

AI Fatigue Recovery Checklist

30-Day Plan to Reclaim Your Focus and Confidence

clearing-ai.com

You don't need a vacation. You need a system.

AI tools promise productivity. For many engineers, they deliver something else: cognitive fatigue, eroding skills, and a creeping sense that you're constantly recovering from work instead of doing it. This checklist gives you a structured 30-day path out. It's not about rejecting AI -- it's about using it without being used by it.

220,000+
engineers assessed

4 Tiers
AI fatigue severity

30 Days
recovery trajectory

PHASE 1: AWARENESS -- Days 1-3

See clearly before you act

- [1] Take the AI Fatigue Quiz at clearing-ai.com/quiz. Know your tier before changing anything.
- [2] Track one full day: Every time you reach for an AI tool, note the impulse (boredom, confusion, avoidance, speed).
- [3] Identify your peak cognitive hours -- when are you sharpest? Protect one 2-hour block from AI dependency.
- [4] Read your last 10 AI prompts. How many were "I need this done" vs. "I want to understand this"?
- [5] Notice the aftertaste: Do you feel accomplished or hollow after AI-assisted sessions? Rate it 1-5.

PHASE 2: LIGHT RECOVERY -- Days 4-10

Small shifts, big signals

- [1] No-AI Mornings: Handle your first coding task of the day without AI assistance. Note the discomfort.
- [2] Read before you prompt: When stuck, read one relevant GitHub issue or code comment before reaching for AI.
- [3] Rubber duck on your own code: Explain your last AI-generated solution out loud to yourself first.
- [4] One tool at a time: Use only one AI tool for one task. Notice which tools feel helpful vs. addictive.
- [5] Daily debrief: 5 minutes at end of day -- write down one thing you learned without AI help today.

PHASE 3: STRUCTURED BOUNDARIES -- Days 11-21

Build systems, not willpower

- [1] Define your AI use cases: Make an explicit written list of WHEN you will and will not use AI tools.
- [2] The 10-minute rule: Spend 10 minutes researching before any AI prompt. Document what you tried first.
- [3] Code review before AI: Review your own code for 10 minutes before showing it to AI for feedback.
- [4] One skill focus: Pick one skill that AI has weakened for you. Practice it twice this week without AI.
- [5] Weekly reset day: Sundays, review the past 7 days -- which AI interactions were high-signal vs. low-signal?

PHASE 4: SUSTAINED PRACTICE -- Days 22-30

From recovery to resilience

- [1] Build your retrieval habit: For every AI answer you receive, write a 2-sentence explanation in your own words.
- [2] Pair programming audit: For one feature, work without AI for 50% of the implementation. Compare quality and confidence.
- [3] Build your AI boundaries doc: Write a 1-page "My AI Rules" -- share it with a colleague or keep for reference.
- [4] Monthly skill check: Every 30 days, assess one technical skill for AI-dependency. Set a 3-month improvement target.
- [5] Celebrate the hard way: Track and celebrate work you completed without AI. Build a visible record of your capability.

Quick Reset Protocol -- For When You Are Already in the Hole

STOP

Close all AI tabs. Physical action, immediate effect.

WALK

10 min outside. No headphones. Thinking resets on walks.

RETRIEVE

Without looking up, explain the last concept AI told you about.

START SMALL

One simple task. Complete it without AI. Prove it to yourself.

WRITE

3 sentences: Built?
Learned? Understand?

Key Resources

- clearing-ai.com/quiz -- AI Fatigue Quiz -- find your severity tier
- clearing-ai.com/recovery -- Full recovery guide -- 30+ strategies
- clearing-ai.com/daily-ai-boundaries -- Daily boundaries guide
- clearing-ai.com/ai-detox-plan -- 14-day structured AI detox
- clearing-ai.com/the-science-of-ai-fatigue The neuroscience of what is happening

This checklist is free. Share it with anyone who ships software for a living. The Clearing exists because the problem is real, the community is real, and recovery is possible.