask whether anyone, anywhere, could change it at any cost. If yes, it is a problem. If no, write down what you will build on top of it instead.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Finish your but sentence

Write: I want ___, but I also want ___.

If the two cannot both happen, choose one for the next 90 days and put the other on a list for later.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

List the judges who are not in the room

Write down the people whose opinion you are working for.

Next to each name, note whether they ever said so, or whether you imagined it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Write who it is for and what it is for

For the project you are stuck on, write one line naming the people it serves and one line naming the change it should make for them.

Put it where you work.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Total your sunk costs, then cross them out

List the years, money and identity you have put into the current path.

Draw a line through the list. Ask what you would choose if you were starting today.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Turn but into and, or choose

Each time you hear yourself say but about a goal this week, stop.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 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

Ask the baggage question on Fridays

Ask: what am I pretending I have to do?

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 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 ○
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Ship one small thing a week

Pick the smallest version someone could use and put it in front of them by Friday, even if it is not perfect.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 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 ○
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December 2026

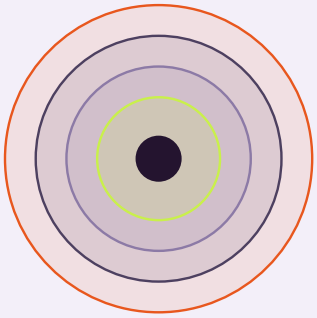
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Say what you are carrying. Put down what you can. Then ship the next small thing.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER SETH GODIN