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### **DARTS...A BRAIN GAME? (by John Reichwein)**

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The mind and its powers have been the subjects many books, and the cause of considerable wonder. The mind works with lightning speed, like a computer. I have seen people in the sport of darts who can add and subtract their score and check their toe line in a split second after the last dart has left the hand. Yet this is nothing compared to the capabilities of a person who has found his inner self, a detached state that he or she can go into anytime they want to - a state of objectivity, knowing what has to be done and doing it.

This state is nothing new. Zen and yoga masters, and many other great teachers, have taught it for centuries. The reason the majority of the people have not been able to grasp this principle is because they are too involved in Ism, better known as the ego or self. This is better explained in two good books: first and foremost, *Eckankar - Key to the Secret World*, and *Zen in the Art of Archery*. There are numerous other books in any library on these and related subjects.

To attain a detached state you have to be totally egoless, selfless, void of emotion. In this state the only reason for doing anything is because it is to be done; therefore, you work in a state of objectivity, not subjectivity. In the sport of darts I have heard some outstanding players say they have tried hypnosis, and that they believe in the positive thinking approach. I feel the state of *detachment* has the greater advantage for the dart player than positive thinking or any other artificial means.

Let's look at positive thinking and a person using this method. This person goes into a competitive situation with the attitude, "I am going to win, I really feel good today, today is my day, I can't miss." And all the time before the competition, practice goes well, so this confidence is confirmed.

I have seen this attitude carry a player into competition. In the first round the player jumps on his opponent like a cat on a mouse. Second round, he is still going strong. Third round, the competition is getting tougher and tougher, time is wearing on the player. By this point, he has something to eat and is drinking heavily. (*It is common knowledge that excessive food and drink slows down the mental and physical processes.*)

The positive thinking approach undergoes its greatest test at this time. The player sees he has a chance at the top spot, so he applies more pressure on himself to win. The competition at this time is relatively equal. Having a more difficult time of it, the player may miss a few few shots he would not ordinarily have missed. This is where the positive thinking theory starts to backfire. The player presses hard for a win, he may hit a few wires, miss a few shots, then begin to panic. He starts to have doubts and from then on it's all downhill, so to speak.

I have seen grown people cry, others have a look of disbelief. Some react in anger, and try to put the game on a more personal basis, saying such things as, "You were lucky to have won." All these are scenes I have observed in watching players who use positive thinking. *If you pump yourself high enough with the "I can't lose" attitude and fail, how can you ever pump yourself up to that lie again?*

Now let us look at positive intention, which I believe is completely different than positive thinking. When employing positive intention, you go into the competition knowing what caliber of play it will take to place or win, and you're realistic about your chances. You know, for example, that the top competitors play a 301 game - in, down, and out - in 10 to 15 darts. On a good day, you play the game in 17 to 22 darts. If you are lucky, you may place, but your darts would not be good enough to win. If you say, "I shot an 11-dart 301 game once." you will be kidding yourself if you expect to win. The trick to positive intention is knowing what has to be done and doing it.

Carrying this further, let's suppose you're in a crucial match. You play very well, shooting a 10- or 11-dart game, but your opponent is one dart better. Sure, you would be disappointed, but you would not be "defeated." You merely would have lost the match. Using the principle of positive intention, you prepared for the match, you performed to the best of your ability at the given time, and you didn't win. ***Now I ask you, how can you possibly "lose" when you have done your very best?***

It is difficult for anyone to accept defeat of any kind in this day and age. We are taught to compete from the first day we go to school. From the time our parents first tell us to get good grades and life will go well for us, we are taught that the world loves a winner. ***It seems everything we learn about success of any nature has to do with winning whatever the cost. There is no room for failure. This is a very sad and unfortunate situation.***

In our lives we have met and survived many setbacks without it affecting our egos. That's because we accepted our setbacks with the knowledge that we did our very best, and that was enough.

Unfortunately, in our competitive efforts, our failures attack our egos and losing is traumatic. The principle of positive intention affords you the privilege of failure, whereas positive thinking leaves no room for error. If you look at any competitive situation only as a measurement of your ability to perform at that given time, no more, no less, then you can learn to compete to a standard you set for yourself, working always to improve your ability and consistency. You can then win more and lose less.

What standard should you *realistically* set for yourself? Observations show that we are not realistic in our evaluation of ourselves. Our minds tend to overrate us (or sometimes underrate us), which hampers our ability to perform. But if we can look at things totally objectively, impersonal to our own gain, we can be realistic in our goals.

I think a good suggestion, first, would be to go to a national tournament so you can see some good players in action, and then be truthful with yourself on where you stand as a player. Study the great players, observe their form. Learn how they always manage to place or win. ***I think you will find that these players know when they have a chance to win, and they know wishing and hoping doesn't help.*** They have learned to perform to a standard and always look forward to the day being "their day." They have learned positive intention. They know what has to be done and they do it.

The secret to anything is that we must be consistent and confident in our ability to perform:

- Practice ensures consistency
- Consistency ensures confidence
- Confidence ensures the best performance we can give.

***Winning can only be worked toward, not controlled.*** Life has taught us a very hard truth to face: All of us are not winners. ***If we are realistic in our goals, and steadily work toward them, we will find satisfaction in our efforts.***