



SOLUTION NOTEBOOK

SOLUTION FOCUS AGENDA



Marco Matera

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This translation is edited by Tania Gordon, on the site www.solutionfocusagenda.com you can read about her. Thank you very much Tania

PREFACE

We are very happy you downloaded this eBook.

“True richness is having time.

Time for oneself, to share and to create, to be nourished and to feed the mind.”

We hope this small guide may be useful to make your time more efficient, effective, fun and abundant.

The guide is free, you can print and share it under the creative commons rights.

I developed the idea and the concept and co-created the layout with Alberto Vassale. All this to offer you three advantages:

- ☑ Whenever you buy the agenda it will accompany you for one year regardless of the month and year you bought it in.
- ☑ It is structured to help you focus your attention with a solution-focused approach.
- ☑ You may personalize the diary adding a section of your liking.

If you want to purchase the agenda this is the link

If you want to know more about the tools visit the website
www.solutionfocusagenda.com

Enjoy!

Marco Matera & Alberto Vassale

“La vera ricchezza è il tempo per sé,,

marco matera

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this eBook is to illustrate the agenda's structure and application.

Of course managing an agenda is customary and intuitive, but what we want to offer is a way to increase your resources and give you tools to reach your goals quicker.

Basically improving the quality of life.



I have always looked for agendas to help me manage my year and have never found one that fully matched my requirements.

What did I ask of an agenda?

- ☑ A yearly planning chart with space for notes and a clear layout of monthly appointments.
- ☑ A monthly planning chart with space for writing.
- ☑ A weekly planning sheet instead of a daily one.
- ☑ A section to write down things to do: phone calls etc.

I always ended up personalizing my agendas, but even so they never turned out how I wanted so I asked myself:

**“Suppose you found the perfect agenda, how would it be?
What features would it have and how would it be organised?”**

I wanted an agenda that allowed me to organise my time with the Solution Focus philosophy.

So I created it.

A paper diary made with a mixture of approaches that make my life easier.

Even though I value the digital I find that writing, drawing or scribbling helps me to remember things better. I like the feeling of pencil on paper and being able to draw a line on the things I have done.

Besides, scribbling and personalising something makes it feel more uniquely my own.



MORNING ROUTINE

What you see in the photo is my “morning desk”.

This is the bar where the SF Agenda project was born. From the initial concept to the graphic design and final publishing.



This is where every day I start the day by opening my agenda, checking yesterday's notes and adding or confirming appointments. But most importantly I have my coffee and breakfast asking myself:

“If today – or this week if it’s Monday – will be fantastic, what will I bring home?”

This simple question is able to move our attention from any negative expectations to a feeling of proficiency.

Having a paper diary enables me to write things down without being online.

In the early morning I can still be invisible to the rest of the world, no phone calls, no notifications.

It's a sacred space where I can spend time with myself, thinking of what I want to achieve, the things I have to do and how to organize them. It's my routine and it helps me get a clear mental picture of the steps to take.

There is a great amount of literature supporting the value of routines; I will tell you about the advantages it gives me:

- ☑ Time for myself – I start the day saying to myself: “You are important”.
- ☑ It allows me build my day slowly, defining and remembering goals.
- ☑ It makes me feel concentrated and in control, allowing me to organize the day instead of just running from one thing to the next.

THE SOLUTION FOCUS PARADIGM

Complaining is unfortunately a common behaviour and often without us being aware it enormously reduces our capacity for action.

The solution-focused approach helps us move from complaints to action, from imagining disastrous scenarios to solidly evaluating the benefits of possible solutions.

Solution Focus was born in the United States as a form of brief therapy and then spread out into to the word touching different fields such as coaching, training and consultancy.

Although **Solution Focus** is taught and recognised as a method, for me it is simply an approach able to activate and enhance our resources and strengths, as well as giving clear insights on the steps to take to reach the solutions.

In the beginning you may need to practice having a proactive approach, but soon after it will become a way of working and personally, it has made my life so much easier.

Schooling has trained us better at solving problems than dreaming of solutions.

By learning to correct mistakes our mind has got used to focusing on what is wrong or needs to be fixed. In this way we may overlook or underappreciate the good aspects or the things we do well.

The outcome?

I call it the “**hamster effect**”.

We jump from one project to another and from one task to the next without ever stopping to celebrate our successes and give recognition to what we have done. We just keep spinning in the hamster wheel!

At least this is true for me, I grew up in a generation in which getting good grades was simply “your duty!”



The Solution Focus approach concentrates precisely on giving value to what is working, to the good aspects and to our resources.

It helps celebrate success and allows us to start thinking of what changes we would make for things to work.

Poverty thinking activates in the mind the expectation further scarcity.

The two most important SF tools you will find in the agenda are basically:

- ☒ The miracle question
- ☒ The use of scales

The *miracle question* summed up recites:

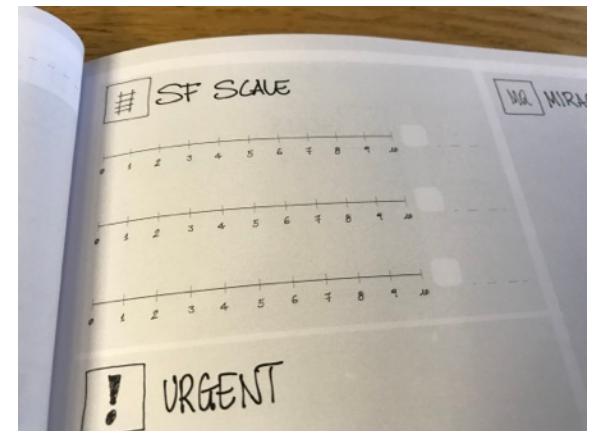
“Suppose a miracle happens that grants you what you want to achieve, what would be different?”

This is a very powerful question because by focusing on the small differences that would occur, we start to perceive the advantages and effects.

How do you know when you have obtained what you set out for?

The Solution Focus Approach works with a 0 to 10 scale therefore giving tangible value to the present moment and to each step that leads up to the solution. Number 10 represents the finishing point and the solution, whereas 0 represents the starting point.

There are further explanations in the specific sections, however to know more about it look up my website (www.marcomatera.it) and you will find:

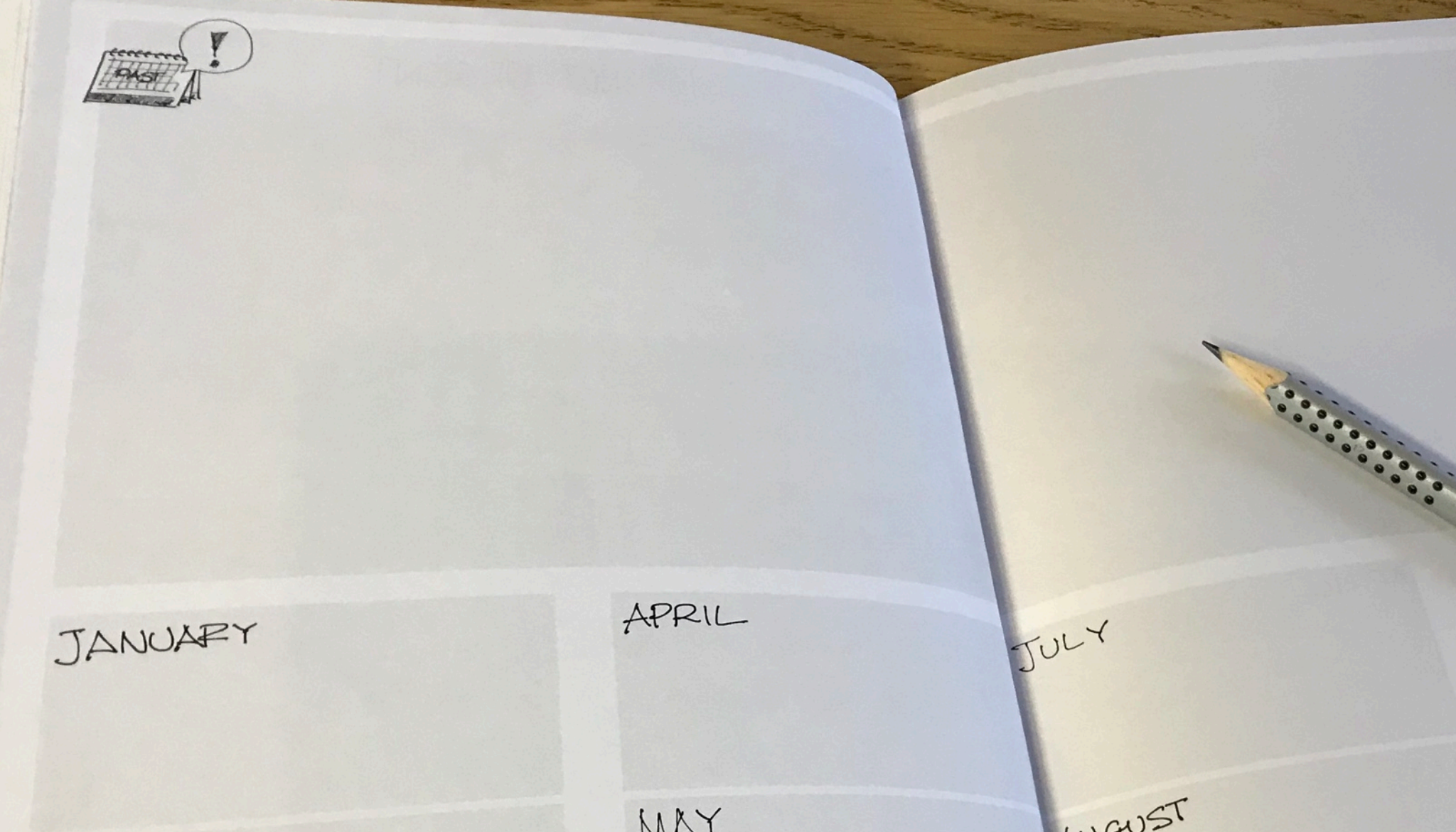


- ☑ The book we curated for Franco Angeli
- ☑ A map that explains the differences between problem solving and Solution Focus
- ☑ Tools for coaching and much more.



LAST YEAR'S RETROSPECTIVE

How has your past year been?



"Stopping might be a different way of moving forward"

Every year between the 27th and 31st of December I take some time to think over and evaluate the year gone by. A kind of analysis.

I am fortunate enough to live near Tellaro, in Italy, so in these days I stroll around the small village with my diary at hand, gazing out to sea and letting the sound of the waves cradle me while I reflect on the past year.

When thinking of the year gone by we could describe it in terms of scarcity:

"It was terrible, I wanted to do A, B, C and I did nothing!"

Or in terms of the efforts we made or the problems we faced.

Then again, we could describe it in terms of abundance, focusing our attention on the good and useful things that happened. On the new people we met.

If our assessment is negative because it was a particularly hard year, we can focus on what got us through it, what resources we put into play or who gave us a hand.

This is exactly what I do.

I think back on all the interesting things that happened, the people who enriched me personally and professionally.

The chances I had, the ones I took advantage of and the ones I lost.

The lessons I learned.

The resources I put to into play.

Once this is done – which is pleasurable in itself – I take the next step: dreaming of a new scenario.

Take your time to think and remember.

You will find a large section laid out on two pages where you can draw and write notes, as well as designated boxes for each month so you can write in the most important things.



IMAGINING THE FUTURE

*"I might not know what is good,
but I definitely know what is better"*

Steve de Shazer

In “Venti favorevoli” Angelo Ricci* commented Walt Disney’s statement “*If you can dream it you can do it*” by saying... “*I don’t know if it’s true, but if you can’t dream it it’s unlikely you will do it.*”

Always with the solution-focused approach in mind, I ask myself:

“Supposing next year will be fantastic, what good things will there be?”

In those same days of the end of December I imagine all the possible new differences I would like to experience if everything worked out well. What would happen, how would I feel, how would I be dressed and who would I be with?

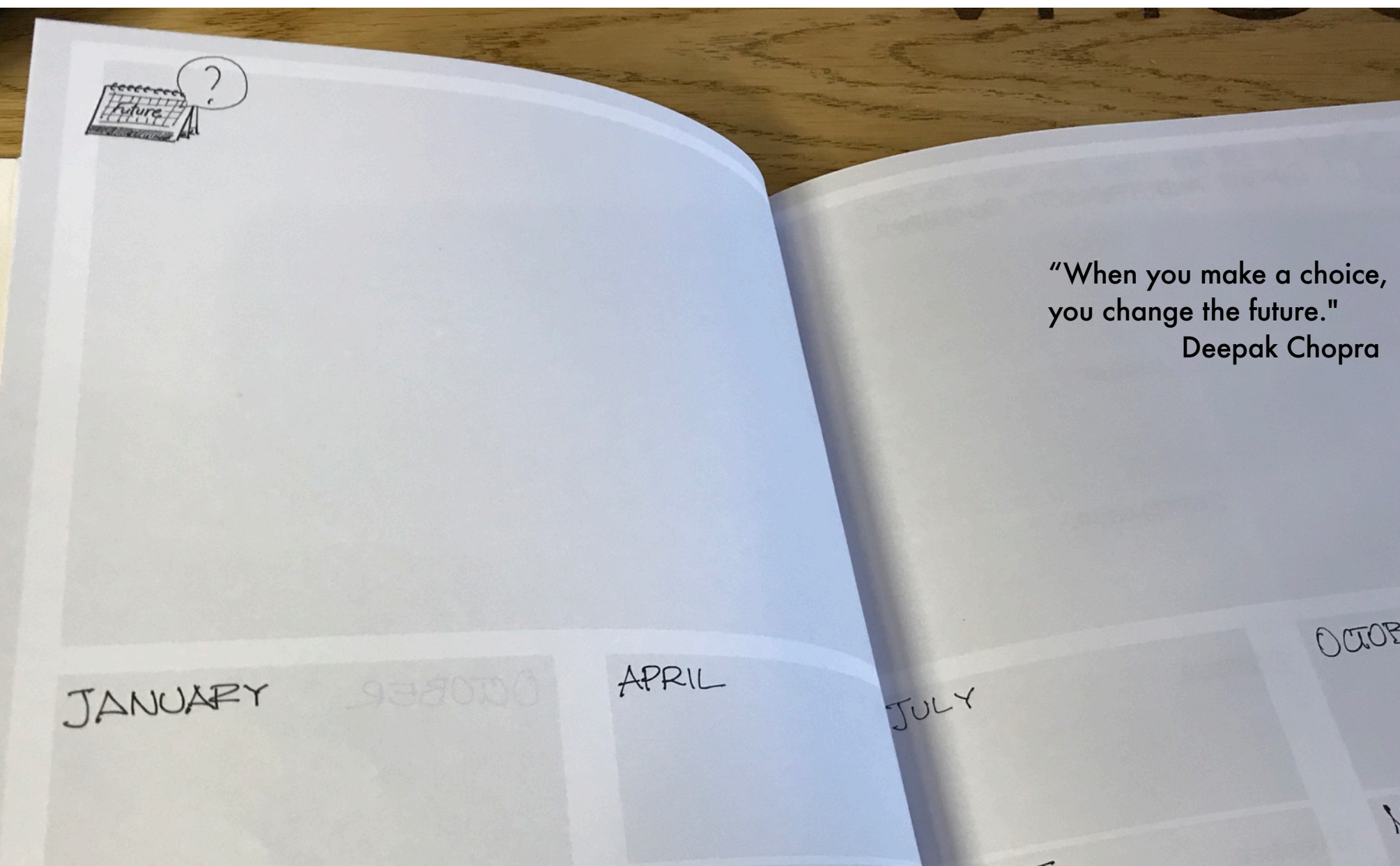
It’s a bit like mentally fast-forwarding a year to evaluate what happened.

I think of the projects I would like to accomplish, of my holidays, of meaningful people and of all the new things I would like to learn.

I dedicate some time to surprise myself as well, imagining things that would amaze me.

So when I start planning the year ahead I already have a good idea of the important things.

* Inventor and creator of sognatorisvegli, one of the most rated podcasts on iTunes www.sognatorisvegli.com



PLANNING

I have always looked for yearly planning charts in agendas.

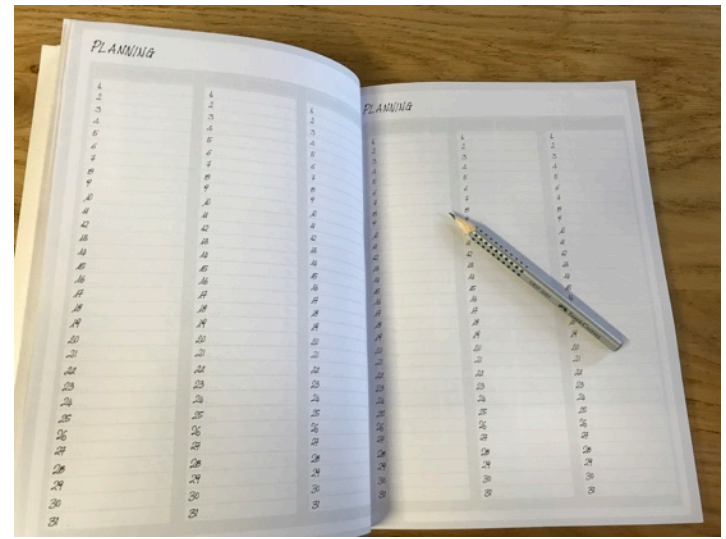
Being able to see your appointments laid out in front of you makes planning easier.

The yearly planning chart is blank, it just has the months and the date so it's up to you to fill in the day of the week. This way in whatever year you get the agenda you will be able to use it.

The second yearly planning chart has 12 months of 31 days each, so you can start the year whenever you want and the diary will finish with the month you started instead of December.

Planning and creating my yearly calendar is a very important procedure for me.

After reflecting on all the good things that happened and having imagined all the great, useful and surprising things to look forward to, the time has come to put down the action steps.



The first thing I do is to fill in the days of the week in each monthly column and then mark Sundays and holidays with a marker pen.

I suggest using a colour that doesn't show through the page.

This job will need some concentration if you want to do it neatly but by the end of it you will have the whole year laid out in front of you, divided into two six-month columns.

Now that you have your year in front of you, with the weeks and weekends highlighted, what do you feel?

What would you like to write in first? Which are your priorities?

There is a video on YouTube about **time management** in which a professor presents his students with an empty jar. He starts filling it with large stones and asks the class if they think there is any room left. He then puts some smaller stones in, filling the jar to the brim. When the students answer that it is now full, he adds sand and fills in the empty spaces. It really looks like nothing else could fit into the jar but the professor pours in some water.

The moral of the story is that you need to start with the large stones in order to make everything fit.

Which are your large stones?

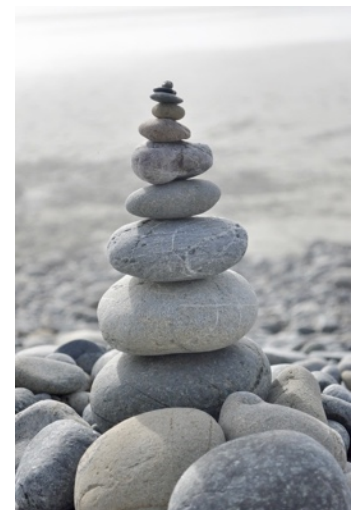
Mine are tasks that cannot be delayed and vacations.

You can use different colours for the different categories that might be useful to you.

I like using a pencil. This also reminds me that anything can be changed...

Once you have written in all your appointments take a step back and ask yourself:

"If this year turns out to be fantastic, what amazing things will happen?"



Maybe you will come up with activities you hadn't thought of before.

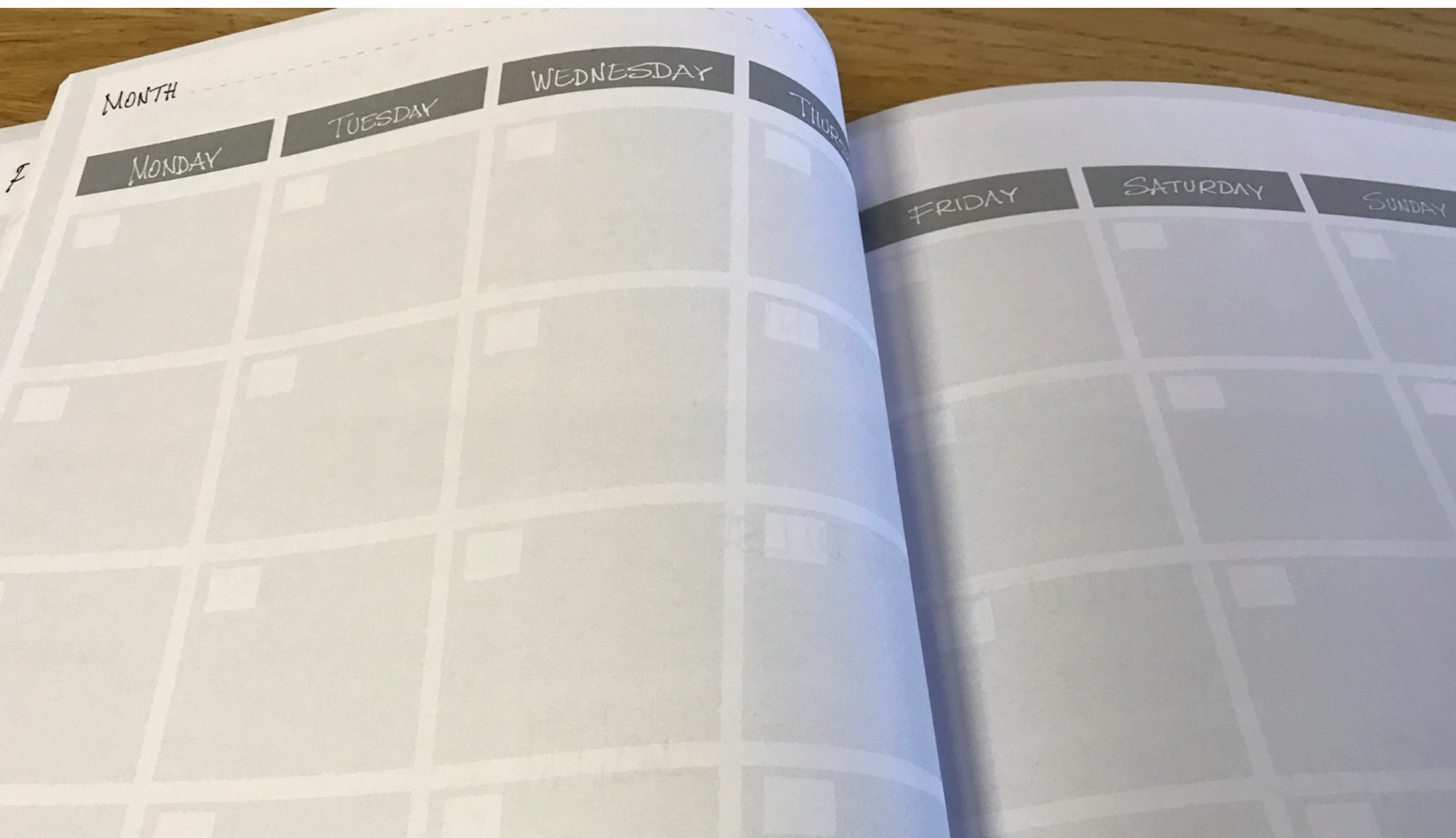
Then I move on to the **monthly planning**: here you will find the days of the week but no date.

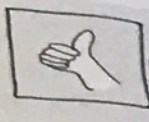
You may personalise the months based on the current year.


The weekdays have been set starting with Monday.

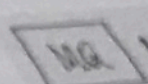
I fill in each month of the planning chart with the appointments I had already written in the yearly one.


There is more space here so plans can be further detailed.

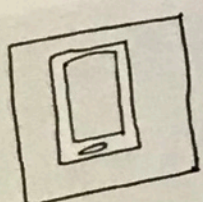


 GOALS

 SF SCALE

 MIRACLE Q1

 URGENT

 CALL

7

THE AGENDA'S SECTIONS

Now let's get to the weekly planning.

The days of the week are placed in columns from Monday to Sunday and have a box next to them in which to add the date, depending on which month the page refers to.

Each month has five weeks.



Goals

What would you like to achieve this week? Are you working on any objectives that will conclude this week?

I just write down a few words and meditate on the effects that achieving this goal give me.



Call

This section is for important phone calls. Nowadays we so frequently communicate with less than 140 digits using WhatsApp and Messenger that making a phone call acquires huge value.

I use check boxes so I can tick them off when they are done.

But let's get to the heart of the Solution Focus tools.



Miracle Question

The miracle question is a key step in Solution Focus.

In this section you can contemplate on the effects of having reached your goals.

Imagine for a moment that all works out miraculously and the goals you wrote down in your goal section come true. What would be different?

Or imagine that your week will be fantastic, what would be different? Explore these differences from various angles.

Dive into the scene; imagine you really are in the “miraculous” situation.

How does your body feel, your stomach, your limbs, your shoulders...? What emotions do you feel? What clothes are you wearing?

If we asked someone close to you what differences they noticed, what would they answer?

You don't have to write anything down, just knowing this section exists will make you think about it.

The founder of the solution-focused approach Steve de Shazer, said:

“...I might not know what is good, but I definitely know what is better”

Over fifteen years of experience, both with myself and with my clients, has proven to me how effective these methods are in allowing us to reach our goals.

They let us perceive the advantages of reaching our result. This increases motivation to achieve a goal. It also allows us to feel like we deserve that result!

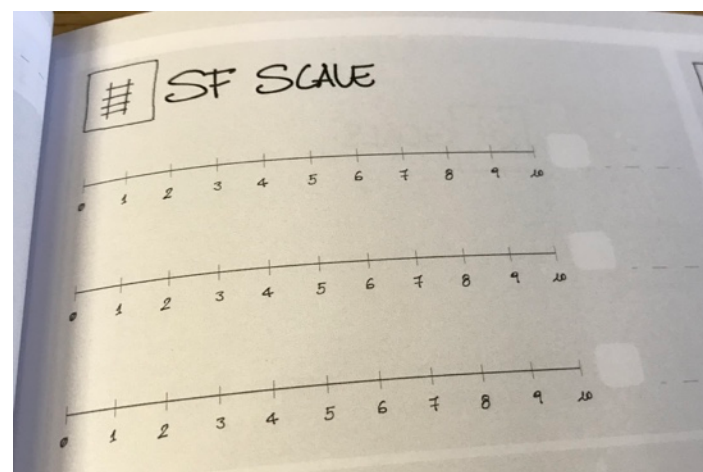
If I think I am undeserving, I will end up sabotaging myself



Scaling section

In this section you will find three 0 to 10 scales with three boxes next to them and some space to write.

In each scale 10 represents the finishing point, the accomplished goal and 0 represents its opposite. You may use a coloured marker in the box to create a category.



For example if I'm using the first scale for a task I'm somewhat behind with - let's say I rate it at 3 – I can put a dot on number three with a coloured marker and highlight the box with the same colour in order to identify it with a specific category.

On a different scale, perhaps related to a hobby, I might be at number 7.

What can I do to get to one point higher?

If my answer inspires some new activities, I can write them in my “to do list” with check boxes.



Urgent

Here I usually write down things I need to solve that day or week. For example paying a bill, booking a trip or purchasing a train ticket. They are usually tasks that require little effort. For this reason I differentiated them from the urgent tasks I put in the Eisenhower chart that you will find further on.

Writing helps me not to forget.

If I need to send an important email or make a phone call I usually use the specific box and red ink.



To do list

This is the section I always missed most in my former diaries. A dedicated space to list the things to do during the week, with a check box next to them.

When I've completed a task I usually tick the box and also draw a line straight across it. This may seem ordinary but it gives me a sense of satisfaction: it's done!!

Whatever I did not manage to complete I write down in the following week or I erase if no longer necessary.

Empty field

I have always loved personalizing my agenda so I decided to leave an empty space for you to personalize yours as you wish. Just add an icon to classify the empty space.

Some suggestions.



I don't use emails very much, I rather call on the telephone, however a specific box can be useful. Speculate on your email having the desired effect.

What would you receive? What important information does the reader need to know in order to fulfil your expectations?

This is a SF method applied to communication, both written and spoken.



There is always something week related that needs to be written down.

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Quotes could be another interesting section to add. An inspirational thought or phrase to open or close the week with.



Do you need to keep track of your budget? You could use this field to note your weekly expenses.



Are you a creative person and come up with brilliant ideas during the week? Write them here.



SPECIAL SECTIONS

The agenda also has some special sections:

- ☑ The Eisenhower chart
- ☑ The SF charts
- ☑ The Miracle Scaling



Eisenhower's Chart

I always missed having an Eisenhower chart in the diaries I bought, so I would draw it behind the cover.

I find it very useful to manage priorities. All you need is a pen and Post-it.

The chart is made of four quadrants, two rows and two columns.

The left column is for **URGENT** activities and the right column is for **NOT URGENT** tasks.

The rows prioritize importance. The top row is for **IMPORTANT** activities and the bottom row is for the **NOT IMPORTANT** ones.

Online you can find a lot of information on the use and history of the Eisenhower chart. If all your activities are urgent and important you will end up working in a constant state of emergency, whereas if your activities are all urgent but non important for you, perhaps you are managing someone else's urgent and important matters.

I use this chart to manage my agenda and work on macro areas. I write down my large-scale projects and then manage them separately. This gives me a clear and immediate overview of my important activities.

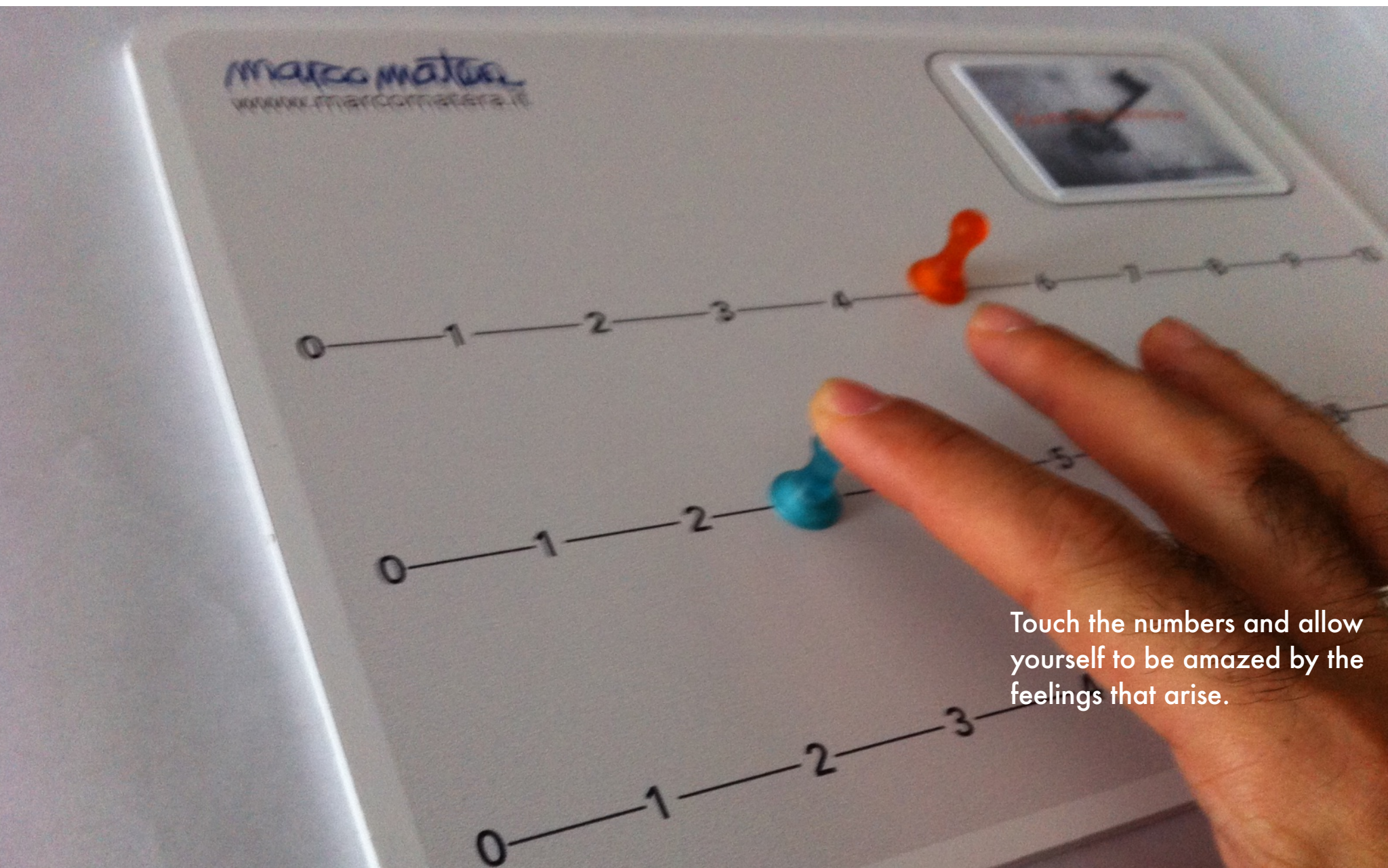
Miracle Scaling

I developed a coaching method with Riccardo Benardon that turned out to be very fast and effective.

I always kept a photocopy of the diagram in my agenda.

It might be useful for you to work on a goal or use it with a friend or client.

You can read the article we wrote for the [The Knowing field](#) here.



SF Canvas

What do you want?	Where are you? 0 ————— 5 ————— 10	Resources
	What works?	
Actions		Advantages

marco matera



Solution Focus Chart

I created the SF charts to make project management easier.

The SF Chart or Canvas is the result of my research applied in the field of the solution-focused approach, a real change of paradigm to find solutions without analysing problems.

The solution-focused approach (SF) is simplified into a diagram. The charts represent containers to collect your insights as a sort of 'plan to get out of the plan'.

These are simple tools and I published an article where I explain the practical application, the advantages and rules to experiment with thus contributing with me to the research in the SF world.

Download my article here [link](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

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Solution Focus Agenda in the world



Solution_Focus_Agenda



#Solutionfocusagenda



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AMBASSADORS

Budapest Solworld Conference 2019

Thanks to the ambassadors who participated in the Solution Focus Agenda workshop I held in Budapest, this "notebook of solutions" will be translated into different languages.

Not only will these ambassadors translate the guidebook but they will also offer seminars to experience the Solution Focus approach applied to the agenda management.

Thanks to three Solution Focus coaches who are passionate about the project, this eBook will be translated into:

- ☒ French
- ☒ Slovakian
- ☒ Hungarian

You will find all their details and references on the website www.solutionfocusagenda.com

"It doesn't matter what you take but
what you leave"





IN CONCLUSION

I hope these tips have been useful to you.

I wish you years full of wonderful ideas, emotions and time for you.

If you want to know a little more about me you can visit [my website](#), or [contact me](#) and book a meeting via Skype

The process of creating this agenda with Alberto Vassale has been very interesting. We developed everything from scratch, from the graphic design to the layout. So we already have all the material to develop personalised versions, both corporate and personal.

If you would like to create your personalised diary [contact us](#)



"I invented this life. Everyone can do it, it just takes courage and determination"
Tiziano Terzani