

**SEVEN STEPS TO DEALING WITH FEAR  
IN PARAGLIDING**

**Making Process Work Accessible to the Sporting Public**

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## **Introduction**

Paragliding is a sport that captures the imagination of many. The thought of flying freely with the birds, many thousands of feet above the earth without a motor and without anything around you, is both exciting and terrifying. This final project focuses on the latter – the fear associated with flying, and in doing so shows two things. Firstly, how Process Work can be applied to the sports arena, and secondly, how Process Work can be made accessible to the general population. The finished form of the project is an article for “Cross Country” magazine, the largest paragliding related publication in the world. The article is called “Seven Steps to Dealing with Fear”. It describes a seven step process I have come up with over the years to deal with my fear when I’m paragliding.

After describing the purpose and approach of this final project, I include the article verbatim in this contextual essay. I do so to show how this type of writing contributes to Process Work – although the article touches on seven Process Work concepts, it does so using almost no jargon at all, by embedding them in the personal writing and thus making them easily accessible to the general public. I then go on to discuss how I have done this by specifically showing how I have applied each of the Process Work concepts in the article. The essay concludes with a discussion about the how this contributes to the field, the quality and the limitations of the project.

## **Purpose**

Writing this article has brought together two of my loves – Process Work and paragliding. I chose to do this project for a number of reasons. Firstly, because of my passion for extending Process Work’s reach into the larger world, and making it accessible to a new audience. Secondly, it has provided me with the opportunity to understand how I have integrated Process Work into another very important aspect of my life – paragliding. And thirdly, it has helped me deal with my own fear when I’m flying. As the article describes, my levels of fear went up enormously after having had a number of accidents, to the point where it was affecting my performance and I was no longer enjoying flying.

The objectives of this project were to show how Process Work can be applied to sports, and do this in a way that makes Process Work accessible to a non Process Work audience.

## **Approach**

My approach was to write an article, for other paraglider pilots, which explains a seven step process that can be used to deal with fear. The first five steps take place whilst flying, the last two occur on the ground.

These seven steps are the synthesis of my working on myself to deal with my fear over my 17 year paragliding career. They are the culmination of more than a decade of process-oriented inner work and sessions, along with other techniques I learned from



speaking with other pilots. Imbedded in the seven steps are the following Process Work concepts – utilising inner work to work through traumatic experiences, going into a disturbance, the use of second attention, the inner critic, channel switching, edges and using anchors to access other states. The concept of going into a disturbance rather than repressing it or ignoring it pervades the article.

The choice to make the product of this final project an article rather than an essay was made to make it more accessible to the general public, and in particular the flying community. I worked closely with the assistant editor of the magazine to tailor my writing style to suit this audience. In doing so, I have explained some Process Work concepts in such a way that they can be easily understood and applied by people without any background understanding of Process Work.

Although the proportion of the article spent on these Process Work concepts is not large, the concepts themselves are very important in the seven steps. The article and the seven steps themselves provide the container which I use to bring in the Process Work concepts to this new audience, and in doing so show a minimalistic way of including Process Work in writing.



## **The Article**

Below is the text of the article, “Seven Steps to Dealing with Fear”, which has been accepted for publication in the October 2009 issue of Cross Country magazine. An exploration of its contribution to Process Work follows.

### **Main Article – Seven Steps to Dealing with Fear**

Over the 17 years that I have been flying, I've had my own share of fear to deal with. Between two accidents that resulted in hospital, and an incident which didn't actually result in physical injury, but left me with emotional damage, I'd say it's been the biggest factor in my flying performance and pleasure, the piece that has taken the most ongoing work.

When I feel frightened in the air, it is debilitating. I spend most of my energy dealing with it, rather than the task at hand of observing what is going on around me, making tactical decisions and having fun. I land exhausted.

My first accident was landing on a powerline – a single strand running down the side of a rocky, tree-covered hill. Although this was probably the most dangerous and potentially fatal incident I've had, it had a happy ending, in that I started sliding down the line with my glider and eventually had the wing reinflated by a thermal coming through – and it left no long-term scars.

The second accident occurred on tow, when one of the tow points unclipped and I was dragged into the ground. A few X-rays later I was released from hospital – nothing broken, but in pain all the same.

My most frightening incident occurred at 5,000 m in Spain, at the seven-hour mark of an exhausting flight, when I was in danger of being sucked up into clouds. I was on a new wing, and when it went into a parachutal stall after an incorrectly exited B-line, it didn't respond in the same way as my previous wing. The result was a long cascade of G-force and terror-inducing events and thoughts about promises made about coming home safely. Eventually, using the last of the physical strength I had left, I pulled on a full stall and held it on as long as I could – when the glider recovered, there was a moment of calm. A calm that I had experienced about four times in the previous minutes – only this time the calm remained. When I eventually landed safely, I broke down and cried. And then it took about five hours before I was picked up by the retrieve bus. Five hours of being alone in the middle of nowhere, needing to deal with the trauma alone.

A month or so later, while flying high in the Austrian Alps, I had a huge collapse close to the trees, and threw my reserve. It opened just in time, but my impact with the ground was hard. After a ride suspended in a stretcher below a helicopter, I found myself in hospital. Once again nothing broken, but almost, and internal organs shaken severely. Seven days later I emerged sorely from hospital – after much soul searching I had decided to keep flying. Judy Leden's book, *Flying with Condors* helped me decide.

### ***Fear and Fantasy***

That all happened over 11 years ago – the fearlessness that marked my earlier flying days was gone forever. Since then I have come up with a strategy that helps me deal with fear. It is a synthesis of talking with people and working on myself.

Coming back from those two incidents took a year of focused effort, to get myself flying close to the levels I had before they occurred. Lots of short flights, so that my 'courage quotient' didn't get too drained – I found time on the ground built up the courage quotient, and time in the air drained it. A new wing. Studying myself using the skills I was learning

in my psychology studies. Talking to other pilots. Sessions with a therapist and a sports psychologist to work through some of the trauma. Years down the track I find myself going through phases of high levels of fear every now and again, and I do more work, study more, talk to more people until eventually I work through the next piece. Then I come back to loving being in the air again and being closely in touch with my glider when things get a little rough, rather than semi-freezing and just wanting to land.

The first thing I am saying is, you can do something about the fear you feel. You don't need to just ignore it or pretend it isn't there. There are things you can do to help yourself. I have seven basic steps I use to deal with fear. Five of them occur when I am in the air, feeling afraid, wanting to land to end the horrible experience. The final two steps take place on the ground.

Before I go into the seven steps I want to talk briefly about fear. There has been much written about it and there are books such as *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* that deal with the subject. I've often come across descriptions that include the word Fear as an acronym of Fantasy Expectations Appearing Real. Many of the strategies that are suggested for working through this are excellent, not only for dealing with fear, but for dealing with life.

However, in paragliding there is a real difference – fear is not only fantasy expectations appearing real. Sometimes that is the case, and I will at times refer to this as 'irrational' fear.

Other times, we really are in danger. There is no fantasy, there is no appearing real. We are in danger. It is real. This fear I refer to as 'rational' fear.

### ***Step 1: Notice you are afraid***

That might sound obvious, but unless you've just had a big collapse or find yourself without a glide out to a landing field, it often creeps up on you. There were times that I did not realise I was afraid, until I found myself wanting to land. Get to know yourself: how do you know when you are beginning to feel afraid? Do you start breathing more shallowly? Do you tense up? Do you find yourself looking constantly at your wing? These days I'm getting better at noticing it. One of the first signs is that I pull my feet up, so they are at right angles to my shins. Or I find myself sitting more upright in the harness, rather than relaxing back and letting it hold me.

Catching it early is important, so that you can address it before it's gone so far that landing is all you can think of.

### ***Step 2: Breathe deeply***

Right into your belly. Three times. We start breathing more shallowly when we are afraid. This deep breathing in itself will ease the tension somewhat, and once you've used this seven-step method a few times, will mark the beginning of the fact you are about to do something about your feelings of fear, rather than just ignoring them.

### ***Step 3: Ask yourself what you are afraid of***

Is it the bumps? Or the clouds? Is it that little or big tuck you had? The rustle? Is it because you are so high? Or so low? Name it. Out loud, as though you were telling someone about it. When I was first recovering from my accidents I would find myself having made the decision to land, because I was afraid. But once back on the ground I

couldn't actually say what I was afraid of. So for a while I took a voice recorder with me, and I would speak into it when I was feeling afraid.

Clarifying what the fear is about, rather than just leaving it as a nebulous feeling, is important. Even if it's just a vague feeling, concentrate on it, guess what might be causing it. Dismissing it as 'silly' or similar, without really knowing what is behind it, is not helpful.

#### ***Step 4: Are you in danger?***

Having named the fear, step four is to ask the question: are you actually in danger? An interesting discovery I made here is that sometimes I didn't know. After all these years of flying, I didn't actually always know where the 'danger zone' was. Sure, being right under a big cumulonimbus cloud is dangerous. But how about if it's a cumulus congestus? How close is too close? How close is okay? Take the time to read the books and talk with experienced pilots about these things, and work out where your own safety margins lie.

There are three answers to the question, Am I in danger?

In my "Yes" category I include big clouds, rain and the associated gust front, strong winds and no glide out to a safe landing.

Being high and being alone however, fall into my "No" category. These are good examples of irrational fear. I sometimes feel frightened in these situations because of past experiences I've had. The feeling of fear is just as intense as if I was really in danger. However, I am not in any danger – unless I stop thinking clearly as a result of feeling frightened and then do something that puts me in danger.

The "I Don't Know" category can contain all of the situations included in the "Yes" category above, if I don't know what my safety zone is. More about this shortly. I would

also add strong turbulence into this category – others might put it in the Yes category. Each of us needs to find our own answers to this question.

***Step 5: What are you going to do now?***

Having established whether or not you are actually in physical danger, the next step is to come up with a strategy to deal with the situation you are in.

If you are in danger then your highest priority is to get yourself safe. The details of how to do that fall outside the realms of this article, however I will touch on them briefly here. If you don't have a strategy for dealing with these situations, make it a priority to find one, by talking to people and reading books, watching videos, attending clinics etc. This will not only make you a safer pilot, but will also give you peace of mind, which in itself may reduce your levels of fear.

*Big clouds:* fly away from them, and if you need to land to be safe, fly away from them using speed bar and big ears. If you are under one, big ears and speed bar to the edge of the cloud, having taken a GPS direction reading so that in case you get into the cloud you know which way to keep heading.

*Rain:* I have a personal policy not to fly with a wet glider, however mild the rain is. So land before it gets wet, and if it is wet, land asap, remembering the glider may become more prone to going parachutal, so keep the glider speed up.

*Gust fronts:* if you can see one coming and can't land in time, one philosophy is to stay as high as you can and ride it out that way. I don't even like to think too hard about that possibility – it's too scary. Yet think about it we must. Another philosophy is to fly in the opposite direction of the gust front, and find the largest, widest part of the valley, if that's what you are in, and pick the biggest paddock, free of powerlines that you can find to



land in. All of these topics are worthy of an article in themselves. Best of all however, don't get caught in a gust front – learn how to avoid that happening.

*Strong winds:* landing safely here is the key. Find a big, obstacle-free field, free of powerlines, ideally with other fields downwind in case you get blown back. Set yourself up at the upwind end of the paddock, face into the wind, and fly from one side of the paddock to the other, a little as though you are ridge soaring – like a squashed figure 8. When you do land (and remember you won't need to flare), you need to be able to control your glider. Learn how to do that in strong wind.

*No glide to a safe landing:* if you have flown too deep into a hill, and don't have the glide out find the line to the closest field that maximises your chances of lift or finding a thermal – normally by flying down the windward side of a ridge. It is tempting to take the most direct route to the landing paddock, but that may put you in the heaviest sink. If there is no way out, and you are going to land in a tree, do the thing you learned at paragliding school – pick a big bushy tree and then land in it like you would on the ground.

The key in all these instances is to have thought about the scenarios beforehand, and the strategies for getting yourself safe again. In the moment of danger, you need to know what to do, so you don't add to the fear by needing to work it out at the time. Think and talk it through beforehand. This has the added advantage of probably putting you off putting yourself in such a situation in the first place.

If you can, remember to breathe deeply and visualise yourself getting out of the situation. Visualisation has a strong effect in the middle of a dangerous situation – it sets the determination to get yourself safe. It replaces the frightening images of what could go wrong with a positive one. My body immediately relaxes somewhat and the determination to find a safe way out increases.

Let's move now to those situations where you are feeling scared, but are actually not in any danger of physically hurting yourself. This is situation I find myself in most often –

and I have a routine (another seven steps!) I take myself through when I am aware this has happened:

1. Look around
2. Breathe
3. Set myself a mini-goal
4. Use my anchors
5. Visualise myself landing safely
6. Talk to people on the radio
7. Remind myself that flying well sometimes means pushing out of my comfort zone

The first thing to do is to look around. When we get scared we can become fixated, so by forcing ourselves to look around the level of fear immediately reduces. And once again, breathe deeply.

Mini-goals are crucial. They shift our focus from whatever is frightening, to something positive. Examples of the types of mini-goals I set myself are to core thermals well, get to the top of a thermal faster than everyone else or stick with pilot A – don't let them outfly me.

Focusing on coring thermals has the added advantage of keeping you in what is generally the most formed part of the lift. When we are half-hearted about thermalling we may find ourselves at the edges of the thermal, where it is roughest.

When I was coming back from my accidents, just staying in the air was an achievement. So once I noticed myself feeling uncomfortable, I would set myself a mini-goal of flying for another 10 or 15 minutes. And then go in to land. That way I could feel good about having achieved a goal, rather than just berating myself for landing early.

Similarly, I might say, I'll go and land after I've had two or three tucks, however small. This was a particularly good mini-goal to set myself if I was afraid of the wing collapsing

because of the conditions. Inevitably I found that I wasn't actually getting any collapses at all!

Having set a mini-goal, I then use anchors (see the side panel) to change my state from a fearful state to a more desirable state.

I then visualise myself landing safely – I visualise myself coming in above the field, assessing the wind direction, deciding where and how I'm going to set myself up for a good landing, execute that landing approach, and flaring at the right time.

Talking to people is also a very effective way of moving through an irrational fear moment. Get on the radio; ask people how they are finding the conditions. Talk with them about what you are noticing and feeling, and ask them for their feedback or thoughts.

The last thing I'll do is remind myself that flying well sometimes means pushing myself out of my comfort zone. There are times when the air is rough, or the day is windy. I know I have the skills to handle the conditions safely – it's just uncomfortable. And chances are it will change, as I move to another part of the flight or as the day progresses. I'll do this more when I'm competing than when I'm free flying – when my desire to achieve a good finish outweighs the discomfort I am feeling in the moment.

These days, when I am free-flying, I will tend to go and land when I am flying outside my comfort zone – I am in the air to enjoy myself, so if I am not enjoying myself, why persist? This has been particularly important for me, as I have had a tendency to keep pushing myself, and then forget how much I love flying. It becomes more of a chore, another job I need to do, rather than something I love doing.

The last situation that you may need to find a strategy for, as part of Step 5, is when you feel frightened but don't actually know if you are in any physical danger or not. Is that cloud too big or that turbulence extreme? As you find where that line lies for yourself through experience and study, this will probably occur less.

In this instance the best thing to do is to get on the radio and talk to people: “How is it for you?” Don’t suffer alone – talk it through with them, understand their thinking about it, and then make a decision for yourself about whether it is dangerous or not, and act accordingly.

### ***Step 6: Back on the ground***

If you’ve been scared in the air, whether the fear was rational or irrational, talk about it when you’re back on the ground. Ask other pilots for their opinions about the conditions and find out how they dealt with them. Don’t be shy here – people generally love helping out. And if you can, share your feelings: let someone you trust know what it was like and whether you were frightened or found it difficult.

Likewise, be gentle with yourself after such experiences. For the longest time, I felt like I had to be strong and deal with them myself. Or more like it, not deal with the feelings at all, and just move on. Many years after my cascades in Spain, I realised my flying pleasure and performance were still being hampered by the experience I’d had eight years earlier! When I eventually let myself revisit that time and feel the feelings and have the associated emotions, and take care of myself around them, there was a step change in both my flying pleasure and competition performance. Little did people know that the reason why I was standing on the winner’s podium was because of the ‘inner work’ that I did.

### ***Step 7: Other strategies***

I’ve already mentioned studying up about what is and isn’t safe, and finding that line. Read and talk to people – increase your knowledge base, get the facts, come up with your own methods for working out where your safety line is.

Flying a glider you are comfortable on is also important. Flying a wing with less performance can greatly increase your sense of wellness and comfort on your glider. And it is surprising how much better you can fly when you feel like you are on-top of things and in control of your glider: your own performance will probably increase, despite the glider's lesser performance.

Doing an SIV course is a great way of becoming more comfortable on your wing and helps you get comfortable with rapid descent techniques. Knowing that you can get out of the sky quickly, if you need to, will increase your level of comfort and your physical safety when flying. And the controlled collapses will help you understand better how your wing reacts.

Reading books and articles about fear and how to deal with it, may also help you work through your fears – both in flying and in life!

The more you think about your fear when you are on the ground, and the situations that cause it, the more you'll be able to deal with the fears, become a safer pilot and enjoy your flying.

### **Sidebar – Anchor Yourself**

Anchors are words, sounds, songs, movements or specific physical touch that are associated to a certain, positive state in your body. The technique is relatively simple to use. It originally comes from Neuro-linguistic programming, and the method I describe here draws on NLP and on the work of Arnold Mindell, who has taken the concept further.

I have two anchors that I use when I am frightened but not in any physical danger. The first is some words that get me into a calm yet focused state. The second is a song that I

hum to myself, that reminds me of my connection with something bigger than myself – nature, spirit, whatever you want to call it.

To get an anchor, you must first access the psychological state you want to be able to reconnect with. It is important to really be in that state – for example, being calm yet focussed. You need to feel it in your body, to look around at the world from that state, to walk around in that state. Then choose a movement, sound, song, visual image or some physical touch, such as pushing or pinching a certain part of your body, which somehow captures that state for you. Whatever you choose needn't make sense to anyone else – it's often an intuitive thing, that just works for you.

When you want to re-connect with that state, you just repeat the movement or touch, make the sound or sing the song, or look at the visual image – some pilots have a smiley-face sticker on their vario, for example. Looking at it, using the anchor, brings the pilot back from the fearful state.

### **Sidebox – About the Author**

Heike Hamann learned to fly in Bright, Australia, in 1992 and has been flying competitions for over a decade. She has flown in the World Championships as a member of the Australian Team and has been Australian Female Champion four times. She has recently completed a Masters in Process Work, or Process Oriented Psychology, at the Process Work Institute in Portland, Oregon. She would like to thank Arnold Mindell and her teachers, and Brian Webb, Craig Collings, Phil Hystek and the many other pilots who have spoken with her about various elements of this subject over the years.

## **Process Work Concepts Applied in the Article**

A number of Process Work concepts are touched on directly or indirectly in the article “Seven Steps to Dealing with Fear”. These are, in the order they appear in the article:

1. Inner work
2. Going into the disturbance
3. Second attention
4. Inner critic
5. Channel switching
6. Edges
7. Use of anchors to change state

In this section of the contextual essay I give some theoretical background to each of the concepts, and show how I introduced them in the article. In the following section I discuss this style of writing about Process Work and the contribution this makes.

### **Inner Work**

The idea of inner work is one of the few Process Work concepts that I speak about directly in the article, and I describe it using an example, rather than trying to define it more theoretically:

Many years after my cascades in Spain, I realised my flying pleasure and performance were still being hampered by the experience I’d had eight years earlier! When I eventually let myself revisit that time and feel the feelings and

have the associated emotions, and take care of myself around them, there was a step change in both my flying pleasure and competition performance. Little did people know that the reason why I was standing on the winner's podium was because of the 'inner work' that I did.

I also refer to inner work indirectly a number of times throughout the article, mostly referring to it as 'work', and once as 'working on myself':

I'd say it's [the fear] been the biggest factor in my flying performance and pleasure, the piece that has taken the most ongoing work.

Since then I have come up with a strategy that helps me deal with fear. It is a synthesis of talking with people and working on myself.

Years down the track I find myself going through phases of high levels of fear every now and again, and I do more work, study more, talk to more people until eventually I work through the next piece.

In the moment of danger, you need to know what to do, so you don't add to the fear by needing to work it out at the time. Think and talk it through beforehand.

Inner work is a, if not *the*, pivotal piece of Process Work, in that all our work as Process Workers relies on us knowing ourselves and being in touch with ourselves whilst we are working. Inner work means working on yourself – following and being the facilitator of your own process and as a result, getting to know yourself more, and increasing your levels of awareness. There are as many ways of doing inner work as there are ways of working with a client – signal work, focusing on a disturbance, exploring roles, following



a flirt and getting in touch with your process mind to approach a problem or a difficulty from another level.

### **Going into the Disturbance**

A disturber, from a structural viewpoint, is the “interrupter of a primary process focus” (Mindell, 1989a, glossary). One way of unfolding a process is by going into the disturbance – understanding what channel the disturbance shows up in, amplifying the disturbance in the channel and seeing where that leads. The primary process, however, would prefer to ignore or repress the disturber. In the case of flying, the primary process may be to enjoy the flying and the views, be in control or have fun. Feeling frightened disturbs this.

The whole article, in addressing how to deal with fear, has by definition the underlying principle of going into a disturbance, rather than repressing or ignoring it, embedded into it. The disturbance is unfolded as part of the “seven steps to dealing with fear”, however the unfolding is more primary in nature than secondary. This is appropriate, given the article has a self-help rather than a therapeutic feel to it.

The first step in going into the disturbance, is to acknowledge that people do feel fear and that it is good to do this rather than ignoring the feelings:

I’ve had my own share of fear to deal with...

The first thing I am saying is you can do something about the fear you feel. You don’t need to just ignore it or pretend it isn’t there.

... you are about to do something about your feelings of fear, rather than just ignoring them.

The seven steps unfold the disturbance in a primary way, by encouraging the reader to know themselves when they feel fear, name what is causing the fear and then do something to address this. In naming what is causing the fear I make space for the pilot to 'guess into' what might be causing the fear, which makes room for some secondary material to come to the fore.

Clarifying what the fear is about, rather than just leaving it as a nebulous feeling, is important. Even if it's just a vague feeling, concentrate on it, guess what might be causing it.

However, the steps of naming what is causing the fear and doing something about it is aimed at the level of consensus reality (CR) – the reality that our particular culture consents to being real, as compared to non consensus reality (NCR) – the place of dreams, feelings and sentient experiences.

## **Second Attention**

Second attention is the attention we put on feelings, fantasies, accidents etc that we are normally not aware of in our everyday life. "Focus upon things you normally neglect, upon external and internal, subjective, irrational experiences. The second attention is the key to the world of dreaming, the unconscious and dreamlike movements, the accidents, synchronicities". (Mindell, 1993, p24). With time and practice, our awareness of these things increases, until it becomes easier and easier to check in with oneself, and we

naturally take accidents and synchronicities as interesting and worthy of some exploration. As we develop our second attention muscle further, the things we pick up become more subtle and refined.

I refer to second attention, in the first of the seven steps: “notice that you are afraid”. I do this by encouraging people to get to know how they know when they are beginning to feel afraid. What are their body sensations, what do they do, where do they look? I purposefully ask questions in a number of different channels.

Step 1: Notice you are afraid. That might sound obvious, but unless you’ve just had a big collapse or find yourself without a glide out to a landing field, it often creeps up on you. There were times that I did not realise I was afraid, until I found myself wanting to land. Get to know yourself: how do you know when you are beginning to feel afraid? Do you start breathing more shallowly? Do you tense up? Do you find yourself looking constantly at your wing? These days I’m getting better at noticing it. One of the first signs is that I pull my feet up, so they are at right angles to my shins. Or I find myself sitting more upright in the harness, rather than relaxing back and letting it hold me.

The third of the seven steps is about asking yourself what you are afraid of. This step takes the concept of becoming aware of the feelings of fear even further, asking the pilot to focus on them long enough to become aware of what is making them frightened:

Is it the bumps? Or the clouds? Is it that little or big tuck you had? The rustle? Is it because you are so high? Or so low? Name it. Out loud, as though you were telling someone about it.

The possibilities I offer the pilot about what may be causing the fear are all ‘real’ causes – once again I am staying at the level of CR – in this moment, at the level of cause and effect. In my experience, how the rest of my life is going in that moment, whether I am happy or sad, on top of things or feeling like life is overwhelming, does have an impact on the fear I may feel when I’m flying – however this article does not broach this.

### **Inner Critic**

The inner critic is that voice we have inside our heads that, until we work with it, is constantly and often harshly judging what we are doing, criticising us and generally never happy with us. It can make it difficult for us to achieve things in the world, get in the way of learning and generally make us feel less well and happy with who we are.

It is possible to transform this inner critic into a more helpful and loving role, that may have good insight and advice, and shares it in a loving way. This version of the inner critic, sometimes referred to as an inner supervisor, coach or ally, helps us to self-reflect and become more aware.

The concept of the inner critic is brought in very subtly a number of times in the article.

The first is in step 3, ‘ask yourself what you are afraid of’. I say:

Dismissing it [the fear] as ‘silly’ or similar, without really knowing what is behind it, is not helpful.

As part of step 5, I talk about setting mini-goals, and in one example indirectly refer to doing so to handle the inner critic:

When I was coming back from my accidents, just staying in the air was an achievement. So once I noticed myself feeling uncomfortable, I would set myself a mini-goal of flying for another 10 or 15 minutes. And then go in to land. That way I could feel good about having achieved a goal, rather than just berating myself for landing early.

### **Channel Switching**

I have mentioned channels a number of times in my essay so far. Channels are what we use to perceive information. They include the visual (seeing), kinaesthetic (moving), auditory (hearing, including thinking if it's in words), and proprioceptive (feeling, both physical body sensations and emotions) channels. Relationship (when we get information through our interactions with other people) and world (information comes to us from the world) are also considered channels in Process Work, and are sometimes referred to as composite channels. Channel switching is described in *The Year I* glossary as “the act of consciously or unconsciously moving from one channel of perception to another in order to broaden awareness”.

I use channel switching as an intervention in step 5, when people are feeling what I have called irrational fear, to support them to be aware of other experiences they may be having.

The first thing to do is to look around. When we get scared we can become fixated, so by forcing ourselves to look around the level of fear immediately reduces. And once again, breathe deeply.

Later, when I am talking about accessing other feeling states by anchoring them, I encourage people to become aware of that state in many different channels, to broaden and deepen their awareness of that state.

You need to feel it in your body, to look around at the world from that state, to walk around in that state.

## **Edges**

Edges are a Process Work concept used to describe what happens when you feel like you are unable to do or say something. We get to an edge when we are moving away from the known, or how we identify, into the unknown, or something that is not us. It is also described as “the limit of what we believe we can do. A description of something we think is impossible for us to experience or live with” (Mindell, 1989b, glossary), and in the article I refer to something that comes close to this experience, when I speak about pushing myself “out of my comfort zone”.

The last thing I’ll do is remind myself that flying well sometimes means pushing myself out of my comfort zone. There are times when the air is rough, or the day is windy. I know I have the skills to handle the conditions safely – it’s just uncomfortable.

The edge could be seen as the edge to being uncomfortable, and by crossing that edge and being okay with being uncomfortable, other possibilities open up in that the flight can continue.

## **Anchors**

Anchors are generally used in Process Work to capture a new, often more secondary state or way of being. The act of finding the movement, scribble, sound or word that captures this new place also deepens the experience, and helps us to know it more. We use anchors to help ourselves and our clients to anchor that new thing in ourselves, and thereby integrate it at least a bit into our everyday identity.

This is the only part of the article which directly talks about any Process Work concepts, and it has been included as a ‘side bar’, rather than in the body of the article. This both draws attention to it, and what it has to teach, and highlights the different style and content of this particular piece. It also keeps the article itself light and free of any psychology theory.

Anchors are words, sounds, songs, movements or specific physical touch that are associated to a certain, positive state in your body. The technique is relatively simple to use. It originally comes from Neuro-linguistic programming, and the method I describe here draws on NLP and on the work of Arnold Mindell, who has taken the concept further...

To get an anchor, you must first access the psychological state you want to be able to reconnect with. It is important to really be in that state – for example, being calm yet focussed. You need to feel it in your body, to look around at the world from that state, to walk around in that state. Then choose a movement, sound, song, visual image or some physical touch, such as pushing or pinching a certain part of your body, which somehow captures that state for you. Whatever

you choose needn't make sense to anyone else – it's often an intuitive thing, that just works for you.

When you want to re-connect with that state, you just repeat the movement or touch, make the sound or sing the song, or look at the visual image – some pilots have a smiley-face sticker on their vario, for example. Looking at it, using the anchor, brings the pilot back from the fearful state.

I've added the pushing, pinching part as a way of anchoring a desired state – interestingly, Process Work tends not to include the proprioceptive channel when encouraging people to find an anchor, rather focusing on the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels. However, it makes sense to do so, and so in the article I borrow this from NLP.

### **Contribution to the Field**

Having explored the Process Work concepts that are referred to in this article, I now focus on the contribution of this project to the field. The largest contribution is that the project makes Process Work accessible to people who have no familiarity with Process Work. The magazine, "Cross Country", that has published the article, is the only international hang gliding and paragliding magazine and is distributed in over 75 countries. It is a high quality, glossy magazine and has an internet site associated with it in which some of the articles are available online. The magazine comes out monthly, with this article on dealing with fear published in the October 2009 edition. Its reach is



very broad in this sector of the population, sometimes referred to as the ‘free flying’ population.

The type of writing I adopt in the article is what I would describe as minimalistic when it comes to Process Work terminology and concepts. There is very little mention of anything to do with Process Work. I have used very little Process Work jargon – in the few instances where I have, the words are self explanatory – eg ‘anchors’ and ‘inner work’. Yet the concepts and tools are there, embedded in the personal writing. In integrating these concepts and tools in my life, I am able to write about them from that integrated place, translating them into everyday language and embedding them seamlessly into the article and the seven steps themselves. Arny’s name and Process Work are acknowledged as a major contributing influence – once again unobtrusively. For example, in the ‘about the author’ section I thank Arny and my teachers, but then go on to thank three specific pilots.

The value of this minimalist way of including Process Work in writing for the general public is enormous – it makes Process Work concepts and ideas more of a part of everyday life in the world, rather than being accessible only to those of us who study it.

The other contribution of this article is that it has a ‘follow these easy steps’ feel to it – something which I believe Process Work is beginning to move towards, as we start bringing Process Work more into the mainstream and strip the concepts and ideas back to their bare essentials.

Another, unintentional contribution is to the group of people who deal with fear in their everyday life. The seven steps I describe in the article are digestible and simple, and can

be applied to fears in general. Many people, for example, have a fear of flying and may be able to get some helpful strategies from this article.

This article shows the many varied applications and expressions of the paradigm. As far as I am aware, there is no literature that applies Process Work concepts to a sport. This project is therefore a first, making the concepts useful in a field not benefitting from them yet. It does so in two ways – firstly, via the article, which is intended for the international free flying community. And secondly, via this contextual essay which outlines which Process Work concepts I have applied to the sporting arena, and describes how I have done this.

The two manuscripts which come close to these topics are Lena Aslanidou’s paper comparing Process Work and Akido and Lily Vasiliou’s work on panic attacks.

Lena Aslanidou work, *Process Work & Akido: A Comparison of Principles and Methods* compares the philosophical roots, basic theories and belief systems of Process Work and Akido, and “their methods for addressing inner work, relationship conflicts and the creation of community” (p. 5).

Lily Vasiliou’s paper, *Discovering Meaning in Panic: A Process-oriented approach to Panic Attacks* uses six case studies of people who have experienced unexpected panic attacks to “provide an elucidation of a process-oriented approach to panic attacks” (p. 2).

## **Quality**

I have ensured this project is of good quality by working closely with the assistant editor of the magazine that has published the article. As he has had no prior exposure to Process Work, I have used his feedback to guide what I did and didn't include in the article. Interestingly though, most of what I initially wrote was fine, and the only sections he suggested I shorten were the ones where I was speaking about paragliding concepts.

As this is an experiential project I am the sole participant in this research the normal ethical considerations surrounding research are not relevant.

## **Limitations of the Project**

The very thing that makes the project a contribution – the finished form being an article written for a non Process Work audience – also becomes the limiting factor. The article only relates to a number of Process Work concepts, and the proportion of the article spent on these Process Work concepts is not large. Were the finished form an essay or a thesis, many more Process Work concepts as applied to the sporting arena could be discussed.

## **Conclusion**

This project had two objectives – the first was to show how Process Work can be applied in the sports arena. The second was to do this in such a way that makes Process Work accessible to a non Process Work audience.

Both objectives were met by the project. The project shows how Process Work concepts – inner work, going into a disturbance, second attention, the inner critic, channels and channel switching, edges and anchor – are applied to the sport of paragliding, specifically to help deal with the fear that is sometimes experienced when flying.

I have made Process Work accessible to a non Process Work audience a number of ways. Firstly by writing about Process Work in this minimalistic way, by incorporating the concepts in personal writing. I did not include much jargon nor directly mention much about Process Work, yet acknowledged Process Work and Arny as a major contributing influence. Secondly by providing a ‘follow these easy steps model’. Thirdly, by writing an article for a widely read paragliding and hang gliding magazine.

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