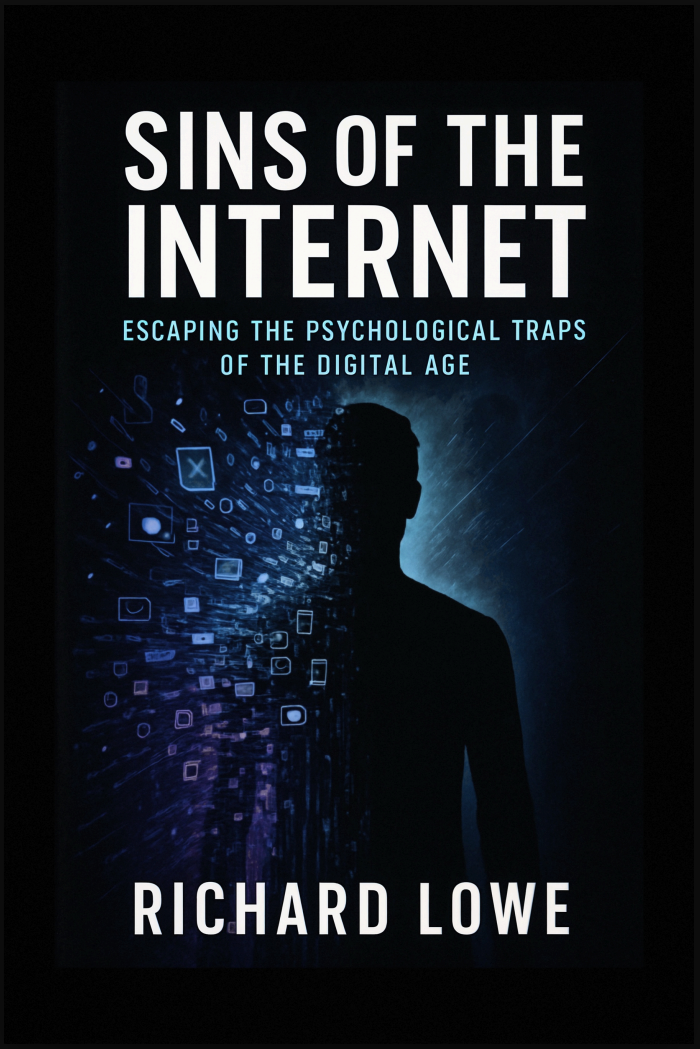
A FREE COMPANION TO SINS OF THE INTERNET

The Digital Confessional

A self-examination, a seven-day reset and a set of discussion questions for taking your attention back from the machine.



RICHARD LOWE

How to Use This Workbook

You can't take your attention back until you can see where it goes.

Sins of the Internet argues that the platforms didn't become toxic by accident. They were built to capture and sell your attention, using techniques borrowed from gambling and behavioral psychology. This workbook turns that argument on your own habits, one honest page at a time.

It has six parts:

1. **The examination**: score yourself against the book's sins.
2. **Your numbers**: screen time, permissions and the apps you never use.
3. **The seven-day reset**: one change a day, with a log.
4. **Rules for the moment**: what to do when the outrage, envy or urge hits.
5. **Protecting the people around you**: children, older relatives and your accounts.
6. **Discussion questions**: for a book club, a class or a family dinner.

Use a pencil. Do the examination again in three months and compare. Your past self is the only comparison that tells you anything useful.

> *We need to catalog the sins, confess our complicity, and commit to something better.*

What the Book Asks of You

1. **Be honest about the number.** Skip “I use my phone too much” and get the real figure from your screen time report.
2. **Decide before you open the app.** Know what you are there for, and stop when it is done.
3. **Look beyond yourself.** Individual choices matter, and they are not sufficient. The platforms are a systems problem.

Part 1: The Examination

Score each line honestly. 0 means never, 1 sometimes, 2 often, 3 most days.

SIN	THE QUESTION	SCORE
Wrath	Do I keep checking a developing controversy, or share things because they make me angry?	
Greed	Do I accept “free” services without asking who the real customer is?	
Envy	Do I leave social media feeling my own life is smaller?	
Pride	Do I mostly read people who already agree with me, and call that clarity?	
Lust	Do I trust impulses that arrive through a screen more than I should?	
Gluttony	Do I consume news I can do nothing about, every day?	
Sloth	Do I let the algorithm choose my restaurant, book or film before I decide for myself?	
Deception	Do I share things before I know whether they are true?	
Vanity	Do I document events more than I experience them?	
Tribalism	Do I believe the worst about the other side without checking?	
Amnesia	Do I hold opinions I formed at the peak of an outrage and never revisited?	
Apathy	Do I count a like or a share as having done something?	
Addiction	Do I reach for my phone within minutes of waking, or in the last half hour before sleep?	
Commodification	Do I post parts of my life, or my children's lives, that should not be for sale?	
Cruelty	Have I joined a pile-on, or watched one and said nothing?	

0 to 12
You are using the tools more than they use you. Keep watching for drift.

13 to 25
The machine has a foothold. Start the seven-day reset (Part 3).

26 or more
It's running your days. Do the reset, and read Part 4 twice.

My three highest scores: _____

Date: _____ **Total:** _____ **Three months later:** _____ **Total:** _____

Part 2: Your Numbers

The discomfort of seeing the numbers clearly is the beginning of anything real.

Screen time

Open your phone's screen time report. Surveys put the average American at four to five hours a day. At four and a half hours a day, a year comes to nearly ten weeks.

QUESTION	MY ANSWER
Average daily screen time this week	
Hours a year (daily hours × 365)	
Weeks of my life a year (hours a year ÷ 168)	
Times I picked up the phone yesterday	
The three apps that take the most time	
Sessions after midnight I don't remember starting	

The permissions audit

Open your phone settings and see which apps can reach your location, microphone, camera and contacts. Revoke what has no reason to be there.

APP	PERMISSION IT HAD NO REASON TO HOLD	REVOKED?

- [ ] Deleted every app I haven't used in sixty days
- [ ] Checked my email address at haveibeenpwned.com and changed any password that appeared in a breach
- [ ] Turned off push notifications for everything except calls and texts from specific people

Part 3: The Seven-Day Reset

One change a day, each one from the book. Keep the earlier changes as you add the next.

DAY	THE CHANGE	HOW IT WENT
1	**Charge the phone in a room you don't sleep in.** Buy an alarm clock.	
2	**Delete the social apps, keep the accounts.** Use them in a computer browser.	
3	**Work in 25-minute blocks** with the phone face down in another room.	
4	**Take a full day off from news.** See how fast you catch up.	
5	**Be bored for thirty minutes.** No phone, no screen. Notice what happens.	
6	**See someone in person.** Schedule it like a meeting and show up.	
7	**Make something with your hands.** Cook, build, fix, write or play music.	

The book suggests going further: a full one-week sabbatical from the apps, which it finds more effective than daily limits. It is uncomfortable for the first two days, neutral by day four and clarifying by day seven.

If you have tried and failed repeatedly to control your phone or social media use, the book says to talk to your doctor. These products were engineered by behavioral scientists to be hard to stop using.

Part 4: Rules for the Moment

When something makes you furious

- [ ] Who gets paid when I'm angry about this?
- [ ] Will this still matter in three months?
- [ ] Can I do anything about it? If not, do something with my hands instead

Before you share

- [ ] The more vindicated this makes me feel, the more carefully I check it. Twice if it flatters my side
- [ ] “I don't know if this is true” is my default for anything I just found online
- [ ] For a fundraiser: I checked the organization at Charity Navigator or Candid first

When the comparison pull hits

- [ ] Write three specific good things about my actual life right now
- [ ] Unfollow anyone who consistently makes me feel worse, including people I like

Part 5: Protecting the People Around You

Nearly every manipulation in the book hits children hardest, and scams aim at the people who trust official-sounding voices.

Children

- [ ] Talked with my children about what the platforms do: the engineered like count, the algorithm that serves engagement over wellbeing
- [ ] Had the conversation about pornography before the algorithm had it for me
- [ ] Agreed a signal a child can use to get picked up without explaining why
- [ ] Asked my child's therapist, if they have one, to ask about social media and gaming
- [ ] Children in virtual worlds get active supervision, on top of filters
- [ ] I don't post my children's private struggles, diagnoses or childhoods for an audience

Older relatives

- [ ] I call my older relatives regularly about scams
- [ ] We have a family code word for emergency calls, because a voice can be cloned from a few seconds of video

Your own accounts and devices

- [ ] Updated software, strong unique passwords and two-factor authentication on everything that matters
- [ ] Financial and health accounts only on my phone's cellular connection or a VPN, never open public Wi-Fi
- [ ] Signal for sensitive conversations
- [ ] Smart speakers, cameras and doorbells on a separate network, default passwords changed
- [ ] Any request for a password or money: pause, verify through another channel, then act
- [ ] Any scam, even a failed one, reported at IC3.gov

Beyond your own house

- [ ] Asked a candidate what legislation they support on platform liability, antitrust and algorithms
- [ ] Subscribed to tech accountability reporting (the book names The Markup, Wired and ProPublica)
- [ ] Went to one school board or city council meeting where technology was on the agenda
- [ ] Voted in the down-ballot races, not only the big ones

Part 6: Discussion Questions

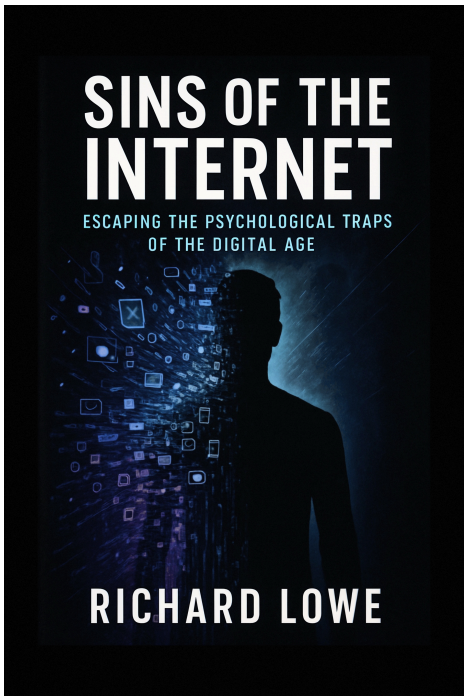
For book clubs, classes and families. Each question draws on a chapter of Sins of the Internet.

1. **The fall.** The introduction says every promise the internet made turned into its opposite. Which promise did you believe most, and what happened to it in your life?
2. **Wrath.** The book says anger became the internet's jet fuel. Think of the last story that made you furious online. Who profited from your anger?
3. **Greed.** "If you can't identify the customer, you're the product." Which free service you use would you pay for, and which would you drop?
4. **Envy and vanity.** Have you ever posted the highlight while living the ordinary? How did it feel afterward?
5. **Pride and tribalism.** When did you last change your mind about something important? What made it possible?
6. **Sloth.** The book calls convenience "a loan you take against your own capability." What skill have you lost to a device?
7. **Deception.** How do you decide whether something online is true? Has your method ever failed you?
8. **Apathy.** Is sharing a cause a form of action? Where is the line between awareness and performance?
9. **Children.** The book says protecting children means going against the current. What friction would you accept, and what would you not?
10. **Penance and virtue.** The book argues for using technology on your own terms instead of rejecting it. What would "on your own terms" look like for you?
11. **Systems.** The book says individual choices matter and are not sufficient. Which systemic fix do you find most convincing, and which least?
12. **Your turn.** Which sin did the book leave out?

> *Your attention is not a resource to be mined.*

The Whole Story

This workbook helps you see your own habits. Sins of the Internet shows how the machine was built: twenty-seven chapters on the rage, envy, addiction, deception and division the platforms profit from, the crimes and spies working the same networks, and the personal and political changes that can fix it.



Sins of the Internet:
Escaping the Psychological Traps of the Digital Age
Digital Self-Defense

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