



Embracing **Uncertainty**

Four keys to unlocking hidden opportunities



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Un-Learning Journal

About the cover:

Meet Charlie. Charlie has prepared himself for discovery. He is relaxed, righthand in pocket. He is undaunted, left fist pointing to his future. One gets the impression that Charlie has attempted this voyage before. Charlie courageously faces the uncertainty of wide-open spaces. He understands that hidden opportunities are within reach.



What is an *Un*-Learning Journal?

While we encourage you to reflect on some new ways of thinking, embracing uncertainty also requires the un-learning of thinking habits that keep us stuck. We invite you to reawaken your beginner's mind.

This is your opportunity to consider new ways of thinking you want to adopt. This is also an opportunity to consider parting company with ways of thinking that hold you back. The word, journal has the same root as the word, *journey*.

We are not giving you a document with answers. We are giving you a place to record insights and reflections as you visit points of interest in unexplored territory.

The Real Work

by Wendell Berry

*It may be that when we no longer know what to do
we have come to our real work.*

*and that when we no longer know which way to go
we have come to our real journey.*

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

How to use the *Un*-Learning Journal:

The Un-learning journal is a fillable pdf document. You can display it on a screen and use a keyboard for taking notes before, during and after the session. If you prefer to handwrite your notes, feel free to print some or all of the journal.

Before the session

- Use the checklist on the next page to track your progress and make sure you complete all your assignments.
- Take note of important information and questions that come up for you about the case study.
- Download the question list from the prework website. Choose the five questions you want Mateo to ask Kyle and be prepared to explain your choices.

During and after the session

- Use the journal to take notes during your **Workout Squad** discussions.
- We will direct you to pages in the journal where you will find the frameworks and ideas being presented so that you can take notes during the session.
- We will ask you to review specific pages during discussions or exercises.
- There are several pages of tips and tools to use as reference material and to support your ongoing development.

Advance Assignments Checklist

Begin your journey at:

<https://unsuckminds.com/start-here/>

The checklist below will help you keep track of your pre-work assignments:

Complete the **Unstuck Minds Profile**.

Review the case-study scenario.

Select the questions you'll recommend to your team during your first **Workout Squad** meeting.



Advance Assignments: Step Three

Notes from my review of the case study:

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Advance Assignments: Step Three

Notes from my review of the case study:

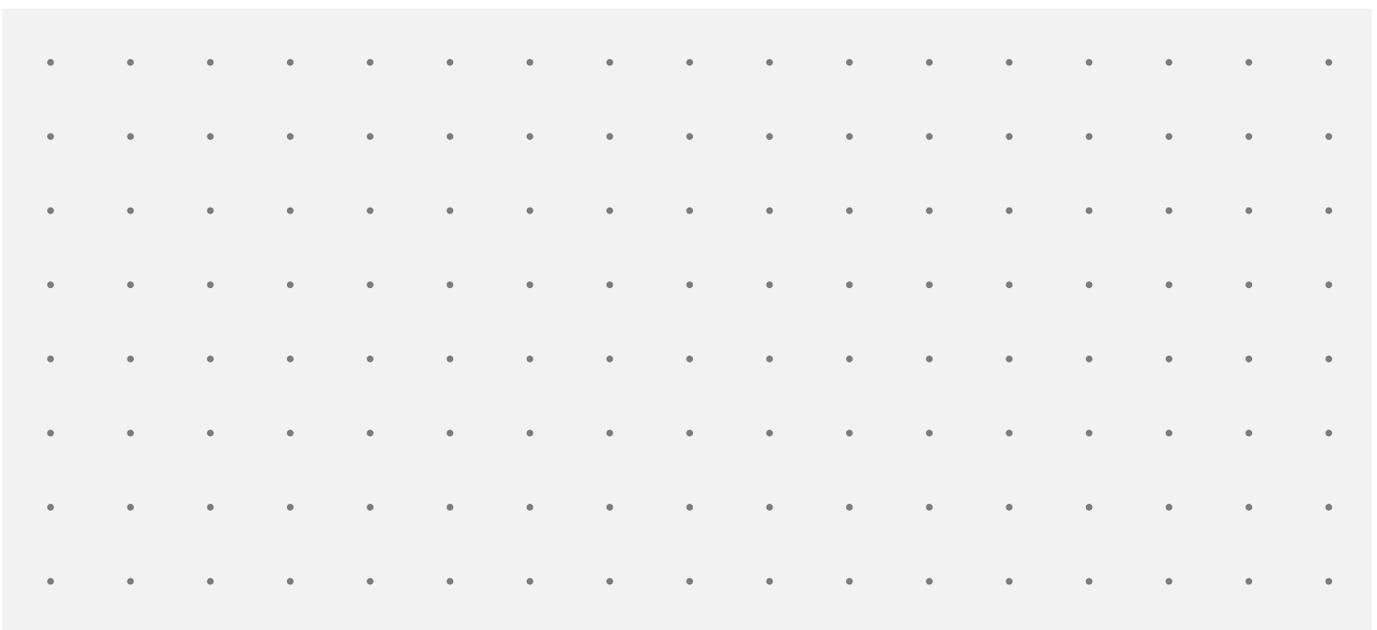
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Advance Assignments: Step Four

Rationale for my favorite questions...



Rationale for my least favorite questions...



Round One Notes

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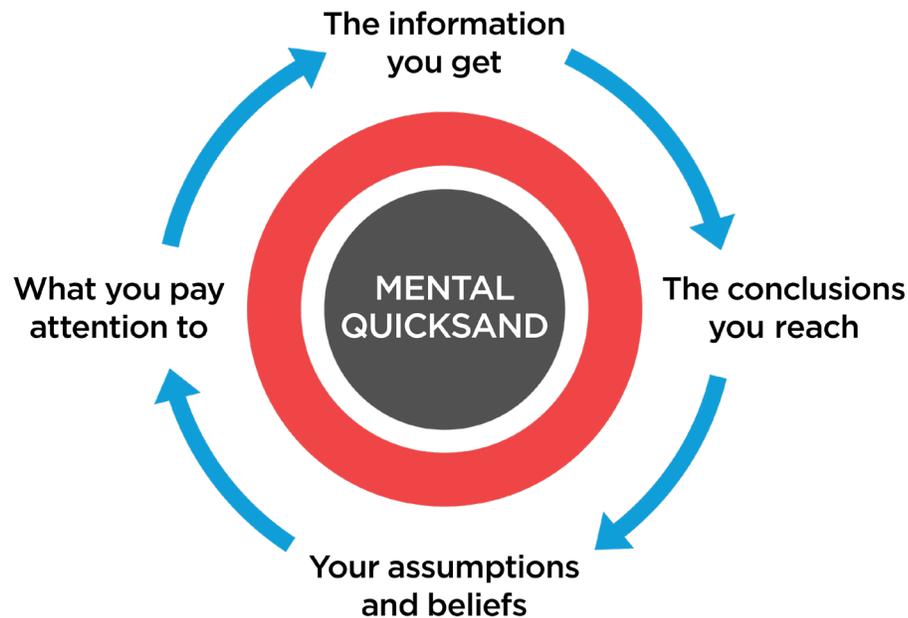
**"In the beginner's
mind there are many
possibilities; in the
expert's mind there
are few."**

-Shunryū Suzuki

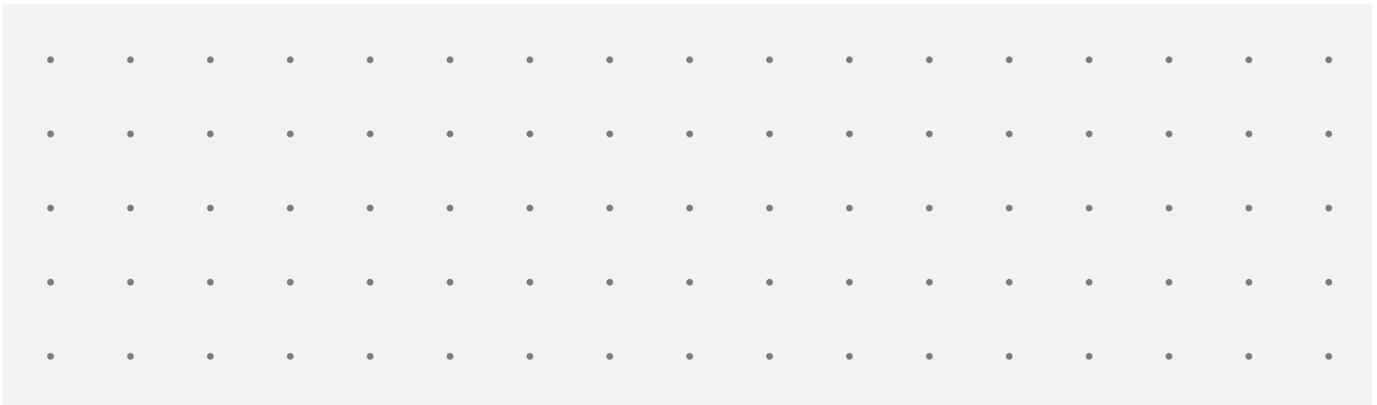


Mental Quicksand

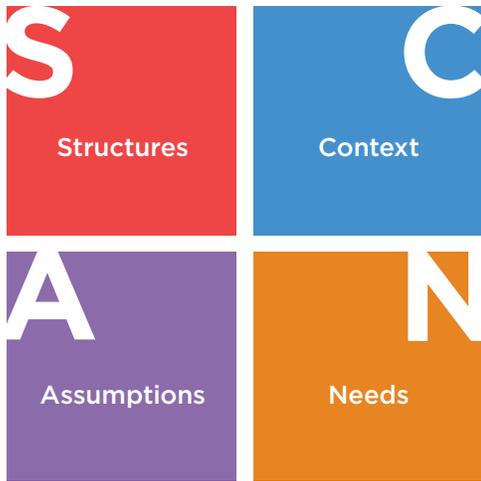
When it comes to processing information and reaching conclusions, human brains have evolved to take shortcuts. The shortcuts protect us from being overwhelmed by data or feeling rattled by having our beliefs challenged.



Premature resolution leads us to overlook information that might provide a breakthrough insight or creative option. Without insights and options, we preserve status quo assumptions and beliefs. Like struggling to escape quicksand, repetitive thinking just gets us more stuck.



Four Keys for Unlocking Hidden Opportunities



SCAN helps us see four hidden aspects of the situations we want to change.

Structures						
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Context						
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Assumptions						
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Needs						
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SCAN Notes

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SCAN Notes (cont.)

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Round Two Notes

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**"In the fields
of observation,
chance favors only
the prepared mind."**

—Louis Pasteur



SCAN Guide

SCAN helps you embrace uncertainty. When you pause and shift your attention, you make it possible for hidden opportunities to emerge. Each element of SCAN is like a key that unlocks a wealth of insights and options that help us get unstuck. Each element provides a view into a different, and often overlooked aspect of our situations.

Structures	Context
<p>Notice Norms, habits, systems, and processes that create stability and consistency</p> <p>Benefit Avoid solving the wrong problem</p> <p>Risks if overlooked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fail to notice small tweaks that might lead to big improvements • Underestimate the stability of the status quo <p>Ask yourself Which processes or routines no longer serve their intended purpose, have diminished impact, or have turned counterproductive?</p>	<p>Notice Factors and trends in the external environment that signal disruptions and opportunities</p> <p>Benefit Reduce the risk of missing something important</p> <p>Risks if overlooked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fail to notice external threats or new constraints • Miss opportunities to redirect assets or reprioritize investments <p>Ask yourself What factors outside our control might change how people experience what we offer?</p>
Assumptions	Needs
<p>Notice Beliefs, values, worldviews that orient our attention, judgements, and priorities</p> <p>Benefit Reframe premature conclusions</p> <p>Risks if overlooked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fail to notice a mismatch between ways of thinking and new realities • Start to equate beliefs with identity; change feels disloyal <p>Ask yourself What beliefs about our purpose, goals, and approach should no longer govern our priorities?</p>	<p>Notice Desires, fears, preferences, and social processes that motivate behavior</p> <p>Benefit Discover previously excluded perspectives</p> <p>Risks if overlooked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fail to consider evolving needs and preferences • Miss the benefits of including marginalized points of view <p>Ask yourself What has changed about those we serve or could be serving? Whose perspectives are underrepresented or missing?</p>

SCAN Guide (cont.)

Sources of information that provide insights and options about a situation you want to change:

<p style="text-align: center;">Structures How things are done around here</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Context What's going on out there</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrics • Incentives • Organizational roles, reporting relationships, and titles • Decision making norms • Standard operating procedures • Norms of behavior • Commonly cited financial ratios or accounting terms • Regularly scheduled events/meetings • Regularly generated reports • Functional processes (e.g., manufacturing, marketing, sales, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics • Laws and regulations • Technology • Social movements • Environmental conditions • Competition • Trends • Economic conditions • Popular culture • Potential risks – "Acts of God" • Availability of natural resources • Global conflicts • Discoveries
<p style="text-align: center;">Assumptions Our unquestioned beliefs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Needs What matters to the people who matter</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value statements • Rationale for a business model (e.g., people want services at their fingertips) • Shared judgements • Implicit/unconscious bias • Accepted cause-effect relationships (e.g., if we lower our prices, people will buy more of our products) • Opinions expressed as universal truths (e.g., all people..., everyone..., you can/can't..., we would never..., etc.) • Repeated mantras (e.g., "this is a sales-driven business," or, "lasting change starts from the top") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desires • Motivations • Fears • Opinions from people traditionally excluded • Opinions from people traditionally marginalized • Unarticulated problems or opportunities • Shifting stakeholder priorities • personas, customer segmentation • Our customers' customers • Beneficiaries of our products, services, expertise • Potential customers or beneficiaries • People with unique perspectives, experiences, or access to social networks

Mental Quicksand: Warning Signs

Signs that you may be headed for mental quicksand . . .

- The person you're listening to does not feel heard or valued. They repeat themselves or give incomplete responses.
- Your immediate ideas feel like a slightly improved version of the status quo, but something tells you that there are new dynamics to consider.
- Your challenge feels too familiar: *Haven't we solved this before? Why do we keep having this conversation? Why are we dealing with this again?*
- It's a complex situation, yet everyone you talk to agrees with you.
- You can't answer basic questions about trends outside the boundaries of your team, function or organization (e.g., what new technologies are creating opportunities for our customers/clients? What societal trends are influencing the attitudes of people we do business with? What laws or regulations are being considered that might constrain our offerings? What sources of competition are emerging?)
- It's been a while since you've researched what really matters to your customer and your customer's customer.

Notes:

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Tips for Analyzing Structures

A structure is a well-defined combination of elements. Analyzing structures means examining the relationships among the elements that make up the structure. Understanding the impacts of underlying structures helps us avoid solving the wrong problem. Analyzing structures amounts to noticing patterns and then asking: Why does this pattern exist?

Ask: What's Working?

When attempting to improve things, we naturally focus on gaps, flaws, and inefficiencies. We can also choose to notice what's already working well and then analyze the root causes of success versus asking only about the root causes of what may be going wrong. Taking note of what's working can inspire solutions that will be easier for the system to adopt because it feels familiar to those being asked to change.

Draw Diagrams

Diagramming elements of a structure can be a powerful tool for understanding interrelationships. Brainstorm elements of a problem onto sticky notes. Arrange the notes on a whiteboard so you can draw lines between elements that influence each other. An element that seems to be at the hub of a lot of other elements is a good candidate for where to focus your analysis.

Work Awake

We operate on autopilot for much of our day. It helps us conserve energy, but it also means we miss a lot. Working awake means choosing to pay more attention to your routine work tasks or habits. Sometimes we get stuck because the environment has changed, but we continue completing tasks even though they may no longer be of value. Or worse, they may have become counterproductive.

For more tips on how to analyze structures, see: *The Surprising Power of Not Knowing What to Do: Discovering Creativity and Compassion in a Time of Chaos* (pp 115-123)

Tips for Exploring the Context

Context organizes and defines things from a perspective that is external to the situation you want to change. Exploring the context is like zooming out to see the setting or circumstances in which your challenge exists. When we explore the context, we reduce the risk of missing something important.

Spend Time with a College Student

Sparks fly when fresh minds confront old knowledge. Many emerging social trends take root on college campuses. You can find signals of changes in preferences and priorities by paying attention to what young adults pay attention to. You may not be comfortable with what you're learning, but you will become keenly aware of how your worldview differs from the emerging zeitgeist.

Read Letters to Shareholders

A lot of thought goes into the few pages of communication a CEO sends out annually to a company's shareholders. Choose a few companies you admire and find out what their CEOs are focused on. If you notice any trends, you can get a pretty good idea of the bets that companies are making on the future.

Learn Something you Didn't Need to Know

Watch a TED talk on astronomy (assuming you're not an astronomer) or find a podcast about bringing financial services to places in the world without banks. Listen to any expert passionately describe the nuances of their field or practice. You never know when a random nugget of information will spur an insight related to something that matters to you. At a minimum, you'll be more interesting at dinner parties.

For more tips on how to explore the context, see: *The Surprising Power of Not Knowing What to Do: Discovering Creativity and Compassion in a Time of Chaos* (pp 107-111)

Tips for Challenging Assumptions

Challenging assumptions means developing the awareness to notice the hidden ways our thoughts and feelings focus our attention and shape our conclusions. We shrink our blind spots, and we get more comfortable with transformative ideas when we learn to challenge our assumptions. When we challenge assumptions, we generate creative options.

Seek Out a Reverse Mentor

A twist on traditional mentoring relationships, reverse mentoring pairs experienced leaders in an organization with younger, newly hired mentors. In reverse mentoring, the more experienced leader gets input from someone who may be more technologically savvy and attuned to emerging social trends. With a “fresh eyes” perspective, the younger mentor will notice operating assumptions worth challenging.

Mind the Measures

Many assumptions about success are hiding behind the metrics we most often reference when making decisions. To challenge assumptions, we should periodically confirm two things about our metrics. First, are we measuring something that matters? Secondly, will tracking the metric lead to valid conclusions about the future we want?

Listen for Worldviews

When someone shares their perspective, they might describe an observation (e.g., you didn't share any ideas during the meeting), an interpretation (e.g., you're shy), or an underlying belief (shy people never speak up). When someone speaks in generalities or universals, they are revealing an assumption that has become part of their worldview. To challenge assumptions, we must first learn to recognize assumptions.

For more tips on how to challenge assumptions, see: *The Surprising Power of Not Knowing What to Do: Discovering Creativity and Compassion in a Time of Chaos* (pp 138-147)

Tips for Empathizing with Needs

Empathizing with people and their needs means allowing people's experiences and stories to inspire us. At the heart of empathizing with needs is a commitment to human dignity and autonomy. When we empathize with needs, we discover previously excluded perspectives.

Discover Shared Interests

A *position* is what you say you want. An *interest* explains why you want it. Sometimes we can get unstuck by seeking to understand what really matters to someone rather than trying to talk them out of their position. A team leader might push for the unpopular position that everyone must turn on the cameras during virtual team meetings. Asking about interests might reveal that the team leader wants everyone to feel engaged, focused, and connected. A shift to solving for the interests invites many possible solutions.

Visit Someplace that Feels Uninviting

If you tend to be included because of your role, status, or identity, it may be hard to develop empathy for those who are often left out. Try putting yourself in a situation where you feel ignored or discounted. Visit unfamiliar territory and reflect on feeling like you don't belong. How would you go about making a productive contribution if the people you work with didn't acknowledge or include you?

Pay Attention to Hubs and Peripheries

People at hubs in your organization (e.g., an executive assistant) have a lot of contact with a variety of people. Those at the peripheries (e.g., a salesperson) have a lot of contact with people outside the organization. People at the hubs and peripheries have access to a variety of perspectives that are often overlooked by decision makers.

For more tips on how to empathize with needs, see: *The Surprising Power of Not Knowing What to Do: Discovering Creativity and Compassion in a Time of Chaos* (pp 115-123)

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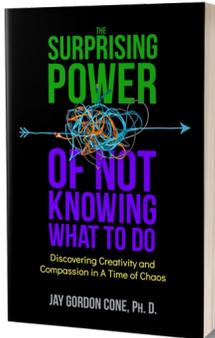
**"Between stimulus
and response there is
a space. In that space
is our power to choose
our response. In our
response lies our growth
and freedom."**

- Viktor E. Frankl



Embracing Uncertainty

Integration Suggestions



Self-Study

- Tips and tools in part 3
- Book Club discussion guide
- Free version of SCAN profile @ unstuckminds.com/your-thinking-to-action-profile

Subscribe



- Blog Posts
- Curated Content
- Quarterly SCAN @ unstuckminds.com/blogs



Team SCAN Sessions

- SCAN Session agenda and template

Being at a loss for what to do
is an opportunity, not a problem.

Embracing Uncertainty is the product of a partnership...



We focus on developing habits of mind and strategies of inclusion that prepare leaders and teams to thrive under conditions of complexity and uncertainty

Our mission is to help people think better and connect better so the world becomes more creative and compassionate



We empower leaders to be more effective and drive results. We do this through artful design and expert facilitation.

Through immersive, simulation-based leadership programs, leaders develop the skills they need to solve today's organizational challenges.



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