



WORKSHOPS AND PUBLICATIONS ON THE NATURE AND TOOLS OF LEARNING
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EVOLUTION OF A PERFORMANCE ANXIETY HABIT

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As humans we have the following properties and there is a tendency of each to flow into and reinforce the next... It is important to recognize that these are not flaws in our nature, but important and helpful characteristics of our nature. The problem comes in when we end up in reactions and habits where these wonderful abilities become used against ourselves. Usually this happens without us really being aware of how this has come to take place. These properties kick in, one after the other, to gradually lock in the habit.

1. Coordinating System

This is your responding system, constantly coordinating your physical and emotional state in response to the present circumstances

2. Construct-creating System

Your coordinating system responds to your interpretation of the moment, that is, what you THINK is happening, not what IS happening... This means that things start to go wrong as soon as you misinterpret a situation without realizing you are misinterpreting.

3. Experiences make things FEEL real

There's nothing like a feeling to make something seem real, so we start to think it IS real, that is, our system projects the (mis)interpretation out AS IF it is Reality (this is what makes us start to react).

(Demonstration of using a pen to feel texture of fabric, or the train in station example)

4. Associative Conditioning (Automatic)

We associate the 'problem' with certain situations (e.g. auditions) and the Conditioning effect ensures that you'll begin to automatically react similarly in similar situations. This begins to lock in the habit.

5. Anticipatory Reaction

Memories of how bad past reactions were, combined with the knowledge that a similar moment is coming up very soon, set off an anticipatory reaction (taking us out of the present) and we mistake this to mean something bad is happening now.

6. Reinforcement (circular habit)

The reinforcement of having this happen over and over strengthens the neural links and reaction pathways, deepening the lock-in of the habit.

7. Identify with it

As the experiences become a regular and constant part of your responses you begin to see it all as being a fundamental property of 'you'. This helps lock in the habit even since it now seems to be part of your very nature... that is, you identify with it.

8. Coping Mechanisms

To the extent that doing something helps you cope with the symptoms it helps lock the habit in more since you'll no longer be looking to change the problem, just to cope with it. 'Treatments' rarely get rid of the problem. The best most people can do is to develop coping methods to manage (or maybe decrease) the symptoms each time they come up...

The way this sequence 'evolves' into a self-reinforcing ever-deepening circular habit virtually ensures that you become 'stuck' in it. And many people do become stuck for life.

BUT... luckily for us, there is one other property we also have which can allow us to change things, IF we learn how to use it...

9. Intelligence

This is our ability to look closely at what is happening, to understand how and why we get caught, and to see where we may be misconceiving what is happening...

So that we can unwind the habit back past where it started (at no. 2 above) and instead become able to make more accurate interpretations of what is happening... To see that you were reacting to a misinterpretation... that in reality nothing bad is actually happening...

And as your Coordinating System responds to this more accurate perception of what is going on you won't feel anything bad. Instead you'll be back in the present, able to perform with clear intention and with all your skills available to you...