

Pistol Shooting: The Art (Part 5)

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This series was originally written for and appeared in The Marksman, the monthly newsletter of the Twelfth Precinct Pistol Club, Inc., located in Harwood, Maryland.

Wow, have there been this many? I guess so. I just looked and they're sequential. At least the way I provided them was. Did you have fun at the range, shooting all those poor targets in the back? How about bluffing them with those "dummy" rounds? Well, I'm glad you got some good range time in, because this one's going to be mental stuff with just references to the physical.

There are many stages to go through in any endeavor in life. Shooting is a parallel to all the other sports and life itself. If you look for them, you will find many correlations. Even some of the seeming contrasts between certain sports, if studied in the overall context, will still relate. What, examples to support my claim? Oh, all right. Let me see...

How about we take something unrelated such as reading. Whenever we learn something new, we start with necessary beginning steps that will have to be set aside at some point to move forward. What is meant by set aside? Relegating it to the subconscious. This will allow our conscious efforts to not be overwhelmed. When we learn to read, we start by first learning to recognize letters. In fact, we pronounce them out loud, over and over. Then we learn syllables, words, phrases and sentences, again pronouncing and reading aloud. When we moved up the chain to reading sentences we left behind the individual letters. It wasn't that we didn't need or use them. It was that we saw the bigger picture because our subconscious took care of the smaller details. How does this relate to shooting?

In shooting we have hundreds of details to learn about in the beginning. We have to watch our sight picture, bring the trigger straight back, grip a certain way, stand a certain way, breathe or not breathe a certain way, etc. We are only able to concentrate on one single item at a time. So what we need to do is work on each item separately, and then turn it over to our subconscious. The way we do this is through practice. Now read close. Joe White, a great shooter known to many of us, said something very important to remember, "Perfect practice makes perfect."

If we practice something enough, it will eventually be a habit that we can initiate and let our subconscious finish. The catch is to practice that something correctly. This is where the dry firing really comes in. You can practice the trigger action so that it is habit to do it right. You can also practice all those other good habits until you can do them without conscious thought. Once we get our shooting details into our subconscious, we can move into higher realms by applying more focus on whatever we need. Just like leaving the letters behind for the words.

Some of us will stop along the way at a comfortable place. Some will never accept anything but perfection. These attitudes are what drive, frustrate and empower us. If we have the patience to accept failure and yet the drive to overcome it, we will progress. If we accept too much, we stay put. Now for some deeper thoughts.

There are many stages to our acceptance of where we are. When we first start out, we have high expectations and usually get slapped down by the reality of a beginner's capability. If we're open to suggestions, there will be all kinds of information to help us progress. These are the secrets I mentioned

in the first part of this series. But, we aren't seeing them the way they are being presented. We're seeing them from our own perspective. We also tend to doubt much of what we hear because it doesn't make sense to us yet.

The mind is very powerful. We can prove anything we really believe in, especially that something doesn't or can't work. Once we can accept that it might work, we can start allowing it to. As we find an idea we can allow to work, something interesting happens. The more it works, the more we believe in it. The more we believe, the more it works... At some point we move from believing to knowing. This is where "success breeds success."

In the beginning, doubt keeps us from achieving. Belief moves us forward, but still allows doubt to creep in. Once we know something, doubt is eliminated. When we know we can do something, we can. This doesn't mean we won't have troubles. Remember, the troubles are there to give us the drive to overcome, which propels us even higher.

All along we must let our subconscious know what we want. If we give it mixed signals, we get mixed results. How many times have you thought, "I hope I don't shoot a 7." just to shoot a 7 the very next shot? Your subconscious said, "7? You want a 7? OK!" Try something different, like, "How can I shoot an X?" Then pay real close attention, so you can remember how you were answered.

Another way to let our subconscious know what we want is called visualization. This is mentally picturing what we want to achieve. For instance forming the idea of all of our shots going through the X. Very important: The mental imagery should not be limited to "pictures" in your mind. You should involve everything you can. Rehearse the event coming up. "Hear" the commands. "Feel" the gun coming up. "See" the sights aligned. "Feel" the trigger coming back. "Know" you hit an X. "See" the sights realign. "Feel" the trigger... This type of mental rehearsal is being used by sports stars throughout the world to achieve great feats.

Oh, oh! I "feel" the league calling. Remember to keep mentally rehearsing. It's something you can do anywhere. Have Fun.