

the subconscious, so no matter how intuitively right a certain course of actions is, if the conscious mind does not approve, and is allowed to become conscious (!) of this, you will not be winning on this particular day.

Nonconscious learning – the basis for intuition

Fortunately we do not need to be conscious of the information flowing into us from all around in order to make it operational for future use by the subconscious mind. The upshot of this is that every time we take to the skies, or even spend time outdoors, we are compiling knowledge about meteorology and correlations between factors in the atmosphere. I briefly mentioned this in one of the first paragraphs in this work, it is worth reiterating it here; the vast majority of our brain busies itself compiling data that the conscious mind never even becomes aware of. All of this data is used in the processing of new data, and when we feel that something is intuitively right or wrong the feeling is based on tacit knowledge stored non-consciously. The best way to exploit all of this tacit knowledge is to trust your intuition – it has far more data to work with, and it operates infinitely faster than if you were to weigh the pro's and cons of each decision, each change of direction, every second of your flight.

Box 9: Don't think; act

I have often found that I'm flying at my best if the entire flight is one of pushing and being pushed, preferably by a gaggle of flying mates, so that my I is busy laughing, playing, watching the others get spanked in the lee etc. while the me is going like the proverbial shit off the shovel. I have noticed that one factor that really facilitates this is on the rare occasions where we have a ground-launched race to goal – in such a task there is really never any time to kick back and consider anything; there is only action and reaction.

Overloading

There are many different strategies used to occupy the conscious mind in order to let the subconscious reign free. One of the best known is from the realm of meditation, where mantras are often used. Repeating a mantra again and again will, if done correctly, chew up about the full bandwidth of consciousness, leaving little or nothing to interfere with all the extremely clever and expedient data processing going on back where you are not even aware of it. Another example that springs to mind is counting sheep when you are trying to fall asleep – all that does is overloading and thus shutting down the conscious mind, which in insomniacs is busy stressing about masses of things that a person lying in bed can't really do much about anyway.

I am not much of a spiritual person myself – I have only recently taken up yoga, and I have never been successful at meditation. So I have had to find another way of blocking the conscious bandwidth, and I have found that simply singing to myself does the trick. My brain, like those of most people, is full of more or less complete song lyrics going back to the times of “Grease – the Movie” and beyond. I seem to never run out of horrible pop songs to recite to myself. Using this strategy even allows me to influence my general mood, as battling a headwind in turbulent conditions may lend itself well to lyrics by Rammstein, whereas Queen and Freddy Mercury are always good for a dose of racing against your mates along a ridge. These are by no means prescribed tunes – everyone will have his own to use – but I'm sure you get the general drift. I suspect this is yet another reason why I really disapprove of gaggle screamers (people who make noise while thermalling in busy gaggles, often exposing their fear to



Anja Kroll launching during the Superfinal 2009 in Poggio Bustone. Anja has used visualisation constructively to excel, and so can we. Photo by Martin Scheel/azoom.ch