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Rinat Vagizov

**LOW BATTERY, HIGH
STORM – 5 HABITS
FOR THE EXHAUSTED**

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5 Habits for the Exhausted**

«Издательские решения»

Vagizov R.

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This is not a book about happiness. It's a book about survival. If you're exhausted, anxious, and tired of being told to «think positive» — this one's for you. ANCHORS offers five simple, real-world habits that work even when you have no energy. No toxic optimism. No superhero standards. Just honest tools to help you stay afloat when everything around you is sinking. Because sometimes, surviving is enough.

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ANCHORS

5 Habits That Will Keep You Afloat When Everything Around You Is Sinking

Introduction

The Turbulence Has Gone On Too Long

Imagine you're on an airplane.

An ordinary flight, cruising altitude, flight attendants passing out food. And suddenly – the seatbelt sign comes on, a brief drop, a cup of juice flies toward the ceiling. Someone gasps, someone grips the armrests. A minute later it all settles, the pilot apologizes, people exhale.

Turbulence is frightening, but it passes.

Now imagine the shaking never stops.

Not violently enough to crash. But enough that you never feel solid ground beneath your feet. You wake up in the morning – and immediately have to grab the handrail. You go to work – turbulence. You lie down to sleep – rocking even in bed.

You get used to living at half-capacity, because standing up straight feels dangerous – what if another jolt comes?

If you're reading these lines and recognizing yourself – this book is for you.

What This Book Is About (And What It's NOT)

This is not a book about happiness, positive thinking, or willpower.

If you're in a storm right now, phrases like “just smile” or “think positive” make you want to throw the book at the wall. Because smiling isn't possible, and the guilt for not being able to – only grows.

This is a book about survival.

About how not to fall apart when everything around you is crumbling. How to preserve the ability to get up in the morning, eat, work, and talk to the people you love – even when inside, it feels like a war zone.

This book is about anchor habits.

Small actions that keep you afloat when the greater meaning is lost. Actions that work without your active participation – simply because they exist.

How This Book Is Structured

You can start reading from any chapter.

If right now you only have the energy to open the table of contents and poke at the shortest chapter – poke away. The book is designed so that each piece works on its own.

But if you want to take the full journey – here's how it looks:

First, we'll take an honest look at where you are. Not to frighten you, but to understand the scale of the storm. You'll complete a few assessments that will either say: “you're just tired, breathe” or: “it's time to gather a life raft.”

Then we'll find what you already have. Usually a person in crisis feels empty, like a hollowed-out shell. But that's an illusion. You already have resources – you've just stopped noticing them. We'll take inventory.

And only after that will I show you five life rings – habits that actually work in a storm. Not in an ideal world where you have plenty of time and money. But here and now, when you're exhausted, anxious, and angry.

At the end, you'll build your own personal system. Not the one productivity gurus push on you, but the one that fits you specifically. Because someone who “lies low” survives differently than someone who “seeks a foothold.” And that's normal.

An Important Warning (Please Read This)

This book contains assessments and checklists.

They're not just for show – they're so you can actually see your own state. We often don't notice how far we've gone because we're used to enduring. "So what if I haven't slept in three weeks – everyone's like that."

So please, complete the exercises honestly. No one will see your answers except you. Lying to yourself is the last thing you need, especially in a storm.

One more thing.

If after the first chapter you realize you're at the "exhaustion" level (we'll unpack exactly what that means) – close the book.

Seriously.

Go to a psychologist, psychiatrist, or at least a general practitioner. This book isn't going anywhere – it will wait. Your health is more important.

Why I Can Write About This

Briefly – because I've been through the storm myself.

Not the kind that looks cinematic and dramatic, but the kind where you just lie with your face to the wall and can't understand why to get up. When work falls apart, relationships fall apart, health falls apart – and you don't even know what to grab first.

I tried countless methods: from strict discipline to total "just let it all go." From breathing practices to antidepressants. Some things worked, some didn't. But gradually I started noticing: there are things that hold, always.

Regardless of how strong the wind is.

I gathered them in this book. Tested on myself, on friends, on clients (I'm a psychologist), and on hundreds of people who wrote to me after consultations.

This is not the final word. These are simply tools that genuinely help when you're drowning.

How to Read This Book So It Works

You'll be tempted to just read it in one evening and set it aside.

Don't.

This book is a workbook. It requires you to stop sometimes, pick up a pen, and write something down. Or just think. Or try a small action and see what happens.

The more honest you are with the exercises – the more you'll take away.

If you have no energy for writing – just read. Even reading without notes changes the picture in your head. And the picture in your head – is the first step toward change.

Welcome Aboard

It will be bumpy.

But now you have a map, life rings, and the understanding that you're not alone in this storm.

Let's go.

Part 1. Diagnosis: Where You Are

Chapter 1. The Storm Map

How Do We Know It's a Storm and Not Just Wind?

In maritime navigation, there's a concept called the Beaufort scale – a table by which sailors determine wind strength from visual signs. From “calm” (smoke rises vertically) to “hurricane” (air filled with foam and spray, visibility nearly zero).

The human psyche has its own scale too. We just were never taught it.

We were taught to endure. “Hold on,” “don't crumble,” “pull yourself together.” As a result, we often don't notice how a gentle breeze turns into a storm – until we're being thrown against the walls.

This chapter is your personal Beaufort scale. Not to frighten you, but so you can finally see: what's happening to you has a name and stages. And what tools you need right now depends on which stage you're at.

Sarah's Story

Sarah is 38 years old. She's a designer, and until recently she had everything that's considered a “normal life”: work, an apartment, friends, a relationship.

Six months ago she noticed she'd stopped tasting food. Not that food had become tasteless – it just stopped being something that brought pleasure. Sarah ate because she had to.

Then the sleep went. She'd fall asleep quickly, but wake at three in the morning and lie there until the alarm with open eyes. Thoughts circling: “need to finish the report,” “why hasn't he called,” “how much money is on the card.”

Then came the irritability. Any little thing – a dropped spoon, a slow-loading website, a colleague's question – would trigger a fit of anger she had to clench her teeth to contain.

Sarah decided she was just tired. She needed to rest, sleep, take a vacation.

The vacation didn't help. On the second day at the hotel, she realized she couldn't decide what to eat for dinner. She stared at the menu and couldn't make a choice. Just stood there blanking while the waiter started getting nervous.

“I thought I was going crazy,” Sarah says. “Turns out – it was just a storm.”

Three Levels of Turbulence

What happened to Sarah wasn't madness. It was biology. Her nervous system had been working at its limit for so long that it stopped coping with even basic tasks.

To understand where you are, let's look at three levels. They exist in everyone. The question is only which level you've gotten stuck at.

Level 1. Light Rocking (Adaptive Stress)

This is the normal response of a healthy organism to difficulty.

What happens:

- You're irritated more than usual
- Falling asleep is harder, but overall you sleep
- Food becomes either comfort or something you're indifferent to
- Work capacity exists, but at its limit
- You can still feel joy, but it's short and somehow flat

The body mobilizes. It's like adrenaline before an important event – you shake a little, but it helps you focus.

What's important: this is normal. At this level, you don't need psychologists or medications. You just need rest and attention to yourself.

Level 2. Storm (Distress)

Here the body stops coping with the load. Resources run out while the demands don't decrease.

What happens:

- Memory gaps. You walk into a room and forget why. You lose the thread of a conversation. You don't remember what you ate yesterday.

- The body is constantly tense. Jaw clenched, shoulders raised to the ears, back hurts. You only notice if you specifically pay attention.

- Emotional swings. Any small thing triggers either tears or rage. You frighten yourself with your own reactions.

- Eating breaks down. You either don't eat at all (because "no time to cook," "no appetite") or eat without stopping (because "need to comfort myself somehow").

- People are unbearable. Even close ones. Especially close ones. You want everyone to leave you alone, and at the same time you suffer from loneliness.

What's important: this is no longer "just tired." This is an SOS signal. At this level you can still help yourself (with the tools in this book), but if you delay – it gets worse.

Level 3. Open Sea Without a Paddle (Exhaustion)

This is what doctors call "neurasthenia" or "clinical exhaustion." The body has shut down everything unnecessary to survive.

What happens:

- Apathy. You don't care. At all. Good news – doesn't matter, bad news – same. Feelings seem switched off at the circuit breaker.

- Inability to get out of bed. Not because of laziness, but because the body doesn't rise. It simply doesn't receive the signal "get up."

- Thoughts about meaninglessness. "What's the point of all this?", "Why wake up?", "Why do people do anything at all?" – this isn't philosophy, this is a symptom.

- Physical symptoms. A lump in the throat, chest pain, frequent illnesses (immunity drops), worsening of chronic conditions.

- Loss of connection with yourself. You feel like you're watching yourself from the outside. There's a body that moves somehow, but you're not inside it.

What's important: this is not a character weakness. This is biology. The body said: "stop, enough, I'm tired, I'm shutting down."

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Right now, without postponing, determine your level.

Take a pen (or just a finger in the air) and mark:

Signs of Level 1 (light rocking):

- I'm irritated more than usual
- Falling asleep is harder for me
- Food has stopped bringing pleasure or has become a comfort
- Work is difficult, but I do it
- Joys have become flat and short

Signs of Level 2 (storm):

- I forget simple things (why I came in, what I wanted to say)
- My body is constantly tense (jaw, shoulders, back)
- Small things trigger tears or rage
- I either don't eat or eat without stopping
- People irritate me, even close ones

Signs of Level 3 (exhaustion):

- I don't care
- I can't get out of bed (or get up through sheer force of will)
- Thoughts about meaninglessness come constantly
- I have physical symptoms (lump in throat, pains, frequent illnesses)
- I feel detached from myself

What to Do About It

If you're at Level 3:

Close the book. Really.

Don't try to be a hero. This book isn't going anywhere. But right now you need not a self-help guide, but a specialist.

Find a psychiatrist or psychotherapist. If there's absolutely no money – at least talk to a general practitioner, check your thyroid, vitamin D, iron levels. Sometimes “depression” turns out to be simply a ferritin deficiency.

You have a right to help. There's no shame in that.

If you're at Level 2:

You're just in time. It's not too late, but it's already time.

This book was written for you. Read on, do the exercises. You can pull through on your own, but without heroics: if things get worse in a couple of weeks – go see a specialist.

If you're at Level 1:

Breathe.

You're just tired. You need rest and possibly a small recalibration. The following chapters will help you from sliding deeper. Use them as prevention.

Chapter Summary

A storm is not a sentence and not a disgrace. It's simply a state with stages.

Your task right now – honestly see which stage you're at. Not to be frightened, but to choose the right tools.

In the next chapter we'll look at the “Point of No Return” checklist – 10 concrete signs that show the nervous system is at its limit. Even if you think everything is “fine.”

But for now – just exhale. You've taken the first step: you looked the truth in the eye. That's already half of salvation.

Chapter 2. The “Point of No Return” Checklist

10 Signs That the Nervous System Is at Its Limit

In the last chapter we talked about the levels of the storm. Now let’s get specific.

You know what’s insidious about nervous exhaustion? It creeps up unnoticed. You don’t wake up one morning thinking: “Oh, looks like I have distress, I should do something about it.” No.

You just get used to living at half-capacity. You get used to waking up already tired. You get used to food not bringing pleasure. You get used to close people being irritating.

And it all starts to feel normal.

That’s the trap.

Why It’s Important to Look Honestly

This checklist isn’t a test or a competition of “who has more checkmarks.” It’s simply a mirror.

If you’re currently in the mindset of “everyone’s like this, why make a big deal” – okay, go through the list. Maybe everyone really is. Or maybe you’ve just gotten used to it and no longer notice how exhausted you are.

The honesty here is needed not for me, but for you. Because what you do next depends on how many checkmarks you get.

EXERCISE – THE CHECKLIST

Read each point and mark whether this has happened to you even a few times in the last two weeks.

Not “at some point in life.” Specifically now, in the last 14 days.

Here we go.

Sign 1. Sleep Doesn’t Restore

You sleep the allotted 7—8 hours. You fall asleep quickly. But you wake up just as wrecked as when you lay down.

As if you spent all night hauling bags instead of sleeping.

The first thought in the morning: “I’m already so tired, and the day hasn’t even started.”

Yes / No

Sign 2. Food Has Stopped Bringing Pleasure

You eat because you “have to.” Because the stomach demands it, or your head is spinning, or colleagues invited you to the cafeteria.

But you don’t taste anything. Or you do, but as if through cotton wool.

Even your favorite food has become just food.

Yes / No

Sign 3. Constant Tension in the Body

Check yourself right now, as you’re reading.

Where is your jaw? Relaxed or clenched? And your shoulders? Are they raised toward your ears? And your teeth? Are you clenching them?

If you’ve caught yourself with your body on edge, even though there are no enemies or dangers around you – that’s a sign.

Your body is living in “battle-ready” mode even when you’re simply sitting and reading.

Yes / No

Sign 4. You’ve Stopped Noticing Details

You don’t remember what you had for dinner last night.

You can’t recall what day of the week it is (you have to check your phone).

You don’t notice what a friend or colleague is wearing, even though you see them every day.

As if you’re living in a fog. The big picture exists, but the details – don’t.

Yes / No

Sign 5. Fight-or-Flight Response Triggered by Trivial Things

A spoon falls on the floor – you want to destroy the whole kitchen.

The internet freezes for three seconds – you want to throw your phone at the wall.

A child asks something for the fifth time – you want to scream so loud the windows shatter.

You frighten yourself with your own reactions. Because you understand: this isn’t proportionate. Screaming like that over a spoon – isn’t normal.

But you do it. Or you clench your teeth so hard your jaw hurts afterward.

Yes / No

Sign 6. You’re Postponing Even What You Used to Love

The books you wanted to read sit in a pile. You look at them and think: “not now, no energy.”

A hobby that used to excite you now seems pointless.

Meetups with friends – more of an obligation than a joy.

Everything non-essential gets postponed. Because the essential is already piled too high.

Yes / No

Sign 7. People Who Try to Help Irritate You

This is a particularly insidious sign.

A friend texts: “How are you? Maybe we should meet?” – and it annoys you.

Your mom calls to ask if you’ve eaten – you want to hang up.

A colleague offers to help with a report – you think: “Leave me alone, I’ll do it myself, just don’t interfere.”

You’re angry at the people who mean well. Because you have no resource even for gratitude.

Yes / No

Sign 8. You’ve Lost the Ability to Plan

Not planning a year ahead. Even tomorrow – there’s a fog.

“What are you doing Saturday?” – a question that causes a blank. You don’t know. Thinking about it is hard. Choosing between options – impossible.

It’s easier if everything just sorts itself out.

Yes / No

Sign 9. Constant Self-Monitoring

You feel like you’re watching yourself from the outside and assessing: “Well, how are you holding up?”

You keep tabs on yourself: did you say anything out of line, did you snap, do you look too miserable. As if there’s a strict warden inside who never turns off.

That makes you even more exhausted.

Yes / No

Sign 10. You’ve Stopped Crying – Or, on the Contrary, Cry Every Day

Two versions of the same malfunction.

First: no tears at all. Even when something is very painful or sad. Eyes dry, inside – empty. It feels as if feelings were switched off at the breaker.

Second: tears come every day for no clear reason. Just because the day ended, or because a dog appeared in an ad, or for no reason at all.

Both versions indicate that the emotional system has broken down.

Yes / No

And Now – The Results

Count how many times you said “Yes.”

0—2 “yes” answers:

Perhaps you’ve just had a difficult month. Or you’re a very resilient person. Or you simply rest enough.

Either way – breathe. You’re within the norm. But the next chapter on resources will still be useful: better to reinforce the roof while the sun is shining.

3—5 “yes” answers:

You’re in the risk zone. This isn’t a catastrophe, but your nervous system is working itself to exhaustion.

Good news: you noticed it in time. Full exhaustion hasn’t set in yet, but it’s approaching.

The following chapters are your life ring. Read carefully, do the exercises. And please, don’t ignore your body’s signals.

6 or more “yes” answers:

This isn’t just fatigue. This is exhaustion.

I don’t want to frighten you, but I won’t lie either: you’re in a dangerous zone. Your nervous system has said “enough” and shut down some functions to survive.

The most important thing right now – treat yourself with maximum care.

If possible – find a psychologist or psychiatrist. If not – at least visit a general practitioner, check the basics (thyroid, iron, vitamin D). Sometimes the body simply lacks the “building materials” it needs to function.

And for goodness' sake, don't demand anything of yourself. Anything at all. Your task right now – not to be productive, but simply to stay afloat. That's exactly what this book is about. Read on, take the tools, but without fanaticism.

A Small But Important Note

I know how the brain of an exhausted person works.

Right now you might think:

- “Well, I only have 4 signs, so everything's fine, I can keep pushing.”
- “I have 7 signs, but who doesn't, everyone lives this way.”
- “This checklist is nonsense, the author is being dramatic.”

If you caught yourself thinking that – thank you for your honesty. But let's agree: your body doesn't know how to lie. If it sent a signal, there's a reason.

You're not weak for being tired.

You're not lazy for being unable to work.

You're not soulless for not feeling joy.

You're simply exhausted. And that can be treated. You just have to admit it first.

What's Next

In the next chapter we'll do the most therapeutic thing: find what you already have.

Because when it's stormy, it feels like you're empty. Like there are no resources, no ground, nothing. But that's not true. You have plenty that's already keeping you afloat. You've just stopped noticing it.

We'll take inventory of your resources.

And trust me, there will be things to be proud of.

Chapter 3. Resource Inventory

What You Already Have to Survive

Imagine you're setting off on a dangerous journey.

Not a tourist hike with tents and a guide, but a real one – where no one will help, you can only count on yourself, and it's unknown how long it'll last.

You search your pockets. Your backpack. The inner compartments of the bag you haven't opened in years. And you find a bunch of things that might come in handy.

Old matches. A penknife. Rope. A flashlight with dead batteries, but the batteries themselves are in another pocket. A map of the area you bought for some reason once. A bottle of water with a little left.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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