Hello Everyone. I hope you are all having a wonderful summer, full of excitement and change of pace. Maybe even you are hungry for skiing to start up again. Perhaps you are doing something about this. You have to remember that some resorts are open pretty much year round, there is always a lower hemisphere, and of course, your mind. Look inside this publication for more details.

You will never believe this, but we are getting famous, O.K., maybe just better known. It is like a domino effect. Some of us instructors forward our Newsletter to a friend, they forward it to their friend(s), and so on. Even though our Newsletters are tailored toward our Sugar Mountain ski/snowboard instructors, others find the material beneficial, including the whole idea of having a ski/snowboard school newsletter to start with. Now, I am getting e-mails from many instructors around the country pertaining to the articles and other ski/snowboard ideas. So, keep up the good work and keep sending me the articles, pictures, announcements, news worthy of mentioning, etc. Remember, my e-mail address is: Kosmala-law@bellsouth.net. Our next Newsletter will be in September.
Mind over Matter:
Imagery and Self Confidence

By Witold Kosmala
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III

Every skier/rider finds moving to the next level challenging. If we want to get better, we have to get out of our comfort zone. Yes, constant repetition of our comfortable skiing will make us better, (provided we repeat correct moves), but that will not pass our next level certification. No matter what it is that we want to challenge ourselves with, getting out of our comfort zone can be scary, difficult, and dangerous. For example, no matter how much you practice on a tame terrain, the first run on a “beyond” black slope might stop you dead in your tracks. Let’s hope, not truly DEAD. (Check out the photo on the next page.) Or, if you would like to master bump skiing, how do you negotiate your first black, or perhaps only blue bump run, where you see nothing but an endless field of “pain.” Or, you want to navigate down a horrible crud slope, and you stop on top beyond the point of no return. Now what?

When you stop on the top of your new challenging, out of your comfort zone slope, your heartbeat will skyrocket and many questions will rush to your mind. Am I physically ready? Can I really do this? Is my equipment appropriate? Do I know the appropriate technique involved in skiing/riding this particular slope? Am I adequately prepared? If it’s a chute or a rock formation, did I check it out from the bottom? If it is trees, do I know that there is a wide enough passage to get through? Even if you answer “yes” to all these questions, you might still be nervous and reluctant about pushing off. (Looking at others around you might help you decide what to do.) What usually intimidates us is the fact that this new, out of the comfort zone run, requires moves we actually did not practice. These moves need to be faster and more precise than the ones in our practice sessions. And now, in addition to proper execution, we face a danger to our physical being. In the back of our mind we see failure and an ambulance on the bottom of the slope.

So, before you get to the top of this slope, you might ask a seemingly silly question: is there any way to practice this “difficult” run in a slow motion? Believe it or not, the answer is “YES.” It is indeed possible to jump off of a cliff and fly in a slow motion. Or do any of the runs anywhere in a slow motion, or even in reverse. I am not talking about a film, but about your MIND. Yes, this is possible, it is widely used, and athletes call this IMAGERY. Years ago, when I was a spring-board diver, I religiously used this idea, because there is this first
time for this new, scary dive off of the high dive that will scare the daylights out of you, so how do you get yourself ready??? Use imagery!

What is “imagery” and how does it work? IMAGERY is just that, imagining yourself doing a task. You can even do it lying down in your bed, or driving on an empty road to prevent tiredness, or biking up a steep hill to help the time go by faster, or when looking at the boring line on the bottom of the pool while swimming, or at any other moment. It is however helpful if you can concentrate on your thoughts as you visualize your imagined run down the slope. Very often you can see racers on TV close their eyes and imagine themselves going down the race course, and their success at the end as they cross the line.

Beyond Black: the world’s top 10 classic steeps are listed below.

# Corbet’s Couloir:  
  Jackson Hole, Wyoming
# Hangman’s Hollow:  
  Mammoth Mountain, California
# The Palisades:  
  Squaw Valley, California
# Highland Bowl:  
  Aspen, Colorado
# Big Couloir:  
  Big Sky, Montana
# Ruby Bowl:  
  Whistler Blackcomb, Canada
# Les Grands Montets:  
  Chamonix, France
# Trefide Couloir:  
  La Grave, France
# Valluga;  
  St. Anton, Austria
# El Marte:  
  Las Lenas, Argentina

If you ski these, or others slopes like these, you will not fear steepness of a slope on your next PSIA event. Then, all you need to do is focus on technique. Imagery and self-confidence will help you with this.

So, let’s get started. The first step is to decide what task you would like to master. Do you know how ideally it should be performed? Can you imagine how your “role model” skier/rider would do this task? Do you know the technique behind it? It is very important to know exactly what it takes to perfectly execute the task in question. More accurately you know what your body needs to do and when, more effective imagery will be for you, and more
prepared you will be to physically perform the desired task. You need to know all the details, like, where to apply the pressure and when and how, what should your toes be doing when executing the task, where your eyes should look, what you should be feeling, etc. Talk to others who know how to do this task, look at others doing it, and read about it in the literature.

Now, put yourself in a place where you will not be disturbed and imagine yourself performing your desired task. You should attempt to enter fully into the image using all senses of sight, hearing, feeling, touching, even smelling, and perform the task successfully. If you are in a relaxed state and very focused, you will be able to go thru a perfect sequence of skills while performing the task in a slow motion. Imagine doing every little move slowly and accurately. Do any move you wish many times over. You can even make them in reverse. It is all in your mind. Do a complete run through of all elements needed to precisely complete the task. You should focus on the ACTIONS it takes to achieve the desired outcome, not on the outcome itself. Do not think about mistakes because they will take over your entire mind. More often you put yourself thru the mental imagery process, more likely you will become self confident about success in performing your task skillfully, and more likely you will be successful in reality.

SELF CONFIDENCE is the sureness of feeling that one is equal to the task at hand. It greatly enhances performance. Now, don’t misunderstand me. I am not talking about ARROGANCE. Arrogance is sureness of feeling that is NOT well founded in one’s ability. Arrogance is not a desirable characteristic in a person.

There are many things that can build self-confidence.

1. When you repeatedly perform a skill successfully. Remember that for adults it takes about 300 CORRECT repetitions of a move before they “own” it.
2. If someone else who closely matches your own abilities is successful, you should think that you will be also successful.
3. When you say to yourself “I know I can do this.” Positive self-talk will affirm that you indeed possess the necessary skills. However, don’t ever say to yourself something like “I really don’t want to mess this one up.” Never use anything negative.
4. Go through mental imagery regularly and often.
5. Application of stress management, like appropriate breathing and negative thought-stopping, will reduce muscular tension, butterflies in the stomach, and anxiousness.

Mental imagery will boost your self-confidence. Together they will help you reach the unreachable. Now go and take yourself to the next level up.
The Intervention Dimension

By Gordon Carr
PSIA-E Alpine, Level II

Well, here it is the middle of summer and it is almost time to put some wax on the long boards! I just believe, sincerely believe that if on July 8th, we all close our eyes, put on our ski or ‘board boots and we click our heels together 3 times, and say “Let it snow.”, that it WILL snow and accumulate AND STICK on November 1st!

But until then, I thought summer would be a good time to share some thoughts about the power we have as snow sports instructors when our guests place their trust in us. The power we have to intervene in peoples’ lives when they invest their trust in us is truly awesome, and this phenomenon occurs in many social relationships in addition to snow sport coaching.

Years ago, when I was Director of Residency Training for post doctoral Clinical Psychology students learning the fundamentals of psychotherapy at a VA Hospital, I was struck each year with how each new resident class viewed this “power of intervention” dimension in an incomplete and unbalanced way. Almost always, each academically educated psychologist, embarking on his or her first clinical assignment, “perceived” this intervention dimension as a scale ranging from “helped a lot” at the high end to “neutral” or “nothing much happened” at the lower end. (See below)

10                                5                                      0
________________________________________
HELPED A LOT                                                    NEUTRAL

The residents sincerely wanted to help people who were suffering psychological pain and they wanted to learn all the established techniques to do so. But they were also falsely confident that if they were less than successful in their interventions, at least they were doing no harm to their patients, based upon their belief in the above dimensional scale.

It was a visible shock to most residents when I insisted that the power of the intervention dimension invested in us thru our patients’ trust was much broader in scope. The dimension actually goes from “helped a lot” THRU “neutral” to “HARMED A LOT” at the low end (see below).

10                                          0                                               -10
__________________________________________________ __
HELPED A LOT                        NEUTRAL                            HARMED A LOT
The power derived from invested trust is symmetrical: if you have the power to help someone, that same power gives you the ability to HARM someone! You must welcome and embrace this symmetry; if you do not have the power to harm, you equally have no power to help someone. The only profession I am aware of which explicitly acknowledges the fullness of this dimension is the medical profession in their tenant: *primum non nocere* (first, not to harm). But many other roles in society are enmeshed in this intervention dimension as well and have the ability to abuse the given trust and use the power to harm. The almost daily headlines give voice to this abuse from teachers, parents, clergy, and police, to name just a few.

What does this have to do with us as professional snow sport instructors? Well, we clearly don’t find ourselves the subject of CNN or Fox News investigative headlines very often; and, one can argue that given the large volume of ski classes taught nationwide each season actually very few complaints are lodged against us with the local managements. Does this mean we are innocent and blameless of abusing the trust placed in us by our guests? Do we believe the intervention dimension ranges from “Helped a Lot” to “Neutral or Nothing Much Happened” at the low end? Maybe. Are we exempt from the full consequences of the broad and more realistic intervention dimension with “Harmed a Lot” at the bottom? I give a resounding, “NO”! The implications and potential to harm someone apply equally to us in our snow sport lessons! I contend, however, that the lack of “negative headlines” about us just means our abuse of power is less obvious to our guests and others and that it is more insidious. When someone fails to learn to ski or board, most coaches have built in excuses: “It is the Guest’s fault.” Or “Trail conditions were to blame”. (They are uncoordinated. They were not paying attention. It was too icy. It was too crowded. The class was too large. They were really out of shape. How could this couch potato pick skiing [snowboarding] as his first physical activity?!! Blah, Blah, Blah, and many others). And even worse, we let our guests go home believing these same excuses for not learning or improving. “It was their fault!” I bet not one guest in a thousand goes home from a mountain after a less than effective snow sport lesson and says, “You know, I had a less than effective instructor who was unable to be clever or creative enough to overcome my unique obstacles to learn!”

But you know, I still remember my first year teaching and the orientation I got from Pete Howard, chief trainer at Sugarloaf/USA (and chairman of PSIA-E Education and Certification Committee). The orientation was about our responsibility and included the following statement, repeated frequently, “If someone isn’t learning…then someone isn’t teaching!” What a sobering thought! You mean when pupils in school fail to optimally learn the teacher plays some role in that? When a “newbie” in our setting doesn’t “get it” or fails to catch the thrill we all have, we as coaches may have been less than effective? What a radical thought…but TRUE! We must behave in our lessons as if it is OUR responsibility to impact the guest’s snow sport outcome and if we meet a challenge to that outcome, we must be creatively clever in using interventions to overcome this person’s unique obstacle.

Are there, though, really people who will NEVER learn to ski or board? Oh I am sure there must be one or two somewhere. But all you have to do is go to a mountain which has
handicapped skier and boarder instructional program and watch those instructors and students; or, watch the winter special Olympics; or, observe a blind person skiing with a guide, and it will dawn on you that there are NO obstacles to learning and enjoying snow sports for anyone (probably). Don’t say, “Well what about those who are extremely advanced in age?”…I once taught an 83 and 84 year old couple from California who for 18 years had been watching from the lodge while their children and grandchildren skied. They cried with both joy and sadness at the lesson conclusion…joy at the thrill of actually skiing, but sadness that they had sat observing from the sideline for years when they could have been an active participant with their skiing family. “What about advanced age, physical infirmity and mental impairment?”, you may ask. Someday I’ll write about Fanny, a frail 83 year old woman with severe Alzheimer’s disease, whose children arranged private lessons of 4 hours duration twice yearly for 2 years AND took Fanny out of a Nursing Home to do so! At times Fanny in the mid portion of a high chair ride would try to raise the bar and say “Do we get off here?” (And other darling vignettes). Was she infirm…mentally impaired…? Certainly! But, my Oh my, could Fanny ski! … But these are stories for another day.

Well, back to snow sport lessons and our responsibility for the outcomes of those lessons. Clearly an abuse of the trust placed in us and an abuse of the power we thus have would be to irresponsibly recommend to a struggling “newbie” that the next run after the lesson they should go up to the top of the mountain and “do” Tom Terrific. Obviously an incredibly dangerous and irresponsible “NO NO”, and surely that doesn’t happen! Right? Well it must, or Len wouldn’t warn us in the early season NOT TO DO IT! (Other ski and snowboard school directors also forcefully give this same injunction, by the way, so somebody must be doing it somewhere, sometime.)

But the more insidious and perhaps even more harmful abuse is when I eyeball a new class or private lesson and say to myself, “Uh, Oh! This one is going to be a problem (for what ever prejudicial reason I see)” Then I can become casual and indifferent to their learning outcome and create a self fulfilling prophesy. When they then don’t “get it”, and I let them leave the mountain feeling a failure, I have abused their trust placed in me. And it is this scenario which probably accounts for the industry wide dismally low percent of first time skiers and boarders who come back for a second snow sport experience. SnowPros…if we want to help our industry grow, at a minimum we have to feel and behave with our guests such that the outcome of lessons is a shared responsibility: us and the guest, and maybe with us having much more than half of that responsibility. Our guests must leave excited, encouraged and convinced that if they didn’t “get something” that their instructor just didn’t make it happen. Ah!, but, next time! A fresh instructor…a different view point, a more creative intervention, and then I (the guest) am on my way to becoming the next BODIE or FLYING TOMATOE!! (Which fantasy I believe rests secretly in most all who want to join our fantastically thrilling snow sport world).

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR LESSON OUTCOMES
What About Helmets?

By Witold Kosmala
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III

Here is what I wrote to Jeb Boyd in January 2009:

Dear Jeb, again congratulations on making the Alpine Team again. An honor well deserved. I was fortunate to have you as a coach for the ART Workshop couple years ago at Elk. During our two-day clinic you never wore a helmet. Did you wear one during your tryouts in Mammoth? When do you, and when do you not wear a helmet? We all look up to you, and so naturally we want to know how you view the issue of wearing a helmet. Thank you so very much for your time, and for all that you do in skiing. Most sincerely, Witold Kosmala.

Here is Jeb’s answer:

Hi Witold,

Thanks for the nice note and I’m sorry it took so long to reply. Unfortunately this note got buried in my winter email and I’m just uncovering it. Anyway, regarding helmets, no I did not wear a helmet during the national team tryouts. I do own a helmet and wear one when in an extreme environment. Outside of that, I feel the helmet is a distraction to my performance and rather focus on skiing / performing at my capabilities and being aware not only of my surroundings but also potential crash paths on the mountain in the event that I run into trouble. In other words, I don’t ski in trajectory of trouble and I am keenly aware of those around me. Interestingly, you should log on to look at the NSAA statistics on helmets which roughly indicate that adult helmet usage is up significantly but the death / head injury rate is relatively unchanged. Knowing your limits, skiing within them and constantly being aware of your spill path and surroundings in my opinion are the best ways to stay safe on the mountain. Helmets certainly don’t hurt and who knows, maybe you’ll see me wearing one sometime soon. All my best,

Jeb.

Thoughts for the Month

- “A true skier never stops missing skiing, he just stops skiing,” by Witold Kosmala
- “Good is not good when better is expected”
- What is the difference between running down the hill and walking down the hill? Is there any connection to skiing?
We all know of one special day in July, but did you know that July is designated as an Ice Cream Month? Enjoy it, but not too much since you will be skiing/riding soon.

August 2 is a National Friendship Day, and August 15 is a National Relaxation Day. Also, the second week of August is a National Smile Week. It always starts on the first Monday in August. So, it looks like we really need to live it up in August.

Below are three announcements from Mike Simmons. He is our PSIA Area Rep. If you have any questions please contact Mike at: <mds@i-america.net>.

Deadline for scholarship applications is September 30th, applications are on the PSIA-E website.

Also, next year, Regions 3, 4, and 7 have elections. If you or anyone from our staff is interested in running for our Region's Director - Representative, those bios need to be in to the Albany office by December 30th if not before. Include a picture, if you can. Anyone wanting assistance, please contact me.

What do you like or dislike about each of these skiers?
• Also, positions on the Ed/Cert and Snowsports School Management Seminar Committees are appointed, so if you are interested in either of those positions, please let me know. I will submit the names for the BOD's consideration. Jump in the water's fine!!

Newsmakers

• In April, John Holder attempted his AASI Level III exam. It did not work out for him nor for any one else that was in his group. John, congratulations on your attempt and all the hard work you put into the preparation for this monumental moment. You will be a shiner next time you go.

• Gordon Carr had his article published in the Spring 2009 PSIA-E publication of Snow-Pro. There were many articles submitted for publication, but they picked Gordon’s. Congratulations Gordon! (Even if you are not a PSIA/AASI member, you can still view their Web site www.psia-e.org. There are many interesting things on it.)

A Funny Turn

The Mudbug

Towards the end of last season when the melting snow created a strip of mud next to the Easy Street chairlift, I happened to be teaching a young girl and this lesson was her first experience with snow and skiing (aren’t these kids who are seeing snow for the first time fun to be with?) She was proficient on roller blades, and had picked up balancing, turning, and stopping effortlessly; in short, she was a good little beginning skier after the first 20 minutes. So up to Easy street we went. She handled the chair ride and exit well chattering away the whole time and she maneuvered masterfully on the upper ¾ths of the trail. Towards the bottom of Easy Street the crowded conditions inadvertently forced her closer to the mud side of the trail. Rather than stop, she tried, unsuccessfully, to make for a small opening between a group of stationary skiers and the mud. Of course, her skis hit the mud and quickly came to a screeching halt! A perfect 5 point, flat out, face plant resulted! Slowly rising to her feet with the forward half of her face and new pink ski outfit now a gooey chocolate brown, she exclaimed, “Hey! Mud’s not a slick as snow! Are you going to teach me how to make mud turns?” And of course, wouldn’t you know, her mother had been watching from the spit rail fence. When we skied up to the fence, visions of an irate parent and a complaint to Len danced in my head. Imagine my surprise when the Mom only asked, “Are you having fun darling?”, and Laura exclaimed, “Oh, Mommy, skiing is way cool!! Can I come out again this afternoon?”

BUDDING YOUNG SOUTHERN SKIERS NEVER COMPLAIN ABOUT CONDITIONS!

By Gordon Carr