

THE LIFE MANUAL PROJECT

Crowdsourcing Adulthood

A participatory cultural project by LOUDR

1. Nobody Gave Us a Handbook

There is a peculiar contradiction at the heart of adulthood.

We spend years learning mathematics, history, grammar and science. We learn to drive. We learn to write examinations. We learn to interview for jobs.

Yet nobody teaches us how to live.

Nobody explains what it means to lose a friend, recover from failure, negotiate family expectations, recognise burnout, ask for help or begin again after making the wrong decision. Instead, adulthood is assembled piece by piece through conversations, mistakes, observation and experience. We inherit advice from parents, colleagues, partners and strangers. Some of it serves us well. Some of it no longer belongs to the world we inhabit.

The Life Manual Project begins with a simple proposition.

What if ordinary people wrote the handbook they wished they had received?

Rather than searching for expert answers, the project asks people to contribute what life has already taught them.

Every workshop becomes another edition of an evolving manual.

No edition is complete.

Each edition simply records what one community knew, questioned and cared about at a particular moment in time.

2. What is The Life Manual Project?

The Life Manual Project is an ongoing participatory cultural initiative developed by LOUDR.

Each edition brings together a different community. Participants respond to carefully designed prompts about everyday adulthood before collectively editing their responses into a shared publication.

The result is not a workshop outcome.

It is a public document.

Every edition becomes part of a growing archive of lived experience, allowing future editions to build upon earlier ones.

The manual is therefore never finished.

It continues to evolve with every community that contributes to it.

3. Why This Project Matters

Contemporary conversations about wellbeing often begin with diagnosis or intervention.

The Life Manual Project begins somewhere else.

It begins with listening.

It asks what people already know through experience, what remains difficult to articulate, and what wisdom quietly circulates between friends, families and colleagues without ever entering books or classrooms.

By collecting these reflections across different communities, the project creates a cultural archive of adulthood.

It documents not only advice, but uncertainty.

Not only confidence, but vulnerability.

Not only solutions, but questions that remain unresolved.

4. Objectives

The project has four interconnected objectives.

Build a public archive of lived experience

To collect reflections on adulthood from diverse communities across India.

Create conversations across disciplines

To bring together cultural practice, community participation and mental health perspectives within a shared framework.

Produce evolving publications

Every workshop contributes to an expanding manual rather than existing as an isolated event.

Generate research

Across multiple editions, recurring themes, emerging concerns and changing attitudes can be studied, offering insight into contemporary adulthood in India.

5. How It Works

Every edition follows the same broad structure.

Reflection

Participants anonymously respond to a series of prompts drawn from everyday adult life.

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Collective Writing

Participants contribute advice, observations and lived experiences across thematic chapters.

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Editorial Process

The group acts as an editorial board, selecting, organising and naming chapters while identifying ideas that remain unresolved.

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Clinical Annotation

Mental health practitioners contribute annotations that provide psychological context without altering participant voices.

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Publication

Each edition becomes part of an expanding public manual.

6. The Role of Amaha

The Life Manual Project is developed in collaboration with Amaha, the project's Clinical Knowledge Partner.

The reflections contained within the manual remain those of participants.

Amaha's role is not to correct or replace these voices.

Instead, clinicians contribute annotations that offer additional psychological context, helping readers engage with the material while preserving the integrity of lived experience.

This creates a dialogue between community knowledge and clinical practice rather than placing one above the other.

7. Edition One

Delhi

The pilot edition brought together participants from diverse professional and personal backgrounds.

The workshop explored seven chapters of adulthood:

- Family Expectations & Identity
- Failure & Starting Over

- Joy & Play
- Work & Burnout
- Relationships & Friendship
- Loneliness & Asking for Help
- Rest, Productivity & Money

The workshop culminated in the publication of The Life Manual – Edition One (Delhi), including editorial observations and clinical annotations.

8. Where the Project Goes Next

The Life Manual Project is designed as a long-term public initiative.

Future editions will work with different communities, including:

- Educators
- Artists
- Corporate teams
- Young adults
- Healthcare professionals
- Community organisations
- Senior citizens

Rather than seeking consensus, each edition will add another perspective to an expanding archive of adulthood.

Over time, this archive may also serve as the basis for exhibitions, public programmes, research publications and interdisciplinary collaborations.

9. Collaborate

The Life Manual Project welcomes collaborations with organisations, educational institutions, cultural spaces and community groups interested in creating thoughtful public conversations.

If your organisation would like to host an edition, collaborate on research, contribute expertise or support the project, we'd love to hear from you.

10. Receive the Manual

If you would like to receive a digital copy of the first edition, please send us an email at hello@loudr.co.in with the subject line "Life Manual" with a little bit about yourself.

Founder & Curator
 Nilanjan Chakravarty
 LOUDR