



The Metrics Trap

THE PATTERN

"If I can't measure it, it doesn't count."

What's Underneath

Numbers gave you clarity in a chaotic world. Revenue, rankings, returns: they provided objective proof when you needed it. The problem isn't that you track metrics. It's that metrics became the only thing that feels real.

Your brain's reward system adapts to each win, requiring bigger numbers for the same feeling. Meanwhile, the things that might actually fulfill you (connection, meaning, presence) are harder to quantify, so they fade from focus.

Where Else It Shows Up

FITNESS & HEALTH

Steps, calories, heart rate zones: health became a dashboard. A great workout without data feels incomplete. You might not know how you feel without checking the numbers first.

RELATIONSHIPS

You keep mental scorecards: who initiated contact, who's putting in more effort. Quality time gets evaluated for productivity rather than presence.

NET WORTH WATCHING

Watching accounts and portfolios more than necessary. The number doesn't change your behavior, but knowing it provides a strange comfort. Or anxiety.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Hobbies get optimized. Golf handicap matters more than enjoying the game. Books read per year gets tracked. Even rest becomes measurable.

What Helps

Try doing things without tracking them. One walk without the fitness app. One conversation without assessing its "ROI." Notice the discomfort. That's the metrics dependency becoming visible.

Ask: "What do I actually want more of in my life?" Often the honest answers don't have dashboards. They require a different way of knowing.

Metrics aren't evil. But they're tools, not absolute truths. The goal is to use them consciously rather than being used by them.

Three Questions

No right answers. Just honest reflection for you to keep.

ONE

Pick the number you check most often. When did you last change something because of what it said?

There's a version of checking that changes what you do next, and a version that doesn't. You know which one that was.

TWO

Describe the best hour you had last month to yourself, without using a single quantity.

If you reached for a number twice before you got there, that isn't a character flaw. It's what happens to a vocabulary that hasn't been needed in a while.

THREE

Finish this in your head. Enough would be _____. Now finish it a second time, and make the second one something nobody could verify.

Hold the two side by side. Only one of them can be checked off, and that's most of the reason it's the one you've been working on.

Nobody is asking you to stop measuring. The scoreboard has been right about a great many things and it will go on being right about them. What it can't do is tell you when to stop looking at it. That call was never going to come from the numbers, which is most of why it has been so long in coming.

