

Shoot Better with NLP

Sports people talk about being 'in The Zone' almost with a sense of reverie. When you ask them what they did to achieve this almost mystical state of being, they'll often say "I don't know; it just came upon me." The top archers can achieve this state more easily and they use it to their best advantage, but for the most of us, it isn't that simple.

Isn't it true that some days of shooting are better than others? Some days it all just comes together as we want, does it not? Then, there are the other days, the days when we couldn't hit the side of a barn if we stood inside it. What's the difference between those times? What do we do differently on the days when it 'all just comes together' for us? We try using will power to get it back, but more often we just hang around and hope that those exceptional days come back again soon, especially on the day of our next competition.

How useful would it be for you to be able to switch off and on this mystical trance-like state of being 'in the zone' at will? Well, the good news is that you can and I'm going to tell you how to do it.

The secret to access to The Zone is *state* or *mood*. The state you are in profoundly affects how you perform at anything. By learning to control your mood and having the ability to access specific moods or states at will, you can achieve far greater scores consistently.

Reaccessing emotional states is a relatively simple process and gets quicker and easier with regular practice.

Our behavior is dictated by our states. Our states are altered by how we use our bodies and also by the focus of our minds, hence archery instructors will tell you to 'concentrate solely on the gold,' or to 'think only of hitting the gold.' How many times have you shot badly and then gave yourself a hard time about it by calling yourself every name under the sun and then gone and done the self same thing again? These kinds of thoughts affect our bodies because the mind and body are inescapably linked: what affects one, affects the other. Therefore there are two ways of controlling our moods: one is through the focus of our minds and the other is through the use of our bodies.

In NeuroLinguistic Programming, or NLP, there are techniques for accessing specific moods and being able to anchor them so that we can reaccess them again quickly and easily. An anchor is a stimulus that triggers an unconscious response. Think of a favorite song; when you hear it, it takes you back years to another time and place, Recall the smell of freshly baked bread; where does that take you? You don't have to think about being transported to another time or place; it just happens. Well the

song and the smell are anchors.

What you are going to do is access a peak state of performance and attach a trigger to it so that whenever you want to reaccess that peak state, you simply have to fire off the anchor or trigger and straight away, you are there.

You can use the exercise as described below and if you can remember a time when you felt you were in the zone, add that in as well as the states of confidence, etc.

You might want to record the instructions onto cassette and then play it back for you to follow along. Alternatively, ask someone to read it to you slowly so that you take all the time you need to follow the instructions fully.

The Exercise

Find yourself somewhere quiet where you can remain undisturbed for a while. What I want you to do is to take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth and allow yourself to relax as fully as you can while standing up. Now, begin to walk around the room as if 'you owned it.' Ask yourself "How will I walk if I feel totally, incredibly confident?" Begin to walk in that way. Ask yourself, "How will I breathe? How will I hold myself (your posture)?" Adopt that way of breathing and that posture as you continue to move around the room for a couple of minutes until you feel those feelings in your body and mind. Ask yourself "How will I walk if I feel totally in control? How will I breathe and what will my posture be like?" Adopt those mannerisms too and, again, walk around for a couple of minutes as you feel those feelings as well. Ask yourself "How will I walk if I feel absolutely invincible? How will I breathe and hold myself?" Now adopt those mannerisms and walk and feel those feelings as before. Ask yourself "How will I walk, breathe, and move if I feel totally fantastic as if

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I had just won the National Lottery or the National Championships?" Walk, move, and breathe as you would when you feel all these fantastic feelings coursing through your body. Now, close your eyes and remember a time when you did something exceptionally well and received the recognition you rightly deserved from it. Step back into that time and place and see what you saw there, hear what you heard and feel how absolutely and utterly fantastic you felt. Allow yourself to go back into those feelings fully, so that you feel them again now, as strongly in your body as you did the last time. Now, imagine a circle on the floor in front of you about three feet across, give it a color, and it will be a color that for you represents all those powerful feelings of total, incredible confidence, absolute invincibility, being totally in control, and feeling absolutely fantastic.

Now, step into that circle and take fully all those incredibly powerful feelings with you so as you stand in the circle, you have the feelings of total incredible confidence, total control, absolute invincibility, and

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feeling totally fantastic coursing through your body. Give these feelings a color and see this color spinning all around you. Give it a sound, just as when something is incredibly powerful it has the hum or buzz of power to it. Crank these incredible feelings all the way up until your body is almost vibrating with the intensity.

Now, step back out of the circle and leave all those feelings spinning in there. Imagine the sound of them as they spin around and around; see the color of them there in the circle. Step back into the circle once more and feel those feelings immediately begin to course through your body and mind, making your skin crackle with their intensity. Now, step back out of the circle again, once again leaving the feelings spinning in there.

Now, physically bend down and pick up the circle with all those feelings spinning around inside it. Imagine holding the circle in front of you and hear the sound it makes with its power. Now imagine that you are shrinking it down, down, down until it's the size of a bracelet and as it gets smaller, the intensity of those feelings within it get concentrated and even more powerful and stronger. Now, hold the bracelet with all those powerful feelings still inside it, in one hand and physically go through the motions of slipping it over your other wrist like you would a bracelet. As you do so, feel once again all those incredibly powerful and strong feelings coursing through your body as you gently squeeze the bracelet onto your wrist.

Now, let go of your wrist and take a deep breath, open up your eyes and come on back out to the real world. Take hold of your wrist where you are 'wearing' the bracelet and gently squeeze and you will feel these incredibly powerful feelings begin to come back into your body and mind. Hold onto your wrist gently until those feelings of total, incredible confidence, incredible invincibility, being totally in control, and feeling absolutely fantastic peak again and again.

That combination of feelings is now firmly anchored onto your wrist and all you have to do to reaccess them fully is to gently squeeze your wrist in the same place with the same pressure as before.

The next time you go to the shooting range, shoot a few rounds of arrows and notice your accuracy and score and then gently squeeze that wrist, and allow all those feelings to come back fully. Then shoot a few more rounds of arrows and compare the two results. Don't think about it, just do it. Fritz Perls, the devel-

oper of Gestalt Therapy used to tell his clients "Stop thinking about it and come to your senses."

Combine this exercise with the ones from *Shoot Better with NLP, Part 1* and prepare to be truly amazed.

Shoot Better with NLP, Part 1 appeared in the previous issue of *AFm*. Ed.



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