FEARLESS FONA

CULTIVATE A MINDSET THAT WILL CONTROL THE CHAOS & HELP YOU MAKE THE CUT





Human Factors

Simplicity

Practice

Planning

Facing a failed airway doesn't have to feel like freefall. With the right mindset and a clear plan, FONA becomes a straightforward, decisive intervention rather than a last-ditch act of desperation. This space builds the mental framework, strategic readiness, and tactile skills that cut through fear, hesitation, and noise. Here you'll learn to recognize the moment, trust your hands, and move with purpose before hypoxia makes the choice for you. Ready to build that confidence and clarity? Step inside.

SCAN ME

141

COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK

FFM

THE FOUR ELEMENTS

THE FOUNDATION OF FEARLESS FONA

“We don’t rise to the moment.
We fall to the level of our training.”



Mastery in FONA is built on four essential elements. When these elements work together, your mindset, preparation, and skills align—so you can act decisively when it matters most.

1 HUMAN FACTORS



Understand yourself and the forces that influence performance. Manage stress, emotions, and mindset to stay calm and in control.

2 SIMPLICITY



Remove the unnecessary. Focus on essential anatomy, equipment, and steps that work—every time.

3 PLANNING



Anticipate the challenge. Build a plan, prepare your environment, and align your team for decisive action.

4 PRACTICE



Repetition builds automaticity. Deliberate practice in realistic conditions creates readiness when it counts the most.

CLARITY OVER CHAOS • SIMPLICITY OVER NOISE • PREPARED ACTION OVER HESITATION

These four elements aren’t independent—they fuel each other in a continuous cycle. Strengthen them together, and you build the confidence to make the cut.

THEPROTECTEDAIRWAY.COM

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THE FIRST ELEMENT

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HUMAN FACTORS

WHY WE *FAIL* WHEN IT MATTERS

In the moment of crisis, the barrier is rarely knowledge.



TEST YOURSELF UNDER PRESSURE

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"In the middle of chaos lies opportunity."

– Bruce Lee

HESITATION IS THE REAL ENEMY

145 FFM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

THE PROTECTED AIRWAY · COLLABORATIVE ·

IT'S TIME TO RETHINK FAILURE

TO PREPARE OUR MINDS FOR ACTION

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

FAILED ATTEMPTS
OVERTHINKING
DELAY
I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH
WHAT IF I HURT THEM?
NOT YET...
ONE MORE TRY...

HESITATION
DOUBT
FEAR
SHAME

決心行動

CLARITY
TRUST
COURAGE
ACTION

FAILURE IS NOT
THE END OF THE STORY.

IT IS THE SIGNAL
TO MOVE FORWARD.

NOT A VERDICT.
A CHALLENGE.

ACT. DON'T FREEZE.

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NAME IT. REASON THROUGH IT. PREPARE. ACT.

THE CICO SCENARIO

UNDERSTAND THE CRITICAL LANGUAGE OF FONA

The “Can’t Intubate, Can’t Oxygenate” (CICO) scenario is one of the most high-risk situations in airway management—a true life-or-death emergency. When standard techniques fail and oxygenation can’t be maintained with less invasive methods like a face mask, bag-valve mask, or supraglottic airway, immediate action is the only option to prevent severe hypoxia, brain injury, or death. Understanding this critical concept is essential for any airway clinician. Let’s break it down here.



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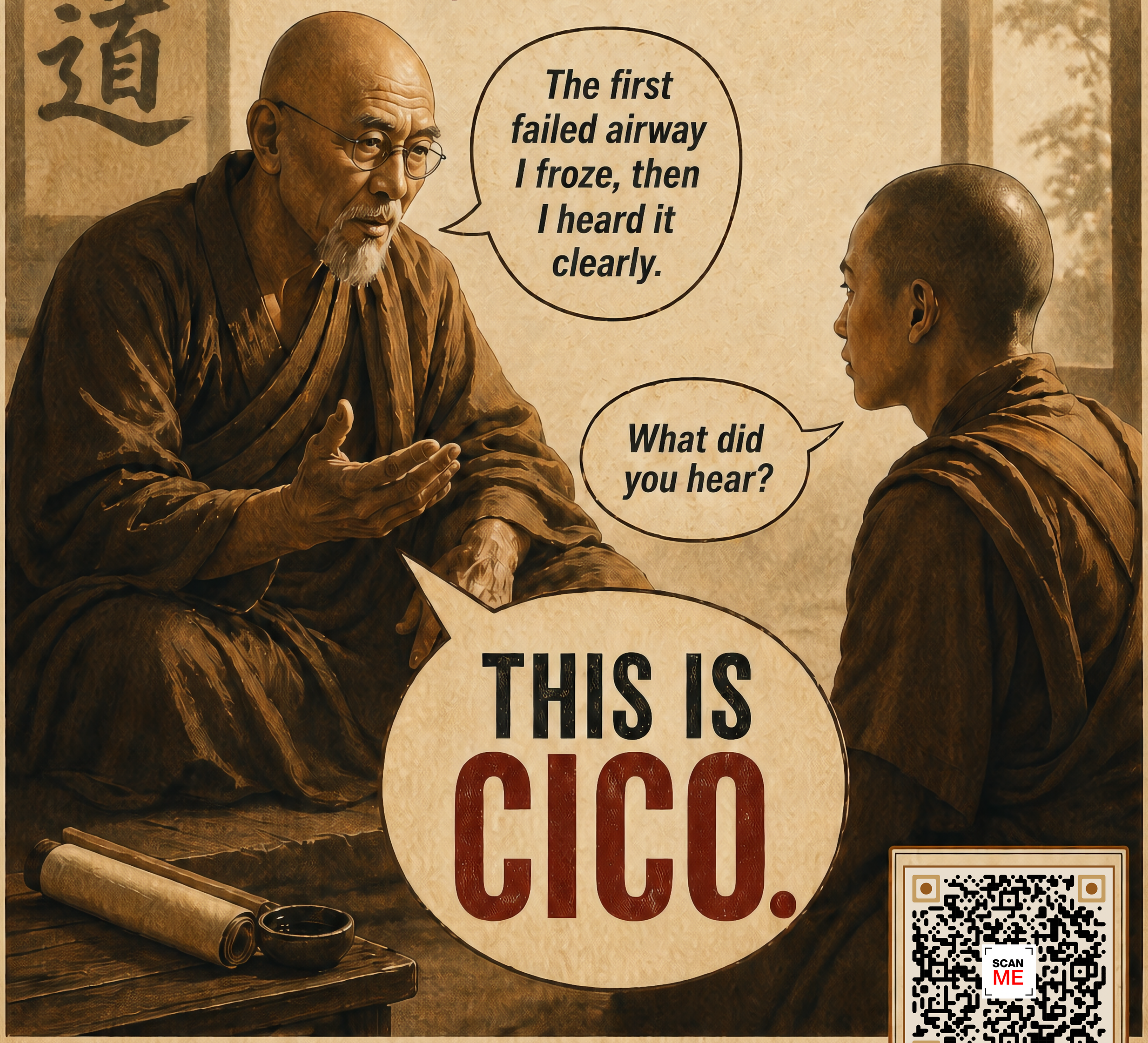
144 | FFM — ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS —

THE PROTECTED AIRWAY · COLLABORATIVE ·

REAL FONA TALES

WHAT YOU HEAR WHEN IT MATTERS

Stories don't teach the procedure.
They teach the moment.



— THE RIGHT WORDS MOVE THE ROOM —

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Real cases. Real decisions.

PERFORMANCE TRAINING

ADDRESS THE STRESS

TRAIN FOR THE MOMENT WHEN THINKING FAILS

Calm is trained.
Not found.

Control the mind. The body will follow.

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KEY ELEMENT

PROTECTED AIRWAY

SEEK SIMPLICITY & *REDUCE* COGNITIVE LOAD

“Simplicity is not less.
It is what remains when everything unnecessary is removed.”

REMOVE WHAT DOESN’T SERVE THE MOMENT.



FOCUS
On what matters most.

SIMPLIFY
Strip away the excess.

EXECUTE
Act with clarity.
Perform with precision.

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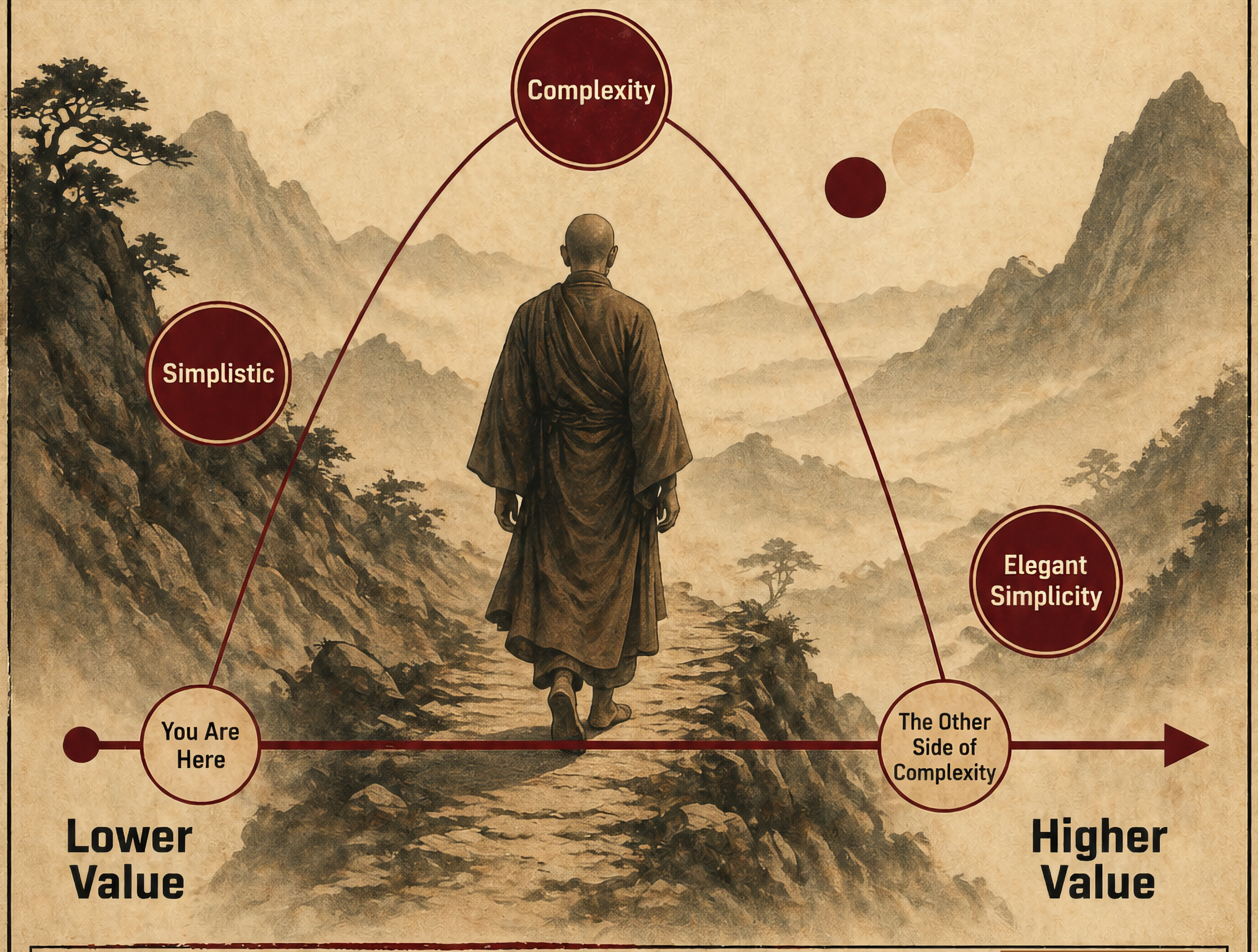
IMPORTANT CONCEPT

OTHER SIDE OF COMPLEXITY

BECAUSE SIMPLE DOES NOT MEAN SIMPLISTIC

True simplicity isn't about dumbing things down—it's about mastering complexity so completely that action becomes instinctive and efficient. Deep knowledge allows us to strip away the unnecessary, leaving behind only what is essential for swift, effective decision-making. In this space, you're challenged to dive deep, break down what you learn, and refine it into a clear, streamlined approach—one that ensures the right action happens quickly and successfully when it matters most. Let's get into it.



"The only simplicity to be trusted is the simplicity to be found on the far side of complexity."

– Alfred North Whitehead

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KEY ELEMENT

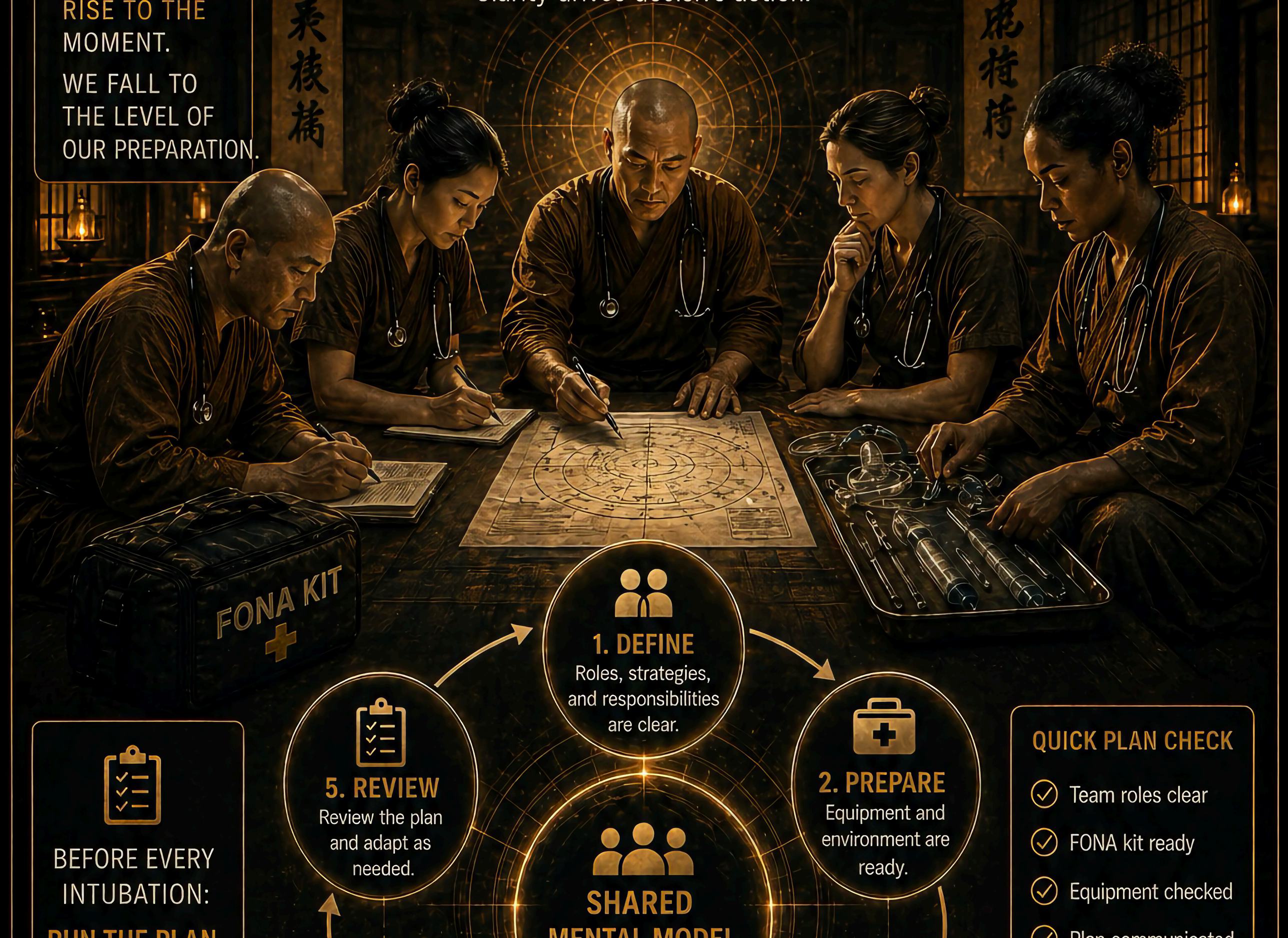
THE ELEMENT OF PLANNING

THE PROFESSIONAL AIRWAY

PREPARE TO ACT. ALIGN TO SUCCEED.

In a crisis, chaos is the enemy.
Planning creates structure. Structure creates clarity.
Clarity drives decisive action.

> “WE DON’T RISE TO THE MOMENT.
> WE FALL TO THE LEVEL OF OUR PREPARATION.



1. DEFINE
Roles, strategies, and responsibilities are clear.

2. PREPARE
Equipment and environment are ready.

3. ALIGN
Communicate the plan and confirm understanding.

4. COMMIT
Set decision thresholds and act without hesitation.

5. REVIEW
Review the plan and adapt as needed.

SHARED MENTAL MODEL
We think together.
We act together.

QUICK PLAN CHECK

- ✓ Team roles clear
- ✓ FONA kit ready
- ✓ Equipment checked
- ✓ Plan communicated
- ✓ Decision points set
- ✓ Everyone aligned

BEFORE EVERY INTUBATION:

RUN THE PLAN.

Preparation today protects the patient tomorrow.

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PLAN WITH PURPOSE. PREPARE WITH PRECISION. ACT WITH CONFIDENCE.

CLARITY OVER CHAOS

SIMPLICITY OVER NOISE

PREPARED ACTION OVER HESITATION

BUILD CONFIDENCE. SAVE LIVES.

FEARLESS FONA MINDSET

150 FFM

COGNITIVE TOOL

PROTECTED AIRWAY

THE ART OF STRATEGY

HOW TO ACHIEVE TIMELY & EFFECTIVE FONA

Failed airways can hit like a tsunami—sudden, overwhelming, and unforgiving. As intubation attempts falter, stress rises, voices blur into noise, and the chaos of the moment can drown out the critical signals that should trigger action. The danger isn't just the failed airway itself—it's the failure to recognize when it's time to pivot to FONA. That's where a strategy of ***amplification and escalation*** comes in. By deliberately clarifying and reinforcing the signals that indicate a deteriorating situation, we ensure that the need for action is recognized before it's too late. In this space, explore how to fine-tune your approach, cutting through the noise and ensuring that FONA happens at the right moment—not a second too late.

Strategy
/ˈstradəjē/
a plan of action to make decisions & allocate resources to accomplish your objective

For Better **FONA**

Use the A&E **STRATEGY**

Amplification
the preparation & tactics used to signal a need for FONA

That failed airway is coming. I must be ready...

Escalation
the ability of the team to mobilize resources in anticipation of FONA

— SCAN ME —

SCAN ME

"THE BEST STRATEGY IS KNOWING WHEN TO ACT."

— SUN TZU

FFM 151 | KEY CONCEPTS

FONA READINESS

REAL-WORLD IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUR FONA PLAN

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Kit identified and accessible	Neck marked, kit at bedside	Skin prepped, kit open, scalpel ready

DOUBLE SET-UP

For high-risk airways:

- Neck marked
- Kit open
- Roles assigned
- Scalpel immediately available

1 ASSESS RISK

Evaluate likelihood of a difficult airway before you begin.

2 ANTICIPATE FAILURE

Decide early if this may require transition to FONA.

3 DEFINE READINESS LEVEL

Align team and environment to the anticipated risk.

4 COMMIT TO ACTION THRESHOLD

Know when you will move to FONA before hypoxia decides for you.

SHARED MENTAL MODEL

Everyone knows:

- The plan
- The backup
- The trigger to act



"THIS AIRWAY MAY FAIL. WE ARE READY."

HIGH-RISK SIGNALS

Low chance of intubation success + impending hypoxia = act early.

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THE BOTTOM LINE

FONA readiness is not having a plan— it's operationalizing it.

ASSESS RISK. ALIGN THE TEAM. PREPARE EARLY. ACT BEFORE DELAY BECOMES HARM.

152 FFM

KEY ELEMENT

REGULAR PRACTICE

MAKE THE RARE EVENT FEEL *ROUTINE*

The final element of the Fearless FONA Mindset is practice. Emergency surgical airways are rare—so rare that even seasoned clinicians may go their entire careers without performing one. But when the moment comes, hesitation is not an option. The reality is that without regular practice, skills fade, and in a high-stakes, low-frequency event like eFONA, that lapse can mean the difference between life and death. The solution? Deliberate, ongoing practice. In this space, we reinforce the fundamentals—reviewing key anatomy, the eFONA procedure, and the critical steps needed in an emergency. Most importantly, we provide a practical, hands-on way for you to keep your skills sharp through our integrated training stations. Because when it comes to FONA, competence is confidence, and confidence saves lives. Let's go practice!



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COMPETENCE IS CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE SAVES LIVES

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FFM

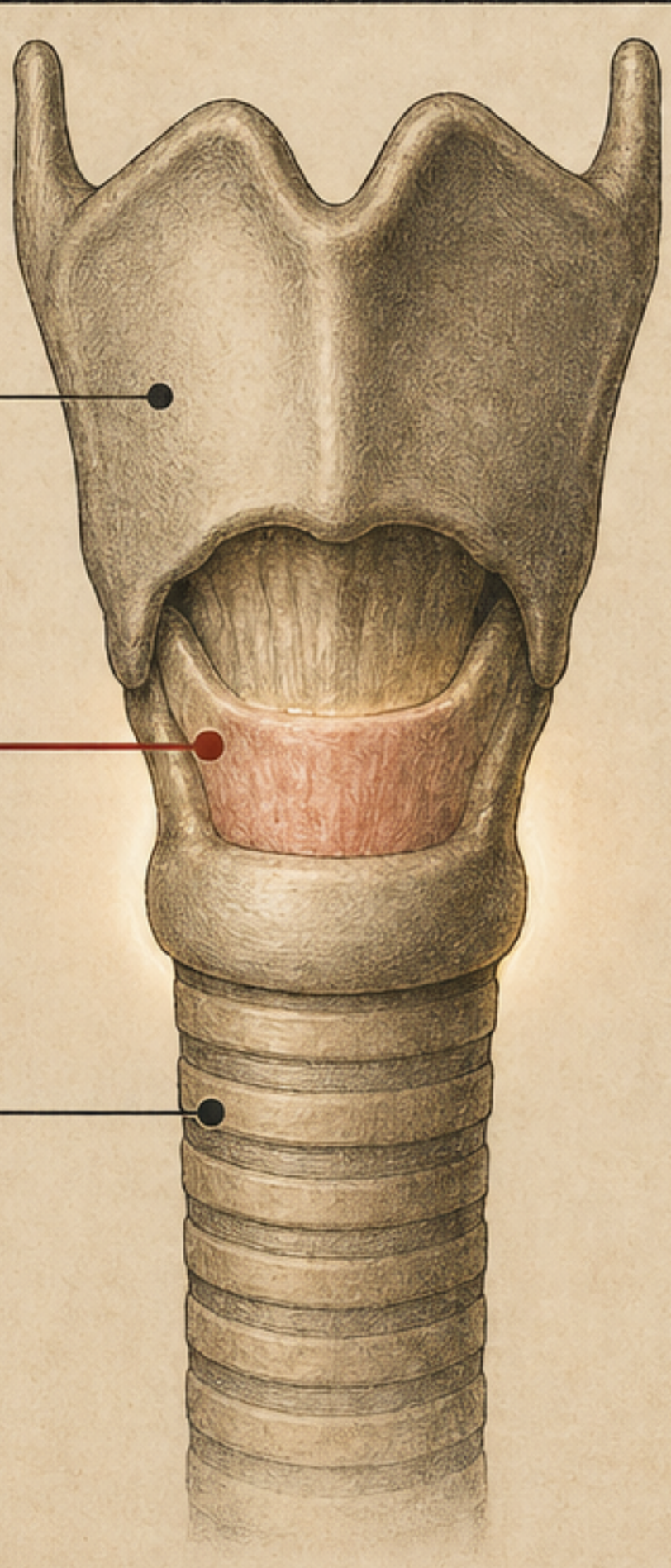
CORE KNOWLEDGE

THE PROTECTED AIRWAY

FIND THE CTM

★ FONA ANATOMY REVIEW ★

ANTERIOR VIEW

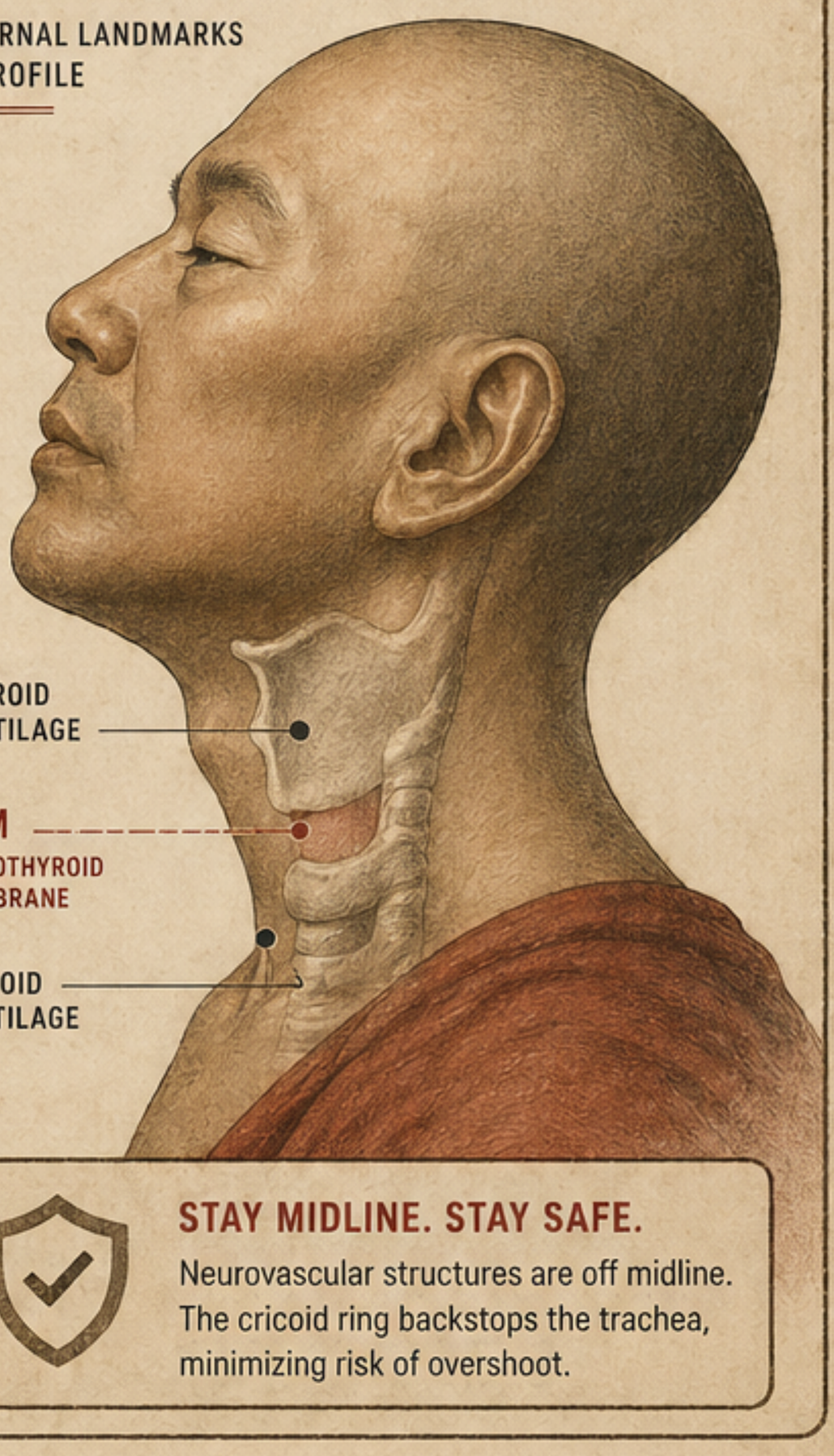


THYROID CARTILAGE
The largest structure (Adam's apple)

CTM
CRICOTHYROID MEMBRANE
Your target (soft & springy)

CRICOID CARTILAGE
The firm ring below

EXTERNAL LANDMARKS IN PROFILE



STAY MIDLINE. STAY SAFE.
Neurovascular structures are off midline. The cricoid ring backstops the trachea, minimizing risk of overshoot.

— FIND THE LANDMARKS. MAKE THE CUT. —

The cricothyroid membrane sits between the thyroid cartilage above and the cricoid cartilage below.

IN A FAILED AIRWAY, NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN FINDING THIS SPACE.

★

FEEL THE LARGEST STRUCTURE (THYROID).
Find the prominent "Adam's apple."

DROP DOWN TO THE FIRM RING (CRICOID).
Feel the hard ring just below.

THE SOFT SPACE IN BETWEEN IS YOUR TARGET.
The cricothyroid membrane (CTM).

ACT DECISIVELY.
Don't overthink it.

STAY MIDLINE.
Your safest path.

TRUST YOUR HANDS.
Feel. Know. Act.

DELAY KILLS. CLARITY SAVES LIVES.

★ NEXT STEP ★

SCAN TO CONTINUE YOUR LEARNING.

SCAN ME

SCALPEL • FINGER • BOUGIE

THE SIMPLEST PATH TO THE AIRWAY

FEEL. STAB. DILATE. TUBE.

1

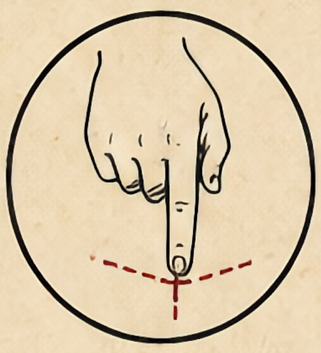


CUT

VERTICAL INCISION

Make a bold, midline vertical skin incision. Expose the anatomy.

2



STAB

INTO THE CTM

Make a horizontal stab through the cricothyroid membrane in the midline.

3

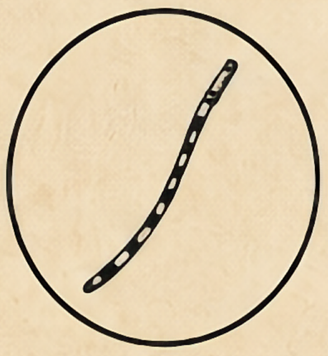


FINGER

IN THE HOLE

Insert your finger.
Feel the space.
Confirm the airway.

4

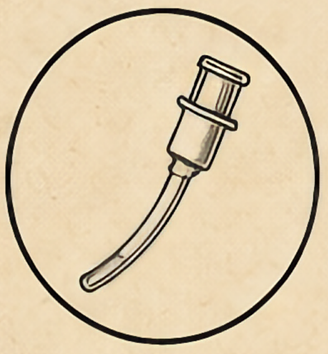


BOUGIE

PAST YOUR FINGER

Insert the bougie into the trachea.
Feel for tracheal clicks.

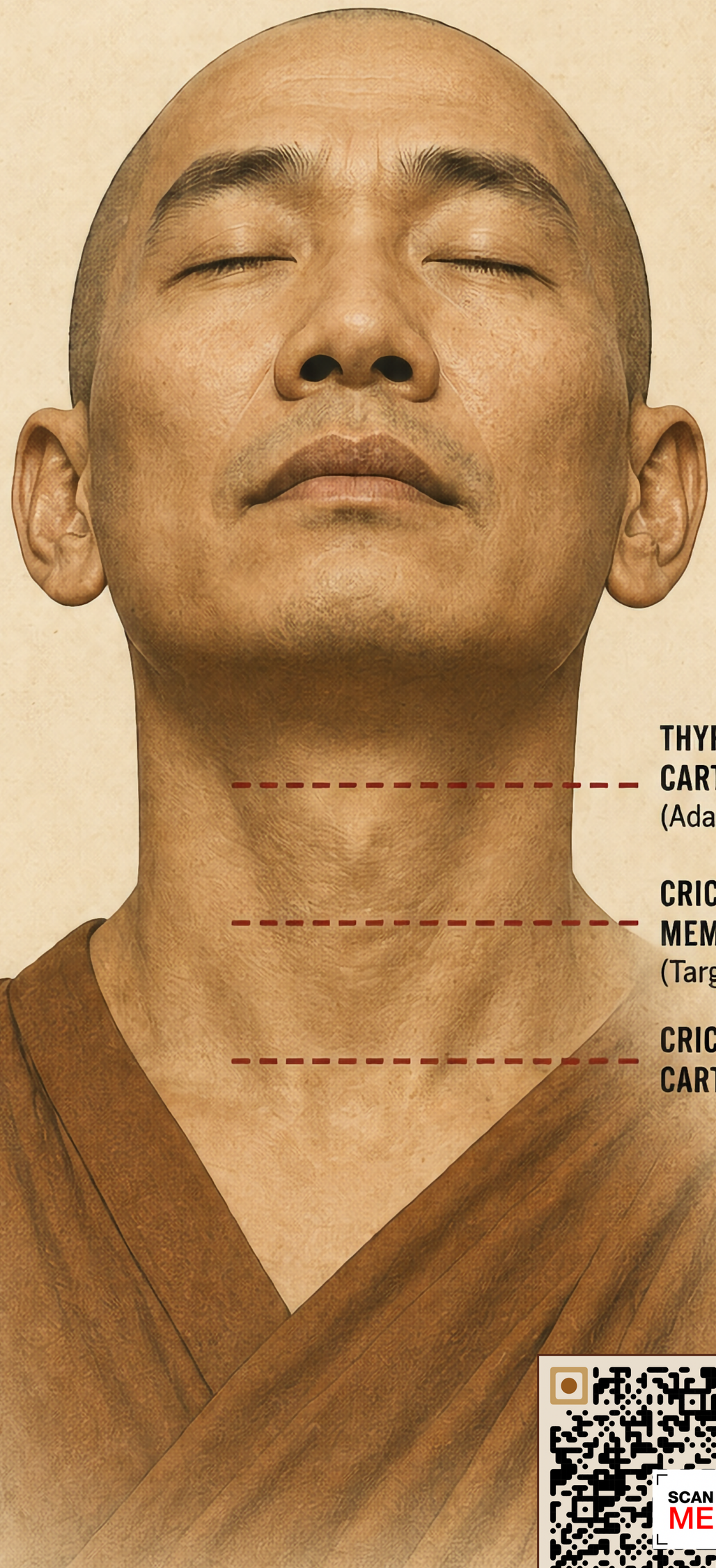
5



TUBE

OVER THE BOUGIE

Railroad the tube over the bougie.
Ventilate. Oxygenate. Stabilize.



SCAN ME

MIDLINE
Stay in the middle. It's the safest path.

LONG CUT
Create space. Don't be timid. Expect blood.

FINGER FIRST
Your finger is your guide and your protection.

DON'T HESITATE
Time is brain. Act decisively. Save a life.

PRACTICE. PREPARE. PERFORM.

BE READY WHEN IT MATTERS MOST.

TIME TO PRACTICE

PRACTICE TODAY. PERFORM FEARLESSLY TOMORROW.

SELF GUIDED. SELF MASTERED.

Use the guided audio and video to rehearse every critical step.
Build muscle memory.
Build confidence.
Build readiness.



REPETITION SAVES LIVES.

The more you practice now, the more prepared you'll be when it matters most.

AUDIO GUIDANCE

Step-by-step instructions in real time.

VIDEO DEMOS

Watch. Learn. Visualize. Perform.

YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF YOUR PREPARATION.

PRACTICE. REVIEW. REPEAT.

SHARPEN SKILLS	BUILD CONFIDENCE	FOCUS UNDER PRESSURE	SAVE LIVES
Reinforce every critical step.	Reduce hesitation. Increase readiness.	Train to perform when it truly counts.	Prepared hands. Calm mind.

FEARLESS FONA MINDSET • SIMPLE TECHNIQUE • DECISIVE ACTION