
Unconditional TRUST



Most shooters can't seem to get their inner voice to stop talking before calling for the target. This source of the seeds of doubt and fear prevents them from trusting their preplanned move. Managing self-talk is essential to developing unconditional trust in your preplanned moves.

There are two types of self-talk: instructional and motivational. Instructional self-talk is necessary during training drills to program a specific preplanned move for each target presentation at every station. Motivational self-talk is necessary to promote confidence in your preplanned moves during practice and competition.

PREPLANNED MOVES

Preplanned moves are habitual responses or reflexes that occur automatically — without conscious thought. I explained in previous articles and in my book that the adaptive unconscious is responsible for programming protective habits and reflexes. This fight-or-flight mechanism regulates your hand-eye coordination.

I reviewed the process for programming appropriate preplanned moves in depth in my two books, *The Moment of Truth* and *A Method for the Magic*. In summary, I prescribe var-

◀ Your inner voice wants to give you reminders and instruction during competition or practice. Don't listen to it — instead, work to automate your moves so thinking about them isn't necessary.



Self-doubt is a game killer. Don't give in to it.

BY JOHN SHIMA



ious training drills to promote visual discipline and program appropriate preplanned moves for every target presentation at each station.

As you improve the discipline to use your eyes correctly, the existing preplanned moves will need to be replaced by new habits. Generally the distance between the gun hold and the break point for outgoing targets will decrease as you acquire the targets more efficiently. In other words, you must learn to trust the shorter preplanned moves.

EMOTIONAL RELEASE

I believe many shooters allow their inner voice to give too many instructions and reminders during practice and competition. These seemingly helpful suggestions arise from the Ego Self and activate self-defeating old habits that compromise your performance. It requires mental discipline to control the ego's instructional self-talk and the associated negative emotions. Undisciplined instructional self-talk overrides appropriate motivational self-talk that supports effective preplanned moves. The Ego Self uses analysis of missed shots and instructional self-talk to get back into the shooting game. Watching the target is boring; shooting at the target is exciting and challenging for the Ego Self. Once the Ego Self captures your attention, it takes over the entire shot sequence and neglects its primary job of just watching the target and trusting the True Self to manage the

shooting reflex. This progression escalates your analysis of missed shots, intensifies instructional self-talk, and activates many of your self-defeating emotions.

I emphasize the importance of "emotional freedom" in my clinics and private sessions with clients. Shooters must resist the emotional urge to satisfy the Ego Self's need for instant gratification. The Ego Self's desire to break the target activates the "check the lead" habit just before firing the gun.

You control the Ego Self

between two people apply to trust between the Ego Self, your Conscious Self and your True Self within your mind. The problem is that the Ego Self doesn't naturally trust the other two selves.

My goal is to teach shooters how to discipline their Ego (conscious mind) Self to trust their True (adaptive unconscious) Self through various training drills and deliberate practice sessions. Most shooters develop trust in their ability to react and respond to the next target with appropriate preplanned

your True Self work together in harmony to manage the watching and shooting reflexes so clay targets break effectively, efficiently and effortlessly.

UNCONDITIONAL TRUST

Unconditional trust is the absolute faith to believe that the expected response and outcome to a specific stimulus is a foregone conclusion. It is the ability to trust that a specific stimulus will cause a specific reaction and response without qualification or conditions.

You must develop unconditional trust in the ability of your True Self to perform the appropriate preplanned move in response to a specific visual cue. It is a given that the True Self places unconditional trust in the Ego Self to watch the target and transmit the information it needs to the visual cortex of the brain. Unfortunately, the undisciplined Ego Self succumbs to visual deceptions and sends the wrong information to the visual cortex. This deceptive information adversely affects the ability of the True Self to activate the correct preplanned move. The subsequent miss causes the Ego Self to revert to conditional trust in the True Self, which causes the Shooting Self to vanish.

Therefore, it is essential for you to create reliable shooting habits that will lead you to develop and perpetuate unconditional trust in your True Self (conscious mind and adaptive unconscious) to manage every shot sequence automatically. Efficient pre-

▼ Breaking targets is fun, of course, but *trying* to break targets puts the emphasis on the result, not the process.



by exercising visual and mental discipline. A quiet mind stifles self-talk and eliminates the self-defeating emotions that are linked to it. I state it often, and I'll emphasize it again, "Your desire to break the target must be replaced by your intention to watch the target break."

CONDITIONAL TRUST

Psychologists state that harmonious relationships are based upon mutual trust. The rules that relate to trust

moves under certain circumstances. I call this conditional trust, because it is based upon certain conditions, such as the weather, the background, location, the shooters on the squad, use of voice release, size of the shoot, chances for winning, etc.

The purpose of deliberate practice is to transform conditional trust in your shooting ability to unconditional trust in a supernatural force I call your Shooting Self. Your Shooting Self is a state of being in which the Ego Self, your Conscious Self and

planned moves are merely reflexes, or good habits, that have been programmed into the adaptive unconscious through rigorous training and arduous practice.

VIOLATED TRUST

Psychologists suggest that the Ego Self of every shooter has an innate need for a sense of control over the outcome of every shot. It is the emotional need to control the shot sequence (shooting reflex) that precipitates those visual deceptions that result in various visual and visceral faults. As the target approaches the selected break zone, that urge to control the outcome is what activates the old habit to check the lead. You will make a perfect preplanned move but visually defocus at the instant the trigger should be pulled, just to satisfy that urge, and the visual deception occurs. The slight deceleration of gun speed movement or a slight correction with the forend hand causes a missed target.

The unexpected missed target causes the Ego Self to immediately lose confidence in the ability of the True Self to break the next target. The Ego Self always perceives itself as the victim, and blames the True Self for the failure. Rather than just watching the next target, the Ego Self loses trust in the ability of the True Self and attempts to manage more of the shot sequence.

Every missed target, especially during competition, creates a potential violation of the unconditional trust that the Ego Self must have toward the True Self

to keep the Shooting Self in the game. When you attempt to analyze why you missed the target during practice or competition, you are encouraging the Ego Self to take a more active role. The Ego Self begins to place conditions and limitations on the performance of the True Self to justify its desire to control the shot sequence. When the wheels fall off during a round, it represents a complete violation of the Ego Self's trust in the True Self.

RESTORING TRUST

The most difficult part of recovering from a violation of trust is getting the Ego Self to admit that the True Self is necessary for the execution of an efficient, effective and effortless preplanned move. I discussed the importance of the Shooting Reflex in previous articles and explained the role of the True (adaptive unconscious) Self in managing it. The Ego Self can

► An emotional need to control the shot sequence will lead to disaster.



▲ You must practice until your conscious mind trusts your subconscious mind to get things done properly.

execute the shot sequence, but it isn't nearly as efficient and effective.

Restoring unconditional trust in the True Self is accomplished with training drills rather than more practice rounds. Training is the methodical process of becoming emotionally detached from the perceived problem and focusing attention on re-programming specific preplanned moves. Once a preplanned move has been re-programmed during a training session, you must practice the habit repeatedly until unconditional trust in it has been restored.

I believe the best method for restoring and maintaining unconditional trust in



your preplanned moves is by employing a reliable pre-shot routine. Many elite shooters are like professional golfers in that they perform a very specific rehearsal before they step onto each station.

An important aspect of restoring unconditional trust in the True Self to manage the shooting reflex is to maintain your visual depth of focus "above and beyond the gun." I recommend shooting singles-only stations 2 through 6 on a skeet field to re-program this visual habit.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

You must believe that trusting the preplanned move unconditionally is absolutely necessary for you to break clay targets consistently. You must discipline yourself to pull the trigger at the break point regardless of the "picture" rather than submit to the emotional urge to check the lead. Many so-called "easy targets" are missed because a shooter cannot resist the urge to peek at the end of the barrel in that critical instant before they pull the trigger.

When I encourage clients to watch the target until it breaks, I also mean to just trust the adaptive unconscious to manage the preplanned move. Visual input determines gun movement via visio-motor (eye-feet-hand) coordination. Therefore, any intention to break the target rather than just watch it until it breaks will interfere with your ability to focus exclusively on the target during that critical instant before you pull the trigger. **CTN**