The CREATE Workbook

A companion to Icarus 2.0 by Peter Smith

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is a companion to *Icarus 2.0*. The book tells the story — a fighter pilot's high-speed ejection and survival, and the lessons he wrote down for his own children afterward. This workbook is the part you *do*.

Who it is for. Young adults launching after high school — and the parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, and peers working alongside them. The book was written for both sides of that relationship, and so is this workbook. You can work through it alone, but it is better with a mentor: someone who has "been there, done that" and is willing to sit down with you, face to face.

The arc. We start at the zero point: back to baseline, back to nature, back to who you actually are before other people's expectations, noise, and "stinky thinking" got layered on top. Then we loop out from there — Observe, Orient, Decide, Act — matching the *who* you found to a *what* you build your life around. That is the whole method: figure out who you are, then create a life in alignment with it.

How to work through it. Go in order the first time. Every section has write-in space — this workbook only works if you write in it. There are no grades and no wrong answers. Answer honestly; nobody is checking your work but you.

The loop is iterative. You will not finish this workbook once and be done. The process is "lather–rinse–repeat": each time through the loop you learn something, adjust, and go again. As the author says, at age 54 he is still looping. It is a continuum of constant refining and reinvention — not a one-time exercise.

No pride of ownership. In the author's words: "There is no pride of ownership in the process I'm about to share with you." These are tools to start with, not to finish with. Argue with them. Adapt them. Make them yours. If a tool does not fit, set it aside and use the ones that do.

What you need. A pen. Some quiet. And at least once, a walk outside — Section 1 will explain why.

SECTION 1 — THE ZERO POINT

Returning to Baseline

Before you can create your way, you have to get back to zero: the person you are underneath the conditioning, the expectations, and the noise. Other people have been telling you who you should be for years — parents, teachers, friends, feeds, advertisers. Most of it was well meant. Some of it was wrong. None of it is you until you check it against yourself.

The first step of the method is **Observe** — and the thing you observe is your *who*, not your *what*. Not what job you want, not what college you should attend, not what will make money. *Who are you?* What do you enjoy? What have you been given — talents, interests, temperament — that is yours and nobody else's?

> "Observe what? Today we're going to observe our 'who,' not our 'what.' We want to gather data about ourselves from multiple sources. These data include our personal circumstances and situations. Who am I? What has influenced me? What do I enjoy doing? How do I know I enjoy doing something? Easy: when we lose track of time while doing something, we are probably enjoying this activity. We are 'in the zone,' as they say, or in a state of flow."

That is the zero point: the place where you stop performing for other people and start paying attention to yourself. Everything in this workbook builds from it.

Exercise 1.1 — The 16 Observe Questions

Work through these questions slowly, in writing. None of them has a right answer. A few of them you will want to ask other people — your parents, your coaches, your teachers, your friends — because they see things about you that you cannot see yourself. Take those answers in a constructive spirit, not a critical one: you are gathering data, not collecting verdicts.

1. What activities do I most enjoy doing?

---

2. Am I adventurous and outgoing, or do I prefer peace and quiet?

---

3. Am I social — not in a media sense, but in a meeting-and-talking-with-people sense?

4. Do I know what I want to do to earn a living?

5. Am I more interested in having a lot of money or in doing something I enjoy to earn a living?

6. Would I enjoy joining the military and serving my country?

7. Do my coaches believe my sports performance is or can be Division 1 material for scholarships and a possible professional future?

8. Is there an area of study I found most interesting in school and would like to pursue further?

9. Do my parents, teachers, and friends feel I'm creative and artistic?

10. Do I like to design and build?

11. What makes me feel purposeful or fulfilled when I'm doing it?

12. How do I feel when I help others?

13. Do I believe the "sky is the limit" for me? If not, why?

14. Besides my parents, who would be a reputable resource for me to talk to about my future?

15. Whom do my parents recommend as a reputable resource to discuss my future?

16. Of all of my family members, colleagues, peers, coaches, teachers, mentors . . . who stands out as my most admired, and why? (Eliminate concerns about offending anyone with this answer.)

Now look back over your answers. Circle anything that surprised you — anything where you thought, *"Wow! I didn't notice this about myself."* Those surprises are the most valuable data you collected.

What surprised me most:

Exercise 1.2 — Flow-State Inventory

Flow is the best evidence you have of what you actually enjoy. When you lose track of time doing something, you are probably enjoying it — you are "in the zone," in a state of flow. Nobody has to pay you to do it. Nobody has to remind you. The hours just go.

List the activities where you lose track of time. Be specific — not "sports" but "shooting free throws alone after practice"; not "music" but "figuring out songs by ear on the guitar."

When do I lose track of time?

Activity	How often do I do it?	What part of it pulls me in?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Now look at the list. What do these activities have in common? Is there a thread — building things, helping people, competing, performing, being outdoors, solving problems, making things with your hands?

The thread I see across my flow activities:

That thread is a clue to your *who*. Hold onto it — Section 2 will show you what to do with it.

Exercise 1.3 — Back to Nature

> "We are wild by nature, so spend some time in it."

> "Spend time in nature to feed your wild soul and think about where you're going."

This one is not a desk exercise. Go outside — a trail, a beach, a park, a field, anywhere the noise drops away. Leave the phone behind, or turned off in your pocket. Give yourself at least thirty minutes. Walk, sit, look around. Then, while you are still out there (or as soon as you get back), write.

Where I went and what I did:

What came up while I was out there — thoughts, feelings, things I noticed:

One thing I want to remember from this:

Make this a habit, not a one-time exercise. The thinking time in Section 4 works best outdoors. Nature is where the zero point lives.

Exercise 1.4 — Who Am I? (Zero-Point Summary)

Pull it together. Using your Observe answers, your flow inventory, and your time in nature, write a short summary of your *who* — as you understand it right now. This is a snapshot, not a final answer. You will revise it every time through the loop.

I am someone who . . .

What I enjoy most:

What others say I'm good at:

What I value:

What I want my life to feel like, day to day:

My zero-point statement *(one or two sentences — who I am, in my own words):*

Keep this page. You will come back to it every time you run the loop.

SECTION 2 — THE BOODA LOOP

A Tool for Finding Clarity

Clarity is not something you find one day. It is something you *develop* — with a process. The process in this book is the OODA loop, created by fighter pilot John Boyd: **Observe, Orient, Decide, Act**. Boyd taught his pilots to out-think a faster enemy by cycling through those four steps more quickly and clearly than the other pilot could.

The author adds a **B** in front of it, for the twenty-first century: **Be present**. Our phones and feeds make it hard to complete the loop at all if we are not actually in the moment. So the loop becomes BOODA:

> **B**e Present — **O**bserve — **O**rient — **D**ecide — **A**ct

The opponent in adolescence, the book says, "is usually in our own minds, and we're going to learn to outmaneuver it." To paraphrase Commodore Perry: *I have met the enemy, and the enemy is me.* The BOODA loop is how you outmaneuver that enemy — the doubt, the distraction, the limiting thoughts — one revolution at a time.

The Energy Egg and "God's g"

The loop is drawn as an egg, borrowed from fighter-pilot energy management. At the top of the egg, gravity gives a fighter an extra 1g of turn performance for free — the author calls it **"God's g."** In essence, you get 3 g's of turn performance at a cost of only 2 g's of energy.

For our purposes, God's g stands for your innate talents, interests, skill sets, joy, and ambition — your God-given potential. When you work *with* what you were given, you turn tighter and faster for less effort. When you fight against it — chasing a path that does not fit who you are — you burn energy and go nowhere. The loop works best at the top of the egg, where your natural gifts do the heavy lifting.

My "God's g" — the talents and interests I was given that I should be working with, not against:

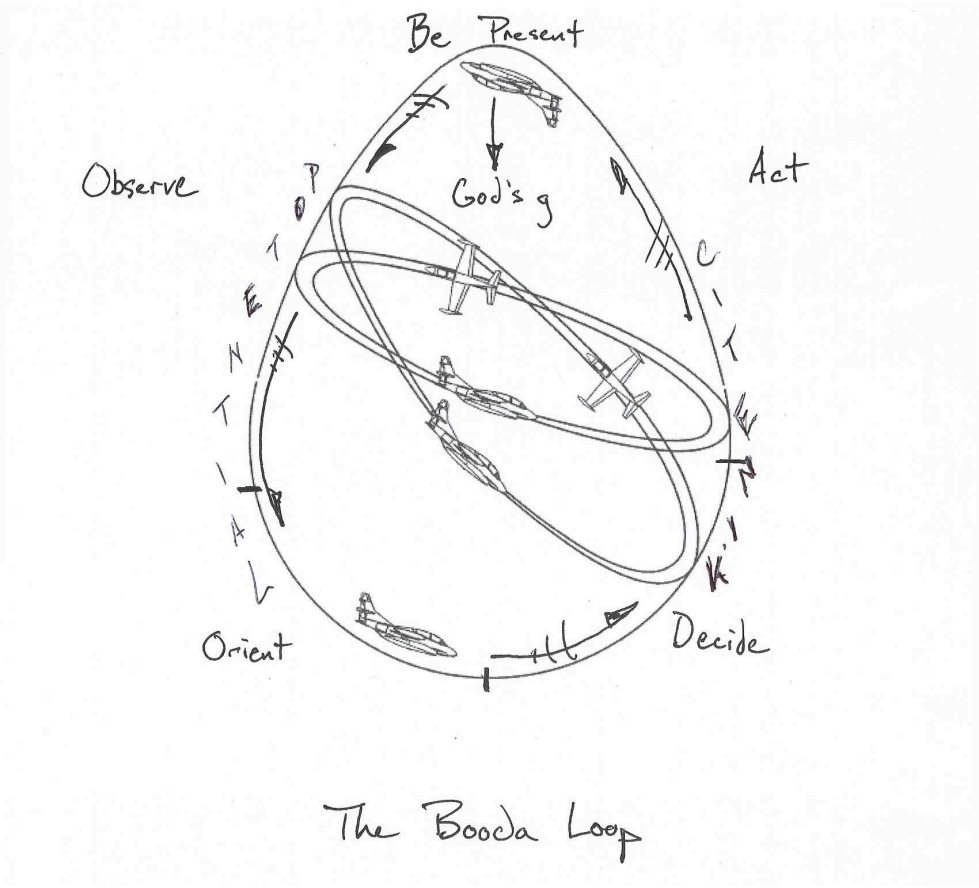

Figure 2. The BOODA loop.

Exercise 2.1 — The BOODA Loop Worksheet

Photocopy this page (or print extra copies). Use one worksheet per question you are working on — a career idea, a school choice, a decision you are stuck on. Run the loop as many times as you need to.

The question I am working on:

B — Be Present

Put the phone away. Turn it off or stuff it in your backpack. Be in the moment you are in, listening to the people around you, paying attention. You cannot run the loop if you are not present for it.

☐ Phone off / put away

☐ I am giving this my full attention for the next _____ minutes

O — Observe

Observe your *who*, not your *what*. Gather data from multiple sources: what you enjoy, what others see in you, what your mentors see. Stay open to all possibilities and avoid jumping to conclusions.

What I observe about myself in relation to this question:

What others (parents, coaches, teachers, mentors, peers) see:

O — Orient

Orientation is the most important step in the loop. This is where you analyze the data you gathered — against your genetics, your culture, your experience, your interests — and look for mismatches, errors in judgment, or standout information you missed. You are aligning your interests with your observations: where do your talents point?

How my observations line up — what fits, what does not:

The mismatch or standout I had not noticed before:

D — Decide

This is where most people get stuck — analysis paralysis, fear of committing, comparing yourself to your peers. Decide anyway. Deciding on a direction does not stop you from changing direction later. You can always course-correct.

My decision (one clear course of action):

The first small step I will take:

By when: _____

A — Act

Execute. The action step tests whether an interest is fantasy or reality — and then it feeds you back into the loop. When the action is done, observe what happened and run the loop again.

What I did:

What happened — did it confirm the interest, or change it?

Next loop: run the BOODA loop again with what you learned. ☐ Done — date: _____

Exercise 2.2 — Mind Map (Da Vinci Method)

Leonardo da Vinci taught a mind-mapping technique for working through a decision: write down every idea you can think of, then build a map from the easy things you can do right now down to the harder things you will need to accomplish to reach your target.

The book's example — becoming a firefighter. Possible ideas: visit my local fire station; ask for a ride-along; study fire sources; look for high school fire programs; attend Emergency Medical Technician training; become a lifeguard; take CPR; find a local firefighter to be a mentor; visit websites; read books. Then arrange them from easiest-now to hardest-later, and start at the top.

Now build your own. Write your target in the center. Brainstorm every step you can think of — easy, hard, far-fetched, obvious. Then draw lines connecting them, and number them from "do this first" to "do this later."

My target:

_____

My ideas (brainstorm — write them all down):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

My map *(use the space below to draw it out — target in the center, ideas branching off, numbered in the order you will do them):*

My map — drawing space

The easiest thing I can do right now:

I will do it by: _____

> "The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity." — Amelia Earhart

SECTION 3 — CREATE, LETTER BY LETTER

CREATE is a checklist, not a philosophy. Pilots use checklists because checklists keep people alive under stress. Young adults launching into the world need the same thing under the stress of the launch.

> **C**larity — **R**elationships — **E**motional Intelligence — **A**dd Value — **T**enacity — **E**nthusiasm

Work through one letter at a time. Each one has a short teaching and an exercise.

C — Clarity

Clarity of purpose is not something most of us acquire in high school. That is normal. There is nothing wrong with not having any idea what you want to do after graduation — it is no indication that you are behind your peers. Traditionally, we have filled this "clarity gap" with the culturally accepted norm of going to college. But what if you could develop clarity *before* finishing high school — with a checklist and a process you carry with you every day?

That is what the BOODA loop is for. You have already started it: the Zero Point (Section 1) was Observe, and the loop worksheet (Section 2) is the engine. Clarity is the target the loop funnels you toward, one revolution at a time.

Exercise 3.1 — My Clarity Statement

Write a clarity statement: what you want to create for your life, as you understand it right now. It does not have to be a career. It can be a direction, a feeling, a way of living. You will revise it every time through the loop — that is the point.

My clarity statement (draft):

What would help me get clearer? *(a conversation, a class, a ride-along, a book, a trip — be specific)*

Mind-map prompt: Take one interest from your Zero Point summary and run it through the mind-map template in Exercise 2.2. What is the easiest first step?

R — Relationships

> "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." — Proverb

You cannot get where you want to go without help from others. Parents, teachers, mentors, peers, coaches, guidance counselors — the whole entangled network of humans along your journey. Face-to-face mentoring is irreplaceable: guidance and mentoring are difficult to project from a smartphone or a Zoom call. You need to see someone's face light up when they share a "been there, done that" story. "Googling it" is not sufficient.

The national student-to-guidance-counselor ratio is 455:1. Your counselor is doing their best, but the numbers mean you cannot wait to be found — you have to go find your people.

Exercise 3.2 — Mentor Map

List the "been there, done that" people in your life — and the ones you still need to find. A mentor is anyone who has done what you are interested in and is willing to talk about it honestly.

People already in my corner:

Name	What they've "been there, done that" in	What I could ask them
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

People I need to find *(someone in a field I'm curious about, a trade, a service academy, a craft — anyone whose life I want to learn from):*

Who I'm looking for	Where I might find them	First step to reach them
1.		
2.		
3.		

Who do I want in my corner — and why?

One conversation I will start this week:

With whom: _____ About what: _____

E — Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize your emotions, understand what they are telling you, and realize how your emotions affect the people around you. It also involves your perception of others: when you understand how they feel, this allows you to manage relationships more effectively.

Your EQ matters more than your IQ at this stage of life. Being smart is not as valuable as learning to be relatable — most of us simply do not have the life experience or wisdom to substitute for it yet.

The tool for building EQ in this book is **InCentivE$** — the word "incentives" reframed. In our culture, incentives mean money and power. Here, the $ comes *last*, not first. The word breaks down into three virtues — **I**ntegrity, **C**ommitment, **E**xample (the "ICE" core) — and seven habits. The handout below is the one the author wrote for his own children shortly after his accident.

The Handout (reproduced verbatim)

> **3 seconds to impact and 0.87 seconds to live…**
>
> **Your Dad's InCentivE$ for CREATEing your way**
>
> **Integrity**
>
> The Air Force Academy taught us to live honorably by not lying, cheating, or stealing, or tolerating that behavior from others. They taught us to be impeccable with our words, to fess up when we mess up, and not to gossip about others. Strive to live your lives this way.
>
> **"No"**
>
> "No": learn to say this word in an empowering way. Establish your priorities, and don't compromise them when you feel pressure from your peers. Be aware of and prepared for the consequences when you do.
>
> **Commitment**
>
> You can't know your true strengths, weaknesses, or abilities unless you "warrior up" and commit to getting in the arena. Fear is when your mind and body are in a heightened state of awareness. Courage to commit is fear's opponent. Participate, and you will learn to manage fear.
>
> **Ego**
>
> There are "Good, Bad, and Ugly" egos. Surround yourself with the good ones. Try not to take another's criticism of you personally, and don't compare yourself to them. Revel in and work with your universal uniqueness.
>
> **Navigate**

Learn to thoroughly read a map of terrain, obstacles and all. Find your position on the map, orient yourself, and move to a position of higher ground somewhere in the distance. Achieving your goals is the same process. Remember, go from large to small identifying features that funnel you toward your target.

Triple Times

Take time to train yourself physically; you'll feel better. Take time to think about the world critically and draw your own conclusions. Take time to thank and develop an attitude of gratitude.

Inform

Maintain a desire to learn throughout your life. Actively listen to others and strive to understand before you talk.

Visualize

Intention is picturing in your mind how the achievement of your goal tastes, smells, and feels. This intention will naturally bring you to the people, circumstances, and events necessary to realize your vision.

Example

Whatever you are asked to do or choose to do for yourself in work, study, sport, or play is worth giving your best effort. Set a positive, inspiring example.

$en¢e of Humor

Find the humor in life's adversities. You'll make mistakes — get over it and forgive yourself. Experience the joy of being less serious, able to laugh at yourself along your way. Serving others will teach you humility. Remain humble and treat the dollar sign as the result of your journey, not its purpose.

Exercise 3.3 — InCentivE$ Self-Check

Rate yourself honestly on each virtue and habit, 1 to 5 (1 = I need work here, 5 = this is a strength). There is no score to pass. The point is to see where you are — and to pick one commitment per virtue.

THE THREE VIRTUES

Integrity — *Don't lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate it. Be impeccable with your word. Fess up when you mess up. Don't gossip.*

Rating: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

One thing I will do to strengthen my integrity:

Commitment — *"Warrior up" and get in the arena. Courage to commit is fear's opponent.*

Rating: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

One thing I will commit to — and see through:

Example — *Whatever you do, give your best effort. Set a positive, inspiring example.*

Rating: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

One way I will set a better example this week:

THE SEVEN HABITS

Habit	What it means	My rating (1–5)	One thing I will practice
"No"	Say no in an empowering way; hold your priorities under pressure	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5	
Ego	Don't take criticism personally; don't compare; work with your uniqueness	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5	
Navigate	Find your position, orient, move to higher ground; large to small	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5	
Triple Times	Train, think, thank — every day (see Section 4)	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5	

Habit	What it means	My rating (1–5)	One thing I will practice
Inform	Keep learning; listen actively; understand before you talk	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5	
Visualize	Picture your goal with all your senses; make it definable and actionable	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5	
$en¢e of Humor	Laugh at yourself; forgive your mistakes; serve others; money is the result, not the purpose	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5	

My strongest habit: _____ My weakest habit: _____

The one habit I will work on first — and how:

_____

_____

A — Add Value

> "When you live your life in alignment with a purpose that is centered on selflessly adding value for others, opportunities become abundant, and your life becomes fulfilled." — Hal Elrod

> "Money is one of the rewards you get for adding value to the lives of others." — Paul McKenna

Adding value is simple: if the people you work with, serve, or influence feel good about your input, you are most likely adding value. You already know how it feels. The question is whether you are asking it early enough — before graduation, before the job interview, before life forces the question on you.

One kind of person who adds value is a **galvanizer**: a leader who collects people's input when assessing challenging situations, brings them together to stimulate thought, and excitedly influences everyone toward the win, the progress, or the solution.

Exercise 3.4 — The Galvanizer Prompt

What talents do I bring to a team?

What skills do I have that others need or are not good at doing themselves?

Which characteristics of mine could a team use? *(Are you inventive? Tenacious? A doer? An innovator? Do you like to stand up or stand out? Do you get things done, or figure out how to get them done more efficiently?)*

Am I a galvanizer? When have I brought people together toward a win?

One way I can add value to someone else's life this week:

T — Tenacity

> "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." — Thomas Edison

Tenacity is seeing something through to a logical conclusion — pass, fail, or redo — rather than quitting in the middle because it got hard or boring. We are conditioned for instant gratification, and the loop takes time. Tenacity completes the loop. It is your work ethic: resisting the temptation to give up at the first sign of not being gratified. There is such a thing as delayed gratification, and most of us never give ourselves the time, patience, or effort to discover it.

Even if you finish and discover the destination was wrong, you have learned something — and you carry that into your next loop. "Seeing it through is never time wasted."

Exercise 3.5 — See It Through

One thing I will see through to a logical conclusion *(a class, a project, a season, an application, a skill — pick one, and be specific):*

What "finished" looks like:

What will probably make me want to quit halfway:

What I will do instead when that happens:

My commitment: I will see this through to pass, fail, or redo — and I will not quit in the middle.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

E — Enthusiasm

> "A man can succeed at almost anything for which he has unlimited enthusiasm." — Charles Schwab

Enthusiasm is a feeling of energetic interest in a subject or activity, and an eagerness to be involved in it. It is unconditional — there are no prerequisites or circumstances for having it. It costs nothing, yet it has the potential to make all the difference in every aspect of your life.

Enthusiasm is also the defense against mediocrity: against the "everybody gets a trophy" idea that your effort makes no difference. It does. Zest for life, pep in your step, enthusiasm in your endeavors — it is not a difficult ask, and it will be rewarded in feelings or achievement, if not in cash.

Exercise 3.6 — Where's Your Enthusiasm?

What am I genuinely enthusiastic about?

Where does my enthusiasm show up most — and where does it disappear?

One place I could bring more enthusiasm this week:

One person whose enthusiasm inspires me — and what I can learn from them:

CREATE Check-In

You have worked through all six letters. Before moving on, do a quick check:

Letter	One thing I learned about myself	One action I will take
C — Clarity		
R — Relationships		
E — Emotional Intelligence		
A — Add Value		
T — Tenacity		
E — Enthusiasm		

SECTION 4 — TRIPLE TIMES

Train, Think, Thank — Every Day

Habit 4 of InCentivE$ is Triple Times: three things to take time for, every day. The two words in front matter as much as the three that follow — *take* and *time*. "Take" implies action. You have to be proactive about scheduling these into your day. Time is divided into 24 hours a day for everybody. Choose to use yours wisely, productively, presently, and joyfully.

The whole routine is **one hour and fifteen minutes** of your day. Mix, match, move around, increase, decrease — what matters is not the amount of time, but the *habit* of including all three every day.

Train — about 60 minutes

Carve out an hour a day to train physically, mentally, and spiritually:

- **Physically, ~45 minutes:** 20–30 minutes of vigorous exercise, plus time to travel and get changed. If your gym is more than ten minutes away, it is too far — run in place, do sit-ups, push-ups, dips, stairs, and use the great outdoors. The human mind and body are designed to be stretched. Get out there and stretch it.
- **Mentally, ~10 minutes:** after physical training, get quiet. Tune into your body and thoughts. Become aware of how you feel and whether your frame of mind is positive, negative, or worried. Accept the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing.
- **Spiritually, ~5 minutes:** feed your soul with something uplifting — a great story of human compassion, uplifting quotes, a motivational speech, a religious book, a good podcast.

> "We are wild by nature, so spend some time in it."

Think — 10 minutes

Take ten minutes a day to listen to what is going on in the world and think about it critically. Look through a few headlines, check the sources, verify credibility, and form your own thoughts and opinions. Know what *you* think about things — not what everybody else does. Start by challenging yourself to counter one negative thought with two positive thoughts.

> "Spend time in nature to feed your wild soul and think about where you're going."

Thank — 5 minutes

Take five minutes a day to be thankful. We did not get where we are without the help of others. Everyone is connected to others in gratitude. Do not take anything for granted. Start out each day with thankfulness for the blessing of getting to experience the day — and before you know it, the hard parts will not seem so bad. Gratitude is contagious.

Exercise 4.1 — My Triple Times Plan

Train — what I will do, and when:

Think — when and where I will do my ten minutes *(outdoors is best):*

Thank — who or what I am grateful for today:

Exercise 4.2 — Weekly Triple Times Tracker

Photocopy this page and use one per week. Check off each day you complete all three. At the end of the week, write one line about what the habit is doing for you.

Day	TRAIN (~60 min)	THINK (10 min)	THANK (5 min)	Notes
Monday	☐	☐	☐	
Tuesday	☐	☐	☐	
Wednesday	☐	☐	☐	
Thursday	☐	☐	☐	
Friday	☐	☐	☐	
Saturday	☐	☐	☐	

Day	TRAIN (~60 min)	THINK (10 min)	THANK (5 min)	Notes
Sunday	☐	☐	☐	

Days completed this week: _____ / 7

What the habit is doing for me:

What I will adjust next week:

SECTION 5 — THE DEBRIEF

How Fighter Pilots Learn — and How You Can Too

Before a training mission, fighter pilots set **desired learning objectives (DLOs)** — what the mission is supposed to teach. After they land, they debrief: they review their recorded performance and pick apart the DLOs, step by step.

1. **DLO — Desired Learning Objective.** What were you trying to learn or achieve?
2. **FP — Focal Point.** What happened that is worth examining? A success or a failure — a specific moment.
3. **CF — Contributing Factor.** What factors contributed to that focal point?
4. **RC — Root Cause.** Out of the contributing factors, what is the one root cause?
5. **IF — Instructional Fix.** What will you do differently next time so the focal point does not hold you back again?

By completing this process each time, you discover your weaknesses and strengths — and you train to new DLOs. The process adapts easily to anything: a test, a game, a conversation, a claim you heard on the news. It is a habitual way to break information down instead of just absorbing what someone else wants you to think.

Worked Example — A Training Mission

Before the flight, the mission objective is set: detect, target, identify, sort, and engage the enemy aircraft, and get bombs on target on time. After landing, the flight debriefs. One focal point: *"Why did I lose my wingman on the way to the target?"* Another: *"Why didn't I achieve my desired weapons effects on my target?"* And a positive one: *"How did #3 successfully find his target and desired point of impact?"* For each focal point, the flight identifies contributing factors, agrees on a root cause, and comes up with an instructional fix — so the same focal point does not cost them next time.

The same five steps work on anything you want to learn from. Try it on your own week.

Exercise 5.1 — Debrief Your Week

Pick one thing from this week — a test, a practice, a game, a conversation, a decision — and debrief it.

What I am debriefing: _____ **Date:** _____

DLO — Desired Learning Objective. What was I trying to learn or achieve?

FP — Focal Point. What happened that is worth examining? (Pick the one moment that matters most.)

CF — Contributing Factors. What factors contributed to it?

1.
2.
3.

RC — Root Cause. Out of those factors, what is the one root cause?

IF — Instructional Fix. What will I do differently next time?

New DLO for next time:

Exercise 5.2 — Debrief a Claim

Take something you heard this week — a headline, a social media post, an advertisement, a claim someone made — and break it down the same way. Do not accept it or reject it until you have run it through the steps.

The claim:

DLO — What am I trying to figure out about this claim?

FP — Focal Point. What is the specific thing worth examining? *(Who is making the claim? What is their interest in it? What evidence did they offer?)*

CF — Contributing Factors. What might be influencing this claim?

RC — Root Cause. What is the most likely reason this claim is being made this way?

IF — Instructional Fix. What will I check or do differently before I believe a claim like this next time?

> "Trust, but verify."

SECTION 6 — GOALS & MENTORING

Turning the Loop Into a Plan

Everything so far has been about finding your *who* and looping toward clarity. This section turns that into goals — and into the mentoring relationship that keeps you honest and moving.

Exercise 6.1 — SMART Goals

A goal is only useful if you can tell whether you hit it. SMART goals are:

> **S**pecific — **M**easurable — **A**ttainable — **R**elevant — **T**ime-based

Write three goals: one short-term (this month), one medium-term (this year), and one long-term (the next few years). Check each one against the five SMART tests.

Goal 1 — Short-term (this month)

My goal:

☐ **Specific** — it says exactly what I will do

☐ **Measurable** — I will know when I have done it

☐ **Attainable** — it is realistic for me right now

☐ **Relevant** — it fits who I am and where I am headed

☐ **Time-based** — deadline: _____

First step:

_____

Goal 2 — Medium-term (this year)

My goal:

☐ **Specific** — it says exactly what I will do

☐ **Measurable** — I will know when I have done it

☐ **Attainable** — it is realistic for me right now

☐ **Relevant** — it fits who I am and where I am headed

☐ **Time-based** — deadline: _____

First step:

_____

Goal 3 — Long-term (the next few years)

My goal:

☐ **Specific** — it says exactly what I will do

☐ **Measurable** — I will know when I have done it

☐ **Attainable** — it is realistic for me right now

☐ **Relevant** — it fits who I am and where I am headed

☐ **Time-based** — deadline: _____

First step:

_____

The Mentor-Mentee Matrix

The book's appendix gives a simple protocol for how mentoring actually works. It uses fighter-pilot pursuit language: sometimes the mentor *leads*, sometimes the mentor *lags* behind and lets the mentee fly. A good mentor knows when to do which.

LEAD pursuit course — the mentor leads

- **L**earn about the mentee's interest and explore it together
- **E**ngage "been there, done that" resources
- **A**ssess courses of action
- **D**irect experientially

LAG pursuit course — the mentor follows and supports

- **L**isten to the mentee's story and evaluate their uncertainties, doubts, or imperfect thinking
- **A**dvise the mentee how to use the CREATE checklist, exercise the BOODA loop, and develop InCentivE$
- **G**uide the mentee in transition to a LEAD pursuit course

Exercise 6.2 — Find Your Mentor

You already started this in Exercise 3.2 (your Mentor Map). Now make it concrete.

The mentor I most want to find:

What I want to learn from them:

How I will reach them *(ask a teacher for an introduction, visit a workplace, attend an event, write a message — be specific):*

What I will ask in our first conversation:

1.
2.
3.

What I will bring to the relationship *(mentoring goes both ways — what do you offer? Curiosity, effort, gratitude, help?):*

When I will reach out: _____

When a mentor is leading (LEAD), what I need most from them right now:

When a mentor is following (LAG), what I need most from them right now:

Exercise 6.3 — My Next Loop

You have worked through the whole workbook once. The loop does not end here — it starts again, with everything you learned. Write your next loop before you close the book.

What I learned about my *who* from this workbook:

The *what* I am now pointed toward:

The next BOODA loop I will run — and what question it will answer:

The date I will come back to this workbook and run the loop again: _____

CLOSING — BEGIN AN ICE AGE

You started at the zero point: who you are, underneath the noise. You looped out from there — observed, oriented, decided, acted — and you built a checklist you can carry with you for the rest of your life. That is the whole method. It is not complicated. It is not finished, either. You will loop through it again and again, at every stage of your life, and it will keep working as long as you keep using it.

The author wrote these lessons for his own children first — in case he was not there to guide them. He survived, and the lessons became a book. His challenge to you, the next generation, is the same one that closes the book: **begin an ICE age** — a generation of young adults living with **I**ntegrity, **C**ommitment, and setting a positive **E**xample for the people coming behind them.

When everything else was stripped away, what mattered to him was relationships and character. That is what this workbook is built on. (His full account is in *Icarus 2.0*.)

> "Here's to you CREATEing your way, and the beginning of an ICE age!"

One more resource: the "been there, done that" stories collected at **stinkythinking.com** — an archive of real people sharing how they created their way. Read them. Learn from them. And when you have a story of your own, pass it on to someone coming up behind you.

Blue side up.

About This Workbook

The CREATE Workbook is a companion to *Icarus 2.0* by Lt Col Pete "Stinky" Smith, USAF (ret.). The exercises are drawn from the book's CREATE Checklist, BOODA Loop, InCentivE$ handout, Triple Times routine, fighter-squadron debrief method, and Mentor-Mentee Matrix. The 16 Observe Questions, the InCentivE$ handout, and the LEAD/LAG pursuit courses are reproduced verbatim from the manuscript; all other material is condensed and adapted from the book for use as a workbook. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.