

GET OUT OF MY HEAD

Activity Workbook



M. Andrew
McConnell

INTRO

M. Andrew McConnell wrote *Get Out of My Head: Creating Modern Clarity with Stoic Wisdom* to share how Stoicism can help anyone find direction and tranquility, whether they're navigating daily stressors or experiencing defining moments.

This workbook was created to accompany your reading and allows you to actively engage with the prompts and questions asked in each chapter as you integrate the practice of Stoicism in your life.

Use this supplementary guide to write out your answers, brainstorm, and plan for your future to better live in the present.

ABOUT

M. Andrew McConnell is the CEO of Rented, Inc. Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, he graduated Harvard College, Harvard Law School, and the University of Cambridge with honors. As a member of the USA Open Water Swimming National Team, he earned an international bronze medal.

Before striking out on his own, Andrew worked as a banker, an attorney, and a consultant. He sits on the board of Sheltering Arms, is a founding Board Member of Atlanta Technology Leaders, and is a TechStars Mentor for social impact startups. Andrew lives in Georgia with his wife and daughter.





CHAPTER 1

TAKEAWAYS

1

If you don't know your own value, you're leaving money (and mind) on the table.

2

Your value doesn't have to remain static. You can move to higher and better uses, whether that is defined by what the market will pay you for your time or how you personally value it.

3

While financial comparisons can be helpful to a point, life is about much more than money. Identify the intangibles you value, and make sure you are optimizing across these as well.

ZERO-BASED CALENDARING

[illegible]

(NOTE: If the total is greater than 100% of the time available, start cutting!)

ADVANCED MIND BUDGETING

CURRENT INCOME	HOURS WORKED TO EARN THAT INCOME	CURRENT VALUE
		\$_____/hour

PRICE CHECK

(e.g., check open job postings, search on PayScale)

INCOME ON OFFER	HOURS EXPECTED TO EARN THAT INCOME	CURRENT VALUE
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour
		\$_____/hour

PRICE CHECK

(e.g., check open job postings, search on PayScale)

ALTERNATIVE USES FOR YOUR TIME	MARKET PRICE / VALUE FOR THAT
	\$_____/hour
	\$_____/hour
	\$_____/hour
	\$_____/hour
	\$_____/hour
	\$_____/hour
	\$_____/hour
	\$_____/hour



CHAPTER 2

TAKEAWAYS

1

Exercising meaningful control over your mind starts with understanding, and indeed accepting, the limited boundaries of that control.

2

Nobody can force you to spend your mind on something. Only you can do that. You can choose to give away this superpower or fully embrace it yourself.

3

In order to set and maintain your own boundaries, you must first **REST**.

- a. **Recognize** what is in your control and what isn't.
- b. **Exert** control where you actually can.
- c. **Stop** spending your mind on areas you have no control over.
- d. **Track** your progress in developing this key skill.

TRACKING YOUR MIND

TIME	WHAT YOU WERE DOING	WHAT YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT
6–7 AM		
7–8 AM		
8–9 AM		
10–11 AM		
11 AM–12 PM		
12–1 PM		
1–2 PM		
2–3 PM		

TRACKING YOUR MIND

Continued

TIME	WHAT YOU WERE DOING	WHAT YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT
3–4 PM		
4–5 PM		
5–6 PM		
6–7 PM		
7–8 PM		
8–9 PM		
9–10 PM		
10–11 PM		

MANAGING YOUR MIND

AREA	DESIRED ALLOCATION (% OF DAY, WEEK, ETC.)*	ACTUAL ALLOCATION (%)
e.g., work, family, friends		

*You can refer back to the exercise you completed in chapter one as a starting point.



CHAPTER 3

TAKEAWAYS

1

Critics, to steal a phrase from elsewhere, “you will always have with you.”

2

While it is important not to be held back by critics, it is also important not to hold yourself back from the growth the critics can help you achieve.

3

To make the most of the gift on offer, there is a **TRIED and True** framework you can use:

- a. **Take** time after receiving the feedback to process.
- b. **Reflect** on what you heard—and think you heard.
- c. **Identify** the “grain of truth” in the criticism that is worth acting on.
- d. **Echo** back to the critic what you think you heard to get additional detail and clarification.
- e. **Deliver** on the changes necessary.

TRIED AND TRUE WORKSHEET

TAKE TIME

When did you receive the feedback? Have your natural walls of defense gone down?

REFLECT

Break down what the critic said into individual components:

- Was there anything they praised?
- What specifically did they criticize?
- Why would this seem true to them?
Look at things from their perspective.

IDENTIFY

What grain or grains of truth are there?

ECHO

Script how to play back to the critic what you believe you heard, focusing on the grains of truth. What edits or clarifications did they provide?

DELIVER

Get to work!



CHAPTER 4

TAKEAWAYS

1

The more and the better you prepare, the less uncertainty you will face.

2

Despite even the best preparation, unforeseen and unforeseeable events and circumstances can and will arise.

3

OWN your preparation by taking these steps:

- a. Define your **Objective**.
- b. Think through everything that can go **Wrong** in the pursuit of that Objective, and do what you can ahead of time to prevent them or at least minimize their likelihood of occurring.
- c. **Nail** the skills you will need as you pursue your Objective.

OWN WORKSHEET

OBJECTIVE:

WHAT CAN GO WRONG:

HOW YOU CAN MINIMIZE THIS OR PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING

1.

a.

b.

c.

d.

2.

a.

b.

c.

d.

3.

a.

b.

c.

d.

SKILLS TO NAIL AHEAD OF TIME:

I.

II.

III.

IV.



CHAPTER 5

TAKEAWAYS

1

Every human being suffers hardship and numerous crises throughout life.

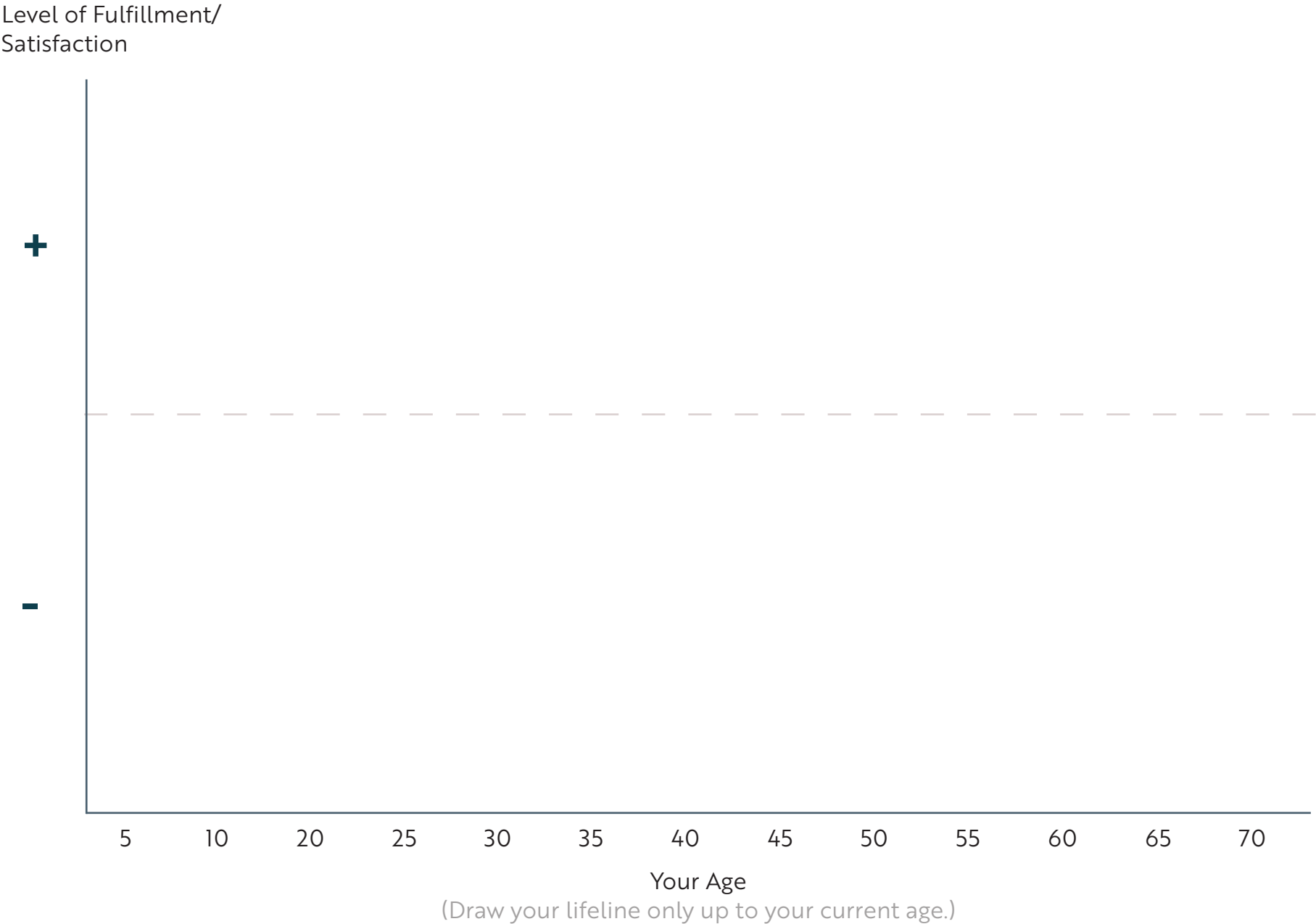
2

Rather than lament or bemoan this fact of life, you have the opportunity to develop a strong internal locus of control. By doing this, you can turn each crisis into an opportunity and in the process make yourself better and stronger.

3

To identify your own past strength through crisis and help prepare you for future crises, go through the lifeline exercise to see how past low points have actually made your later high points possible.

LIFELINE EXERCISE





CHAPTER 6

TAKEAWAYS

1

Suffering is an inevitable part of life. While you can lessen it, you can never avoid it entirely.

2

What you can avoid is suffering the same thing more than once, whether that means “pre-suffering” before the event even occurs, “post-suffering” by ruminating on some past suffering you can now do nothing about, or both.

3

To limit and even prevent this unnecessary and unhelpful pre- and post-suffering, work through the suffering decision tree to turn that same mental energy into something far more productive: identifying ways to prevent suffering the same thing more than once.

Suffering Decision Tree

Has the suffering
already occurred?

Yes

No

What are the cons of
continuing to suffer?

What are the pros
of continuing to suffer?

Is there anything you can
do to make it less likely that
this suffering will occur?

Yes

No

Having been through the suffering,
what have you learned that you can do
differently in the future to prevent suffering
the same thing more than once?

Spend your
mind on this.

Stop spending
your mind
on this.



CHAPTER 7

TAKEAWAYS

1

Acceptance of your circumstances is not enough. The truly Stoic approach is to be grateful for *all* that comes to you.

2

The benefits of gratitude are many and diverse, and the more you practice gratitude, the more grateful you become.

3

Start a daily gratitude practice. No, really, start right now!

GRATITUDE PRACTICE TEMPLATE

WRITE OUT THE STORY OF A TIME SOMEONE
EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TO YOU.

I remember when . . .

THINK THROUGH THE TAKEAWAYS TO MAKE IT
EASIER

1. Before the person expressed gratitude, I felt . . .
2. This person was expressing gratitude to me because . . .
3. The highlights of what this person said/wrote/did to express their gratitude were:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
4. After this person expressed their gratitude, I felt . . .



CHAPTER 8

TAKEAWAYS

1

You learn the wrong lessons if you look only at outcomes and not at the processes that produced them.

2

The fixation on outcomes is called “resulting,” and it can have deadly consequences.

3

To begin practicing nonattachment, you should start by exploring the things whose processes are so rewarding and worthwhile for you that the result is almost irrelevant.

THE PROCESS AS THE RESULT

WHAT ARE THINGS YOU DO (OR DON'T DO) TODAY BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU BELIEVE OTHERS WILL THINK OF YOU?

WHAT WOULD BE WORTH DOING EVEN IF NO ONE NOTICED IT, KNEW ABOUT IT, OR WOULD EVER FIND OUT THAT YOU DID IT?

e.g., job or industry, title, how you dress



CHAPTER 9

TAKEAWAYS

1

Failing to live where you are is a recipe for discontentment. Whether the grass is actually greener elsewhere is meaningless. All that matters is the grass below your own feet.

2

There is no outside white knight or savior who can or will magically hand you the results you seek. Only you can do that.

3

To cultivate the garden that is your mind and make it bloom effectively, you must first **SOW** your own seeds.

- a. **Stop** looking elsewhere for the solution.
- b. **Own** where you are right now.
- c. **Work** diligently to make where you are the place you want it to be.

IDENTIFYING WHAT YOU ARE SEEKING AND WHAT YOU ARE SEEKING TO AVOID

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY RUNNING FROM?	WHAT SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THIS IS THE PROBLEM?	HOW ARE YOU COMPLICIT IN MAKING THE SITUATION WHAT IT IS?	WHAT CAN YOU DO OR STOP DOING TO MAKE THE SITUATION WHAT YOU WANT?
e.g., your boss, the hours you work, your weight			

IDENTIFYING WHAT YOU ARE SEEKING AND WHAT YOU ARE SEEKING TO AVOID

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY RUNNING TO?	WHAT SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THIS MAKES IT SO DESIRABLE TO YOU?	WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU TAKE NOW TO ACHIEVE OR EXPERIENCE THE SAME DESIRED EFFECT WHERE YOU CURRENTLY ARE?
e.g., new job, relationship status, financial milestone		



CHAPTER 10

TAKEAWAYS

1

Life is lived solely in the present.

2

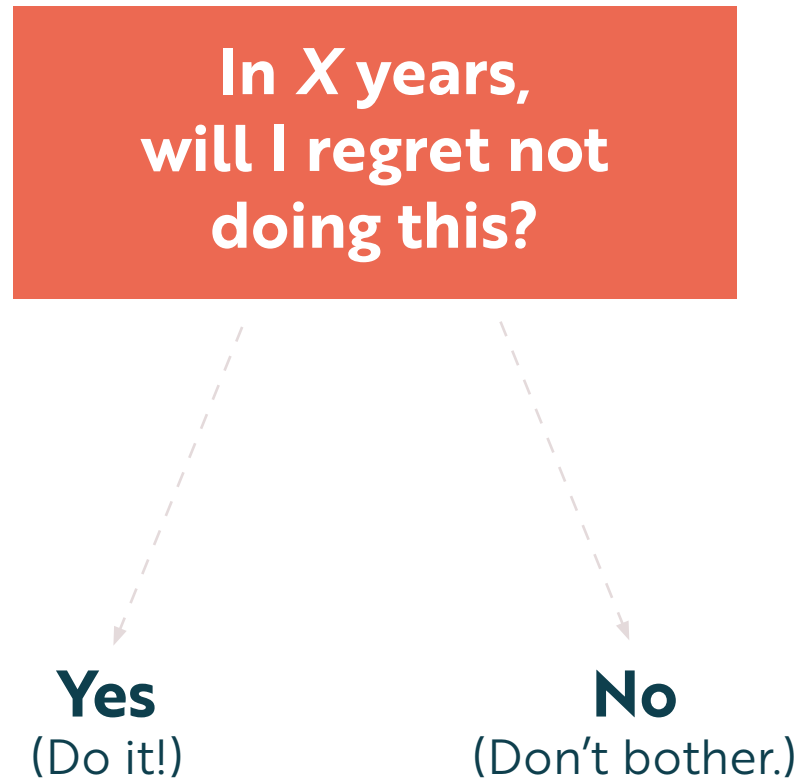
The present *is* a present, meaning a gift, but as it is constantly given to you and familiarity breeds contempt, you are apt to take this for granted and waste the present by dreaming of an uncertain future or replaying a nonexistent past.

3

Rather than put off seizing the opportunity today and waiting for the “right time,” you can make the time right now by using the “regret minimization framework” made famous by Jeff Bezos.

REGRET MINIMIZATION FRAMEWORK

Deceptively simple. Surprisingly powerful.



REGRET MINIMIZATION WORKSHEET

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT?	WHAT MIGHT FUTURE YOU REGRET IF YOU DON'T DO THIS?	DO IT? DON'T?
e.g., change job, relocate, relationship		



CHAPTER 11

TAKEAWAYS

1

Thanks to hedonic adaptation, chasing after “things,” material or otherwise, in the long run won’t make you any happier.

2

Given this truth, the surest path to happiness and success is not to pursue more, but rather to appreciate what you have and to focus your limited time and mind on less. Choose the single great thing over the many good ones.

3

To develop this way of thinking, a form of the Stoic practice of negative visualization can help.

- a. Create a list of the things you have and value today.
- b. Think about the items one by one; imagine how your life would be if you lost each item.
- c. Revisit each item with a newfound appreciation and joy.

NEGATIVE VISUALIZATION WORKSHEET

LIST THE THINGS YOU ALREADY HAVE AND VALUE.	DESCRIBE HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THEM AFTER HAVING "LOST" THEM IN YOUR VISUALIZATION.
e.g., loved ones, professional status and/or accomplishments, possessions	



CHAPTER 12

TAKEAWAYS

1

Perfect is the enemy of good, often serving as an excuse for not doing something at all rather than a motivating force to do something better.

2

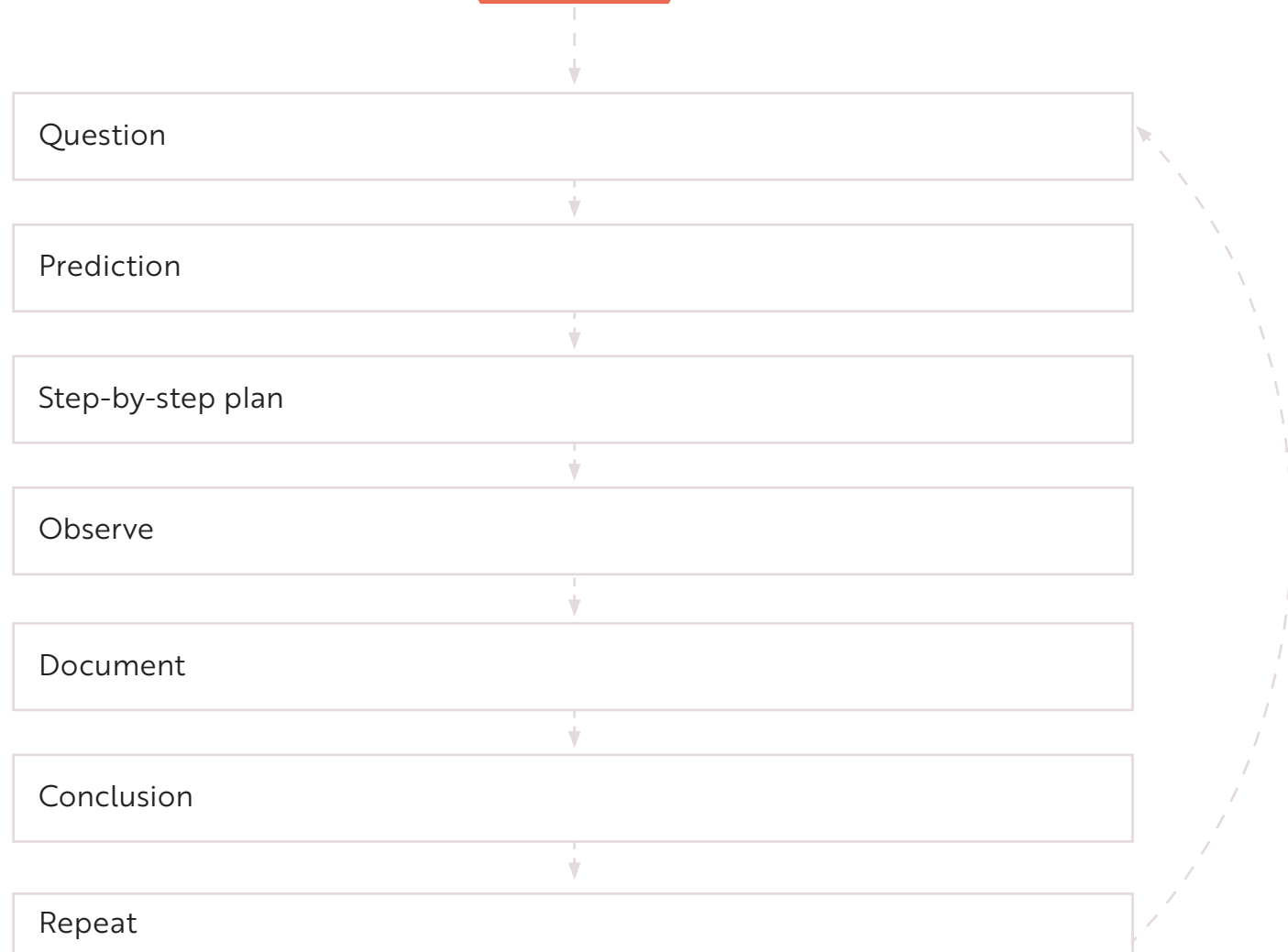
To overcome “analysis paralysis” or freezing in the face of a blank page, start by lowering the bar to determine what the first step needs to be.

3

To lower the bar without lowering your standards, iteratively work through the scientific method.

- a. Ask a **question**.
- b. Make a **prediction**.
- c. Build a **step-by-step plan**.
- d. **Observe** the results as you work through your plan.
- e. **Document** the results.
- f. Draw a **conclusion**.
- g. **Repeat** as necessary.

The Scientific Method Worksheet





CHAPTER 13

TAKEAWAYS

1

Talk is cheap. Action is everything, and the only thing that matters.

2

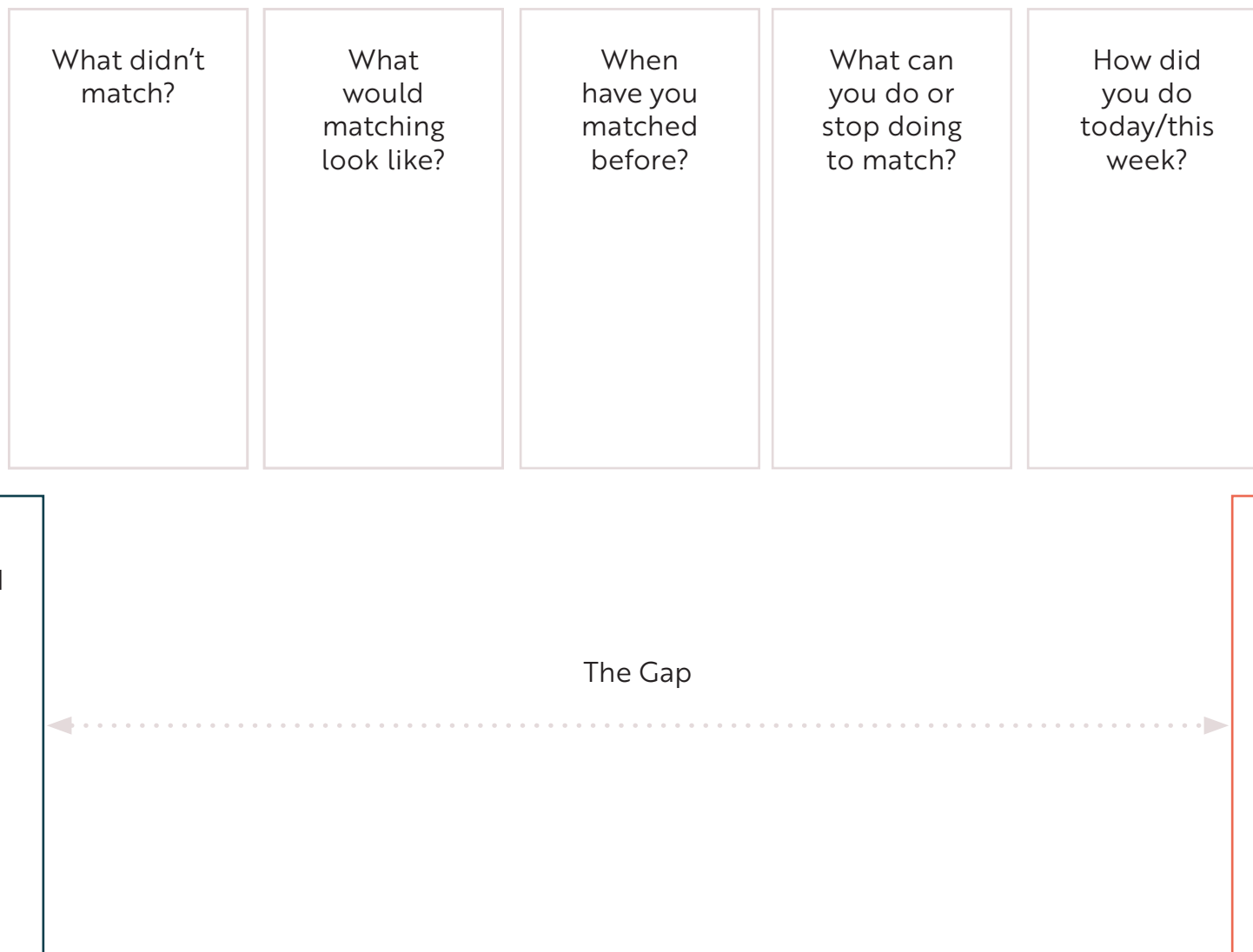
When you are a leader, people won't always do as you say, but they will always do as you do.

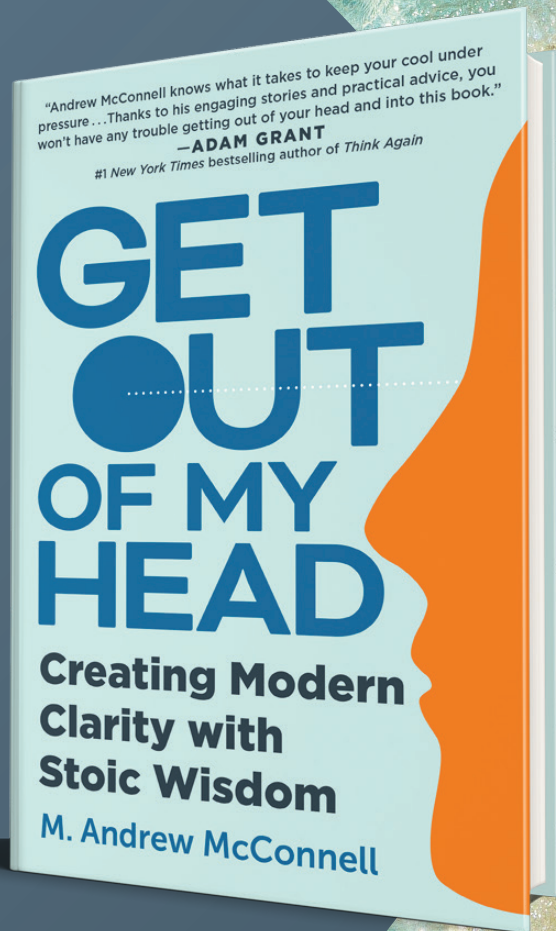
3

To identify your own gaps in words and action, and to close them, use the Bridging the Gap exercise.

- a. State the value.
- b. Identify the conflicting action.
- c. Find a circumstance in which you have matched a value and action in the past.
- d. Map how to bridge the gap between the value and action.
- e. Track and refine as needed.

BRIDGING THE GAP





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