



## **Ready, Steady, Die**

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Although most of my clients are business people, because of my personal development work with young aspiring sports people, I often get to spend quite a bit of time with people who have not yet grown so inward looking that they miss out on the joys of life. The psychological facts are plain, simple and incontrovertible. Up to the age of puberty, the mind functions in a manner that is clear and focused – this young, as yet to be fully “constructed”, brain is subjected to far lower levels of electrical-impulse-induced vibration as the neural pathways are still being constructed. Through adolescence, as work on those neural pathways draws towards completion, electrical activity in the brain accelerates – as thoughts begin to whizz along those neural connections at high speed. By the end of adolescence – largely regarded from a psychological perspective to be somewhere between eighteen and twenty five years of age – with the brain now firing on all cylinders, we become hostage to our thoughts, the average adult having some fifty thousand random thoughts each day. Most importantly, however, the big “resident” thoughts about our self-image and perception are driven by what psychology terms the “stored knowledge” that we largely learned prior to puberty. Our perceptions of current reality are created by this stored knowledge and our consequent reactions are dictated by the resultant misconceptions.

Despite that fact that we may not have had our full intellectual faculties at our disposal, we were at our most mentally effective when we were children. Unfortunately, however, our entire childhood was directed in such a way that we were constantly being pointed towards becoming an adult. Our education systems are designed to ensure conformity to the norms of mindless adulthood. Our society expects people to better themselves, get a good education and then a good job. Children constantly fantasize about what they will be “when I grow up” – whilst, at the same time, consistently being told that they can’t daydream about becoming a movie star, a football star or an astronaut – we were encouraged, by example, to follow in the footsteps of those who went before us. Of course, many of the youths with whom I have worked closely – being torn apart, as all adolescents are, by the utter transformation of the brain – assume that, when they do eventually grow up, all will return to an even keel – all will be well again as it was in childhood. It’s a terrible thing to have to disabuse them of this notion. As one young guy said to me recently “Some of my friends are behaving really badly at the moment – but, I assume, that, when they grow up, they’ll start behaving properly again!”

What evidence have you got for adults behaving properly? There is little or no such evidence because no such proper behaviour is to be seen. As I said, the psychological facts are clear – and when it comes to stating the facts on the normal adult state of mind, frightening. The normal adult sees real reality through the fog of stored knowledge. The normal adult constantly and repetitively behaves automatically. The normal adult does not properly experience anything or anyone new that happens in their lives – they “experience” a version of what is happening based on the way in which they use their stored knowledge, or preconceived notions, to tell them what is happening – and often this is very far removed from what is actually happening.

As we went through our childhood and adolescence we prepared ourselves for life’s great race. Unfortunately, as we limbered up in our childhood and put our feet in those starting blocks during adolescence, as we readied ourselves for the off, what was really going on? On your marks, get set, die! That’s what was happening because the normal adult is as good as dead. Because our adult minds make “sense” of today based on our stored knowledge, we really aren’t alive here and now. To truly live now, to see life and it’s opportunities for what they are, to be carefree and happy, we need to become like a little child again. We need to slow our minds down and we need to stop paying attention to the thoughts that are in our head and start paying attention to what is actually going on around us – just like we did when we were three or four years old. And just like a three year old, we need to experience what’s actually happening now with as many of our senses as possible. Our five senses are the only way we have of making sense of the world. But, as adults, we ignore them and use out-dated stored knowledge to make sense of now – and we all know where that leads! It’s time to come back to the present moment by paying attention to it. Until we do, we will achieve nothing of any value – least of all peace of mind.