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Newsletter
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Editor's Note

By Raj Narayan, ISEC Editor

As a student I used to dread hearing the words "revision", especially close to exam time. It somehow made me feel under-prepared. My confidence would be shaken by a fear of the unknown. What if, a particular problem came or do I really know the answer to that quirky chemical equation?

On examination day, I'd feel "brave" and not so much confident. And once I come out into the sunny skies after writing the paper, I'd feel as if a huge load was off my back. However, by the time my next quarterly exams came around, the sense of *deja vu* returned. It was as if the mind wasn't hearing itself!

However, how many times have we been really scared when asked to take up a physical task that we've not attempted in years? For e.g. despite not cycling for a decade, one can simply get up on it and ride around the block a couple of times. Ditto with swimming! Why is it that the mind is confident now?

If you thought that Fear is the Key to better performance, think again. Our Chief Mentor gives you a perspective on why the best performers are often liable to choke up.

On the subject of revision, I had the privilege to be a part of ISEC's Mentor Coach Certification workshop on January 21, 2011. Not only did it provide me to refresh my mind on the first level coaching lessons, it brought me the opportunity to interact with a very diverse group of future coaches.

The picture shows the participants in the coaching workshop who were drawn from the senior echelons of the corporate world and also included an international dance instructor, an entrepreneur from Hong Kong, a mentalist who observed human behaviors and a doctorate in behavioral sciences.



MENTOR'S MUSINGS: *Fear is Not the Key!*

By Krishna Kumar, ISEC Founder-Director

"When I am about to serve, I feel scared." A student at our tennis academy admitted that he clammed up while getting ready to serve. At over six-feet, this talented youngster is a champion who has won several tournaments. So, his words sounded strange to our coaches and made me wonder how even a steady performer can fall prey to inner turmoil.

How does fear manifest in stressful situations? Physical symptoms may mean sweaty palms, a racing pulse or a parched throat. The face pales and the mind hark back to past errors and failures. Trained coaches often use simple breathing techniques to quell this problem.

However, it is much tougher to dispel hidden fears that could hinder performance, the kind that our tennis player

(let's call him MM) faced. A University of Chicago research conducted by psychology professor Sam Beilock found that high performers are often also the biggest chokers.

High pressure moments are often a double-edged sword. For some, the anxiety drives up their show while in others the stress simply shuts the brain down. And the results could be a bungled presentation, a lousy putt or an uninspiring speech.

All of us face pressure at work or even on a routine day at home. This is now an established fact of life. So, what we need to explore are ways by which we can use pressure as an ally to drive up our game.

Pressure on the mind depletes a part of the brain's processing power known as working memory, which is critical to many everyday activities. Lodged at the prefrontal cortex, this acts a mental scratch pad that stores data on tasks at hand. Most of us have good storage capacity in here, but when worries begin, the bandwidth reduces, thus leaving them with lessor processing capacity.

High performers often put extra pressure on their brains, specifically relying on the scratch pad. Under pressure, this ready reckoner database lets them down as worries take over more of the available space, leading them to choke up when the world expects them to outperform.

Having appreciated the scratch pad syndrome, let us revert to the problem presented by MM. Technically MM has a few flaws needing correction. Supplemented with some simple breathing techniques he will show superficial improvement. But, will these standard methods sort out the inner demons lurking in his mind?

Executives at work are a lot more prone to this situation than sportspersons. Whether making presentations, creating budgets and reports, negotiating deals or worrying over deadlines it is not unusual for an element of nervousness or fear to creep in.

When these situations happen, it is best to take a few steps back and think through the thoughts that are overburdening your mind. From here, it is but a short step to continue achieving your usual high performance levels. Any thoughts you wish to share, please mail me on kk@intradconsult.com .



Coaching Notes:An extract from the IAC's newsletter (IAC Voice). Are you really Agenda Free

by Jennifer Day

"Bossy-boots" was my nickname as a child. Apparently I was always telling others what to do-my father jokes that the only difference between then and now is that now I get paid for it!

Ahhh-if it were only that simple. Being a coach is, of course, not about telling people what to do-it is, as we know, about facilitating someone to arrive at their own agenda and to connect with their own inner knowing of what is true and right for them. It is about supporting her or him to stay on the path they have set for themselves. This requires that the coach "gets out of the way" and drops any judgments or agenda.

However straightforward this is in theory, it is something that doesn't always come easily. Nor is it something we as coaches are even always aware of struggling with in ourselves! As we listen to our clients talk, how "agenda free" are we Really? Do we always ask ourselves:

- Am I judging what's being said? Or something else?
- Am I formulating opinions about it, before I hear it all?

- Am I framing my own reply while I listen?
- Am I looking for an opportunity to interrupt-perhaps to ask a question?
- Am I thinking about other things?
- Did I get enough sleep last night?
- Am I hungry? Thirsty? Comfortable? Focused?
- Have I prepared sufficiently?

Or we might just sum it up in one question: "Got stress?"

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," then we have an agenda-and we are not fully listening. Whether we are completely self-aware or not, whether we admit it or not, any such "agenda" creates low-grade stress and gets in the way of effective coaching. It is a simple biological principle that when we are in any kind of stress-regardless of the intensity-our neo-cortex or "thinking brain" does not engage the way we need it to.

When we listen to a client, ideally we need to assimilate not only what we actually hear fully but also what we "hear" between the lines. We need to be able to ask appropriate questions or offer insightful suggestions that move the client forward. We need to capture the essence of what is going on for the client, and use our insights, creative faculties and often our intuition to respond in a way that is helpful and productive for the client-and the client's agenda.

Continue reading this article at : www.thebeingeffect.com/news/are-you-really-agenda-free/



Jennifer Day is a best-selling author, speaker and coach, specializing in emotional intelligence and "in-the-moment" stress management programs for individuals, practitioners, organizations and families. Her most recent book *Being What You Want to See: Bringing Emotional Mastery Into Everyday Life* is available from bookstores and www.TheBeingEffect.com.

ISEC Coach Certification - March 2011

Our next Mentor-Coach workshop is scheduled on 11th and 12th March 2011 at Bangalore. Please visit www.isecindia.in for details or email us at programs@intradconsult.com

With warm regards,
Krishna Kumar
Executive Coach & Founder-Director, ISEC