

NLP and Sport

Dealing with Distractions

Time distortion

When you are in the Zone or the Flow State, you are fully in the present moment. In that moment, time seems to stand still, and it's all yours. Athletes who have been in the Zone say how they seem to have plenty of time to do whatever they want. Tennis players and golfers see the ball as big as a balloon; they can't miss. Runners describe how everything seems to happen in slow motion, footballers say how everyone else seems to run through treacle while they run on air.

In the Zone, time is different. This sort of time distortion may seem a strange phenomenon, only brought about under special conditions by skilled hypnotists, but time distortion happens all the time. Have you ever watched a kettle boil? Were you ever asked to be quiet for a whole minute as a child? When you pay attention to the passing of time, especially if you are not enjoying yourself, then time drags its feet like a fat boy on a rugby field. Museums always distort time for me, when I was a child I used to believe that museums were not only full of old things, but they also ran on old time, which was a lot slower than modern time. One of the longest hours in my life was going round a foreign museum with some relatives when I was seven years old. I wanted to go and play, but I had to do my duty. I am sure they enjoyed it (they were a lot older than I was), but the only way I could keep sane was to grade exhibits by points of boredom and cast imaginary bets whether the next exhibit would be as boring as the last exhibit. There was a clock in every room and I was sure that all of them had stopped.

You can also accelerate time - you must have seen a film or Television show that so absorbed you that the time flew by. You 'woke up' and the clock said an hour had gone, but it seemed like only an instant. Computer games are particularly good at stealing time. Start a computer game and you may become so absorbed that hours can pass unnoticed. The clock gives you social time, objective time, but we all experience time differently depending on what is happening. We have all had experience of fast time and slow time, regardless of the clock. Time does not 'really' speed up of course, it just seems that way. Your *perception* of time is what matters.

There is a superb science fiction novel by Alfred Bester called 'The Stars my Destination.' The hero, Gully Foyle has had a special operation to enhance his nervous system. When he presses his tongue against his upper incisors it triggers special neural circuits and accelerates his body to five times normal speed. He then experiences the outside world as slowed down to a fifth of its normal speed, so he experiences everything happening in extreme slow motion, although he can move normally. People seem to float languorously about. The colours shift towards infra red and sound becomes a deep rumble like playing an audiotape too slowly. To the rest of the world it looks like Gully Foyle is a blur of movement. When he wants to return to normal, he presses his tongue against the back of his top incisors again. Wouldn't that capability be useful in sport? The ball would slow right down; your opponents would seem to move in slow motion. It

is possible – without the operation. Your brain can do it. All you need is to find the switch. Here are some exercises to that will help you put the world into s-l-o-w time.

Exercise 27

Fast and slow motion pictures

Pick one of your favourite films. Sit down, relax and imagine the film beginning. Imagine the frames at their normal speed and then speed them up. See the action go faster and faster. You can do this easily if you imagine watching the film on video. Just push the fast forward button. The actors rush up and down with quick jerky movements. If you could hear the sounds, their voices would be high pitched and squeaky, music would go *prestissimo*. Watch as much of the film as you like in this way. You might make it go even faster than the fast forward video speed. In a few minutes you could watch the whole film.

As you watch the film, start slowing it down. Slow it down until it's normal speed. It seems to be going slower than usual doesn't it? That is because our perception of speed is affected by what we are used to. You have probably driven onto a motorway and accelerated up to seventy miles an hour. That seems fast after thirty miles an hour. Then you cruise along and get used to the higher speed, your reactions have to be faster because everything moves quicker. When you come off the motorway you slow down on the slip road and suddenly you seem to be crawling along, but the speedometer may be showing forty five miles an hour. You became accustomed to the faster speed and your reactions are for that faster speed. This is the 'Motorway Slip Road' effect and we will use it later.

Now wipe the screen and rewind the tape. Start the film again from the beginning, but this time, imagine the frames going very slowly. A film is made of a number of different frames and they are speeded up until the action seems continuous. All you have to do is imagine that the projector is running slower and slower... Watch as the characters move so slowly... they open their mouths and their voices are incredibly deep... and... slow like an animal g-r-o-w-l-i-n-g.

Exercise 28

Exploring 'fast time'

When you play you want to be in fast time, so your opponents seem slow and you have plenty of time to counter them.

Remember back to a pleasant time when everything seemed to slow down.

Don't pick a bad time when you were bored!

Be back there. What is it like?

Go through the submodalities of how you perceive the world when it seems to be moving slowly.

What do you see?

What is the quality of your pictures?

Do you see brighter colours?

What is the range of your vision?

Listen to any sounds.

What are the qualities of the sounds?
 Is your inner voice silent?
 Do outside sounds seem louder or softer?
 What sort of feeling do you have in your body?
 Whereabouts is it?
 Is the feeling warm or cool?
 How large is it?

Write down your critical submodalities of fast time – it is how your brain codes fast time.
 You can use these submodalities to make it easier to enter fast time when you want to.
 (See the example below)

Example

Experience of fast time - Critical submodalities

Visual Submodalities	Auditory Submodalities	Kinesthetic Submodalities
Colour seems to be less intense, more muted. Slower movement of pictures. Pictures seem more three dimensional – they seem to have a greater depth. Wide angle vision.	Sounds seem louder and seem to echo more than usual. Sound is clear. No internal dialogue	Warm and heavy feeling in the body centred in the solar plexus. The feeling is about the size of a football.
Other comments Notice far more detail than usual I am in the present moment concentrating on where I am and what is happening now. Little awareness of what has just happened or what I want to happen next.		

This example is for a tennis player I worked with to help him enter fast time. He picked an experience of a pleasant evening where he was relaxing and time that seemed to go very slowly. Your submodalities of fast time will be unique to you, but I have found some common qualities of fast time in my work with athletes:

- they are very much in the present moment.
- they are using peripheral vision – they have a wide angle of vision.
- there is no internal dialogue.

These qualities hardly come as a surprise because they are characteristic of the Flow State, and in the Flow State time seems to go more slowly.

Fast time is not something you can will yourself into. It is like being in the Zone, once you try to do it with your conscious mind, you come out. Fast time is an altered state and to get into it you have to use imagery and mental rehearsal.

© 2000 Joseph O'Connor