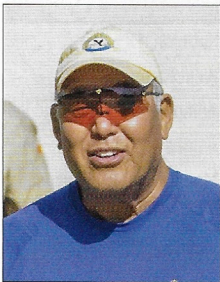




Use Mindsight to Improve Your Insight

Mindsight involves focused attention that can tune you in to what's going on inside your head, revealing problems or flaws in your game.



▲ John D. Shima

In 2012, a television interviewer asked tennis great Roger Federer if he knew that his primary competitor, Rafael Nadal, added a 3-gram weight to the rim of his racquet so he could swing through the ball with more momentum, and hence more power, without compromising balance. Federer commented that it doesn't really matter whether Nadal could feel the difference or not. What mattered

was that Nadal believed it made a difference.

Like all exceptional athletes, elite clay target shooters develop ways to strengthen their minds for competition. Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius said, "You have power over your mind — not outside events. Realize this and you will find strength." Experts suggest that the four greatest powers of the human mind are imagination, focus, perseverance and introspection. This article should help clay target shooters develop insight into the way their mind works — both for them and against them.

When a shooter's weak and undisciplined mind attaches a self-defeating emotion, such as fear or doubt, to a thought, it creates a mental distraction and alters the shooter's visual perception of reality. The paradoxical discrepancy between your perception and actual reality is called a focusing illusion. I believe these visual deceptions are the primary cause of missed targets and are usually the root cause of why shooters lose confidence in their shooting ability.

FOCUSED ATTENTION

Dr. Daniel Siegel is one of the world's leading neuroscientists and psychotherapists. The central theme of his latest book, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, is that humans have the capacity to observe and shape our own minds. Siegel described mindsight as a meditative exercise of focused attention that allows individuals to become aware of their mental processes so they can identify hidden behavior patterns and habitual responses that cause reactive, self-defeating emotional loops. Mindsight is the key to introspection and reflection. It enables us to perceive and analyze our thoughts and emotions, which give us the potential to improve our sense of well-being and our perception of reality.

Siegel described the "hub of awareness" as the ability to see things as they are instead of being distorted by our anticipation of how they should be. I believe a quiet mind (state of mindful awareness) is essential for optimal detection and acquisition of a clay target when it emerges into a shooter's peripheral visual field. Experts agree that the quiet eye/quiet mind phenomenon improves a clay target shooter's reaction time, promotes efficient gun movement and enhances consistency. More importantly, a patient and mindful approach to watching the target continuously enhances the perception of the target in reality by eliminating visual deceptions.

FOCUSED MEDITATION

Several decades ago it was purely intuitive when I designed the Basic Incomer Drill to help shooters rewire their brains to improve their ability to maintain primary focus on clay targets and improve consistency in breaking them. My intention at the time was to use the Incomer Drill to rewire left-brain (analytical) thinkers to become more right-brain (intuitive) shooters. I was pleased to learn that Dr. Siegel scientifically affirmed my rewiring process when he wrote that

humans actually have "the power to shape the architecture of the brain itself."

Meditation is intended to promote relaxation and heightened awareness of the tension in your mind and body. There are seven primary types of meditation: classic postural (Zen), progressive relaxation, mindfulness, breath awareness, loving-kindness, transcendental, and physical movement (yoga). The Basic Incomer Drill is so monotonous that it could be described as a form of physical movement meditation because the incoming targets are so slow that they allow the shooter to gradually eliminate the tension of execution and the twinge of uncertainty. Including the same pre-shot mantra before calling for each target adds a transcendental component to the process.

Mindsight enables disciplined shooters to look within to identify and minimize the focusing illusions that prevent them from seeing clay targets in reality. **CTN**

► John Shima is a five-time World Skeet Champion. To view previous articles or order John's books, go to www.johnshima.com.