

## Shooting In the Mind's Eye

The Mind's Eye is perhaps the most powerful tool that we possess. The Mind's Eye imagines, creates, and visualizes any possibility that we desire. In the process, our Mind's Eye influences our physical reality and our ability to actually have that which we have visualized. Suppose you're working at the computer and suddenly, in your Mind's Eye, you picture something you'd like to eat. You think "that sounds good," and suddenly you're heading to the kitchen. All the necessary functions that are performed in the process of getting the food occur spontaneously, with a minimum of conscious thought. We stand up, walk to the kitchen, grab the food, walk to the cupboard to get a dish, etc. In our Mind's Eye is pictured the outcome which we desire and our bodies, more or less, automatically do what is physically required to successfully reach the outcome. It is not necessary to consciously think about which muscles to extend or contract as we stand or walk or reach; nor to think about where the kitchen is in your house and how to get there. In fact, it is easier to allow your body to do automatically what it knows how; if you attempt to consciously think about and control every muscle movement, it actually makes the process much more difficult. The Mind's Eye not only visualizes the outcome that we desire. It also believes, without an ounce of doubt, that it is in our capacity to reach what we are visualizing. In going for the food, it is doubtful that you would wonder if you are actually capable of making it to the kitchen or able to eat what you are after.

**What does the Mind's Eye have to do with archery?** Similar to the example above, the Mind's Eye greatly influences our actual success in archery. When we can visualize ourselves landing the arrow in the gold, and believe without a doubt that it is in our capacity to do so, then our bodies can more easily do what is necessary to achieve that outcome. Archers who don't or can't visualize themselves shooting successfully are at a great disadvantage. And, like attempting any physical activity, consciously thinking about every muscle you need to extend and contract can interfere with your ability to execute a good shot (unless, of course, you are just learning how to shoot).

Using the Mind's Eye in archery sounds simple, but to actually use it to your advantage rather than disadvantage can be more complicated than it sounds. Think about what can happen in your Mind's Eye following a low scoring end and preparing for the next end. If you feel frustrated or upset, begin to think that "maybe today is just not a good day for shooting," feel less confident in your abilities, and see yourself as not prevailing, there is a good chance that your performance will not improve. Using the Mind's Eye to your advantage means believing in your abilities and feeling confident that you can succeed, despite your performance and despite the outcome. Using the Mind's Eye in this way does not mean that you will have immediate 'success' (depending on how you define success - we'll talk about that in another issue) but it does mean that success will come more easily and more quickly.

### **How does the Mind's Eye influence our physical reality?**

The Mind's Eye influences what occurs physically because the mind and body are intimately connected. They influence one another constantly. It was once thought that the mind and the physical body were completely separate; that is, the function of one did not in any way influence the function of the other. Today, we know this to be absurd. Our thoughts and emotions influence our physical health and our physical health influences our mental health. With regards to archery, if we think positively and believe in

ourselves, the probability of executing a strong shot is much higher than if we think negatively and have a pessimistic outlook.

Archers who are having difficulty shooting as well in competition as they do in practice often tackle the problem by increasing the amount of time they spend shooting. Keeping in mind that shooting is both a physical and mental exercise, these archers may do better by focusing on how their mind, thoughts, and beliefs are influencing their ability to shoot under pressure. With a fuller understanding of the Mind's Eye and how it effects your shooting ability, the next step is to learn to use the Mind's Eye to your advantage. This requires: 1) perfecting the use of visualization, 2) learning to objectively correct your mistakes without emotionally judging them, 3) realistically defining success, and 4) basing your confidence on more than the outcome of your performance.