



THE POWER OF DRY FIRE

Training Your Brain For Perfection

In my last post, I described the linkage between Situational Awareness, Training, and the Subconscious Mind using Boyd's OODA Loop. If you'll recall, the upshot of the article is that you must relegate as much of the Decision/Action steps to the powerful subconscious mind through ongoing realistic training (i.e., Dry Fire, Visualization, and Live Fire). As promised, this post will focus on the power of dry fire toward that end.

And, what better way to get the ball rolling than with a personal story?! Oh, quit your groaning, I'll make it quick.

No Dead Animals Attached To The Bumper

One recent morning while driving to work at O' Dark Thirty, I was particularly deep in thought on how I was going to solve the world's monetary problems....okay, I was just deep in thought. The next thing I knew, I was parked in my customary spot at the shop, without remembering much about the drive in.

For a moment, I thought: "Oh no, Senior Moment." Once I realized there were no dead animals attached to my truck bumper, no accidents in my wake, and no blue lights following me, I recognized it for what it was. Over the course of literally thousands of drives in, I had trained my brain how to make that drive perfectly: when to turn on my turn signal, which signals at which to stop, when to turn left, right, or go straight, etc. My subconscious had simply switched on the auto-pilot while I was deep in thought.

In OODA Loop parlance, I had relegated a good portion of my work commute to my subconscious mind, freeing my conscious mind to deal with other, more important issues....like world monetary policy. If you think about it, we've all done this to one extent or another. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to carry on a conversation, listen to the radio, or anything else but drive when we're behind the wheel. Contrast how nervous you were when you first learned to drive with your burger-chompin', knee-steering, head-bangin' rock-n-roll style of driving now....Or, is that just me?

The same can be said for Dry Fire. The more we practice perfection, the less we have to think about it. And that's the goal - to relegate as much of the Decision/Action steps to your subconscious mind, so your conscious mind can focus on other, more important things... like staying a couple of steps ahead of your attacker.

What's The Big Deal, Lucile?

What distinguishes the elite in any endeavor from the rest of us poor saps? What's the difference between a pro golfer and a duffer like me? Between a virtuoso violinist and the 3rd grader screeching out Mary Had A Little Lamb? Or, between Kim Rhode, Olympic Gold Medalist Skeet Shooter, and your average duck hunter?

If you said Muscle Memory and Practice, you're only partially right. Actually, there's no such thing as "muscle memory." There is, however, Myelination developed through Perfect Practice.

The Elite among us reach the level of Virtuosity in their chosen pursuit. Put simply, these Virtuosos perform the Fundamentals better than practically everyone else. They practice perfection with such intensity and frequency, they know only one way of doing their job... Perfectly.

It's biomechanics, and there's science behind it.

She blinded me with Science

Each time you learn a new skill, your brain must open a neural pathway to tell the rest of your body how to do the new task. The goal of the neural pathway is not only to help you perform the task now, but also how to do it the next time, should you need to do it again.

At first the pathway is a bit rough. Think learning to ride a bike without training wheels the first time. But, each time you perform the task again, your brain refines the pathway and smooths it out. Your brain then coats the pathway with myelin - a sort-of insulation, akin to the insulation of electrical wire - to "lock in" the pathway and make the task easier the next time.

The rub is, if you learn the skill imperfectly, your brain "locks-in" imperfection. Hence, my inability to hang with Tiger Woods on the links. The key to attaining virtuosity in any endeavor is to practice the fundamentals slowly and perfectly until your brain knows only one way to do it...perfectly. Speed will happen organically, over time.

Benefits of Dry Fire Training

If you've taken any of my firearms classes, you know I'm a huge advocate of Dry Fire. In fact, I think Dry Fire is the single most important thing you can do to improve your skills with a firearm. You'd also know Dry Fire is much more than simply pulling the trigger on a firing chamber loaded with a dummy round. It's about attaining virtuosity in everything you do with your firearm; from the fundamentals, movement, speed/tactical reloads, clearing malfunctions, to advanced tactics, and much, much more.

In my estimation, Dry Fire is the way you fully engage your subconscious mind to bridge the gap between Observation and Orientation, and the Decision and Action steps of the OODA Loop.

If you'd like to learn more about Dry Fire, I highly recommend Navy Seal Shooting, by Chris Sajnog. It's been an invaluable resource for me. You can also download my Fundamentals of Pistol Shooting Dry Fire exercises [here](#).

Till next time, stay safe and God Bless.

- Rob