

Do you want the carrot, or do you need it?

You know the if-then trap at work?

That's the trap that our employers like to set for us. Not that they mean us any harm. They try to make us go the extra mile with incentives.

- IF you sell x millions in insurance policies this year THEN your bonus will increase significantly
- IF you deliver your project before the end of the year, THEN you will get promoted

This incentive trap activates our reward system, generates desires and increases the pressure to perform at our best. However, we know from many studies that this trap causes our performance to deteriorate because we no longer focus on what we do, but on the consequences of our actions. This distracts us and performance fades into the background, because we are busy thinking about the consequences.

To get rid of this pressure - ask yourself the question:

Do you want the carrot or do you need it?

If you only want something, the pressure is far less as when you formulate a really essential need. Wanting is merely a wish. If you just want something, you always get another chance. With this attitude, you can reduce your own inner pressure and are thus able to put the focus on performance.

And think about it? Most of what we wish for in life we don't really need, we just want it

Tip: Find the challenge

There used to be a German song in the 80s. I don't remember who sang it, but there was a line in it that said: "you only get smaller when you cry"

Somehow this sentence has stayed in my memory forever and it keeps coming up in my mind again and again, funny enough always in situations where I am afraid of a task ahead of me or have mega respect for. But as a Mental Coach it is also a great help to me, because it's really like this: When we consider something as a threat - say, a presentation in front of a large audience - our brain goes into the "rabbit in the spotlight" position. This means that we can only focus on the threat. The body creates stress, cortisol production is boosted, and the part of our brain responsible for emotions becomes active. We "cry" inside. At the same time, the part of our brain responsible for facts is slowed down. We get thoughts like: "I'm going to embarrass myself, I can't do that, it will go wrong, I will stutter". Attention is on this one threat. Thoughts are negative. And then, most of the time, it goes wrong! Self-fulfilling prophecy.

How do I get out of it? Admittedly it is not so easy, and the moment we stand in front of an audience, it's too late. One method is that of consciously evaluating the situation beforehand. You know that you will have to present. But just the thought of it drives the sweat into your face. Well, there is still time. You can discuss it with yourself. Yes, that works!

Consciously think through and evaluate the situation, which is stressful for you in advance - not as a threat, but as a challenge. Looking at a challenge opens our thinking. We suddenly look "upwards" and look for options and possible solutions to master the task ahead of us. The part of our brain responsible for facts, solutions and planning is activated and emotions fade into the background.

Challenges activate us, threats block us.

In treating it as a challenge, performing in front of an audience becomes something you can definitely master, if you prepare yourself well enough. You think about what you CAN do, what you know, that the audience doesn't know, you look for people who can help you to prepare. You find a solution. You always do.

And you get bigger, not smaller. Because you don't cry at the sight of the spotlight, you grow on the challenge.

So: Go find the challenge 😊

Tip: Play the If-Then Game

Muphy's law has struck again? Despite planning and preparation... technology goes on strike at an important meeting, you only get 3 instead of 5 months for your project, somebody discredits you in an important meeting... We get annoyed, stressed, react impulsively, stutter, blush etc.

Serenity can be learned. Try the what-if game? With yourself or even better, with your team. What do you do when completely unpredictable events happen, for example IF

- the technology fails
- someone is verbally firing at you
- the most important decision makers do not come to the meeting

In this game, you're allowed to dream up horror scenarios. But think them through, incl. THEN... what do you do in each of these situations to get through them confidently?

Playing the game you become calm and self-confident . You know that you will find a way out of every imaginable dilemma - or you know when it is hopeless and you take an orderly and professional retreat. Thinking through mentally stressful situations helps you to check off what happens in the IF case and THEN to concentrate on yourself again. Through the game you have already cleared the way to the solution in your head. Now you only need to go it.

Enjoy the game :-)