



CREATING
CONSCIOUS
CAPABILITY

Mental Musings – a relaxed approach to solving problems



How often do you find yourself struggling to decide what to do, when faced with a plethora of things that need doing? Or, maybe you're finding it difficult to complete something, as that all important deadline approaches.

Now, compare this to how you feel when you are enjoying a nice, relaxing experience. Typically, these two states of mind will be very different and you may never have considered the two at the same time; so why should you do so now?

Whilst relaxing, you feel comfortable and go into automatic, which allows your body to slow down and go into a latent state; ready to re-engage when required. What about your mind – does this do the same thing?

Personally, when I'm enjoying a relaxing experience (scuba diving in my case), I find myself thinking about all sorts of things which are not related to the experience, but are slowly being mulled over as my mind goes into a similar latent state. I'm constantly amazed at what I can sort out whilst diving!

For me, it would be ideal to use this relaxed state of mind to resolve the type of issues that I raised in the first paragraph. This gives rise to the idea of doing a mental dive, or more generically, some mental musing.

The whole idea is that by re-visualising a real relaxing experience, the brain can re-enter the state of mind it was in at the time, allowing itself to go into that latent state once again.

Now I'm not the sort of person who is constantly in a state of indecision or who has regular dilemmas, but I do use the technique periodically and find it very successful. Either my current issues are simply put into context, or potential solutions present themselves.

So how does it work? Let me take you on one of my dives. What may surprise you is that it's not in tropical waters; it's not full of colourful fish. It is, however, a dive I can relax on as I've done it many times over the years.

I'll describe how I do the dive 'mentally', so simply try to follow along in your head. If you do know the dive yourself, add your own details.

Sitting comfortably, at home or at work, shut your eyes (after you have read this article!) and relax. Bring to mind the experience that you are going to re-visualise and get ready to start. From there, just relive the experience, recalling

enough detail to remember how it feels to be there. Try to stimulate all the senses.

So, relax and come diving with me . . .

Entering the water, we slowly descend, listening as the retreating sounds of the world are replaced by the bubbles of our breathing. We fin through fishes, away from the shore to the edge of a drop-off where we turn right. Following this edge, past the Viscount cockpit, we fin down the old rail incline looking for a slightly bent scaffolding pole standing upright on the left hand side.

The pole emerges out of the gloom, and we via off to the left and descend over the edge, now looking for the edge of another drop-off which would take you down to 'the deep dark bit'. Here we turn left, pick up a rock, feel its weight and compensate for it, then follow this new edge until a small cairn of rocks is found. Adding our rock to it, we breathe out and turn left again, finning away at right angles to the edge.

A shadowy shape presents itself, gradually resolving into a single deck bus with no seats. We enter the front door on the side we approach it and exit via a door on the other side near the back. Swimming away from this side of the bus we eventually find an anchor chain which we follow to the right until it rises to the bow of the Stanegarth.

Slowly finning around the hull at deck level, we can take in her details before returning to the bows and going over the top down her centre line back to her stern. Continuing in this direction, we soon see the stern of the Defiant and can take a lazy tour of this wreck too.

Going directly to port from the bow of the Defiant, we discover a white van before reaching the base of a wall. Here we turn right until the wall swings round to the right and becomes more vertical.

Now we start the return journey by slowly ascending up to the top of the wall where there's a small blockhouse on a ledge with plenty of fish. Following the edge around to the left, past a grassy bank where we often see small pike, we reach the Nautilus submarine.

Finally, after passing the Nautilus, we swing to the right into shallow water where we can surface and re-enter the dry world!

The dive itself is typically about 40 minutes, but the mental dive takes just 5-10 minutes depending on the detail you include, and how long you want to be 'down there'.

On completing your mental musing, it's important that you jot down any solutions or ideas that have presented themselves. If you don't, you find that they simply disappear again as the real world starts to reassert itself.

So how might this work for you? It may be true that divers are one of the most laid back groups of individuals on the planet, but we certainly don't have a monopoly on relaxing experiences. The key elements to the technique are:

- Having a current issue/dilemma which requires resolution
- Being able to find a quiet and comfortable environment
- Having a relaxing experience that can be recalled in some detail
- Being willing and able to take the time to recall it
- Being ready to capture solutions at the end of the experience

You may have a favourite walk, or a film you can relive. It could be a book or a holiday, a ski run or a chess game! It really doesn't matter what you use as your relaxing experience, as long as you can recall the detail and get yourself back into the experience in a way which means your mind can slip into that latent state, allowing it to process your current issues & dilemmas.

As a leadership coach and diver, I'm always looking for ways to bring these two passions together. Getting a leadership team to leave the office and go diving is a real challenge. However, letting them enjoy their most relaxing experiences is a simpler matter that can happen in the office.

And the technique isn't only useful at work. These days, all of our lives can be complicated, so why not try it at home too.

Steve is an experienced leadership coach and PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer. He works with senior individuals & teams, and with current & rising talent, in both large and small organisations.