

This article was written by a musician, drummer Phil Maturano – but the exercises that he recommends are excellent for pool players as well!

The Third Eye

If you have researched theories about intense sports training or high level athletic performance, you might know that there is something called “*The zone*“. In the U.S. this refers to a mental state where there is absolute concentration on what the person is doing. To the point of having “*out of body experiences*”. Feeling like it’s not you controlling your body, but some other force.

“The Zone” is accessible to anyone with discipline really and is applied in many areas of advanced learning, or anything that has to do with high level performance. When a musician or athlete is in “*the zone*” you can see it on their faces. This causes all kinds of transformations in the body, such as the ability to do things which perhaps you never thought you could do. When you are in “*the zone*” it is especially manifested in the face and eyes. A person’s face seems to change. The whole body seems to improve its posture and attitude. These methods that I’ve been using for many years now have been finally proven to be real by science!

In places like the University of Liverpool, studies have been done on musical training and blood flow to the left hemisphere of the brain. Proving of course that there is extremely high level of brain activity during a musical performance. Also, a new study in Boston shows that music performance improves several aspects of executive functions of the brain.

Of course, I am sure you have all seen that article that has been circulating on social media. Drummers are smarter than the average person etc. I have always maintained that there is something about studying rhythm on a deep level that affects our brains in incredibly beneficial ways. Since there is more and

more scientific proof that music has an amazing effect on the brain and body, there is no doubt in my mind now that “*third eye practicing*” will vastly improve your time behind the kit and accelerate input and retention of material into the body. I have absorbed some of the toughest most insane independence exercises using this and I am very happy with the results.

So how do you do it? Let’s take an example of this technique using any four-way coordination exercises that you are currently working on. You will need to be at the level with the exercise that you no longer need to read it off the page. Ideally developed enough to play it without stopping. At that point absorption becomes essential and unless you plan on spending a long time in that beginning stage, this is what can help you.

Step 1) With whatever exercise you happen to be working on, close your eyes and use the following mental / visual images while doing them.

Starting at the spot between your eyes on your forehead, travel down from the right side of your head, down your neck to your shoulder, to your elbow and your right hand. Once you are at the right hand focus your attention on the right hand as if you were a tiny person standing on your forearm. Observing the right-hand as it works. Try to retain this image in your mind. Focus on the sound of the instrument the right hand is playing. Try to isolate that sound and group it with the image of your hand. Once you have it, return your mind’s eye to its center. Open your eyes. Observe and listen to the whole body performing the exercise.

Step 2) Do the same for your left hand. Do the visualization going down the left side of your body.

Step 3) The next step would be the feet. Starting with the right side, travel from your head down the right side of your body, down to the right leg, over the knee and stop at the ankle.

Observe the right foot doing the exercise from this angle. Try to retain this image in your mind. Focus on the sound of the instrument the right foot is playing. Try to isolate that sound and group it with the image of your foot. Once you have it, return your mind's eye to the center of your forehead. Open your eyes. Observe and listen to the whole body performing the exercise.

Step 4) Repeat the same process for the left foot. Going down the left side of your body.

Now the process doesn't end here. The next thing to do is to develop what I call "*lateral vision*". You take the same process.

Step 5) While playing an exercise, close your eyes, but this time visualize traveling down both arms until you reach the hands simultaneously. Or ... Maybe you can find a center point of observation for the hands, like the stomach. Observe the hands from there. Then continue down your legs to your feet. Observe the feet working together, isolate the sounds, retain the image in your mind. Then move your focus back to your head. Open your eyes. Observe the whole body performing the exercise.

You should also do different combinations. Such as...

Step 6) Move your focus to the right hand and the left foot. Then the left hand right foot. And to top it all off you can try to increase or decrease the dynamic level of the limbs you are observing. Isolate the sounds, retain the image in your mind. Then move your focus back to your head. Open your eyes. Observe the whole body performing the exercise.

All this is especially helpful for when you want to visualize the exercises in your head later. Like on a plane while traveling. Also... What I do sometimes is try to visualize them before I go to sleep. When all is quite and the lights are switched off. I take a few moments to review the visualizations and the sounds. So that

my body can once again review it as I drift off to sleep. One thing you might want to consider is that this could interfere with your sleep if you are not used to it. There are many drummers who tell me they get caught up in the rhythm and start to get excited! Then are to wound up to sleep. Unable to stop the images and sounds! For me it works ok real late at night but you could try this when you wake up in the morning if doing it at night shakes you up!

So...It all might sound a bit strange. But remember, there are many things we do not yet understand about the brain. These types of visualizations have been going on for centuries. Musicians perhaps were the Shamans of ancient cultures. Perhaps not musicians directly, but shamans used music and especially drumming to propagate visualization, out of body experiences and the rest. There is definitely something going on with drumming in this area and what we once as a species considered to be mystical and magical is turning out to be fact! Also usable!! So why not use it to our advantage as drummers to get the best out of our performances and practice sessions?

All the best

Phil Maturano