



GILMOUR CONSULTING Ltd  
ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

## AN INTRODUCTION TO TURNING SAFE ACTIONS INTO SUBCONSCIOUS HABITS

*For participants at the Drillsafe  
Forum, Sydney June 2006*

*Presented by:*

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**This book belongs to:**

- 
- management training
  - consultancy service
  - stress management
  - interview skills

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- safety training
- sleep management
- team building
- change management

# THE PROCESS OF TURNING THOUGHTS INTO ACTIONS

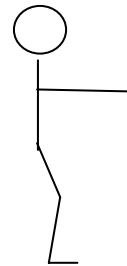
**FUTURE MESSAGES LOAD HERE →**

e.g: *'I must', 'I will', 'I need to', 'You must', 'You will', 'You need to', etc.*

**CONSCIOUS THOUGHTS (Willpower)**

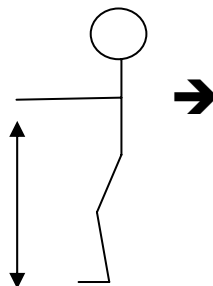


The 'psychological barrier' can block off future messages by agreeing and then putting the action off!



**FACT MESSAGES LOAD HERE →**

e.g.: *'I never', 'I always', 'I...', 'You never', 'You always', 'You...', etc.*



**PICTURE/IMAGE OF BEHAVIOUR (Imagination)**

**SUBCONSCIOUS**

Your subconscious is responsible for making the actions happen. It does this by following set rules, which include:

- It attempts to make the picture/image happen regardless of whether it would be good or bad for you
- It responds to messages worded as fact
- It likes taking control, thereby freeing the conscious mind to think about other things

This 'psychological barrier' can block statements of fact by arguing and changing the input to the subconscious



**ACTION**

# THREE TIMES IN LIFE WHEN PROBLEM MESSAGES ARE A DISASTER

A 'problem message' is any message that brings to mind an image of what not to do, e.g. 'don't drop it' brings to mind an image of dropping it. A 'solution message' brings to mind an image of what you want to happen, e.g. 'catch it' brings to mind an image of catching it.

There are three times in life when problem messages are a disaster, because at these times they are highly likely to result in the problem behaviour that comes to mind, occurring.

## When a person is very young

When children are between the ages of 18 months and 3 years old they are highly likely to action the problem image that comes to mind. The fact that many parents often give problem messages to young children is one of the major reasons for the stage known as 'the terrible two's'.

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## When a person is very stressed

Remember the examples of the woman skiing into a rock and young males hitting lamp-posts.

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## When a person stops concentrating

The reason problem messages are a disaster when people stop concentrating is because, when they stop concentrating, their subconscious takes over and works to the imagery that has been pre-loaded. Remember the example of your subconscious taking over when you are driving your car.

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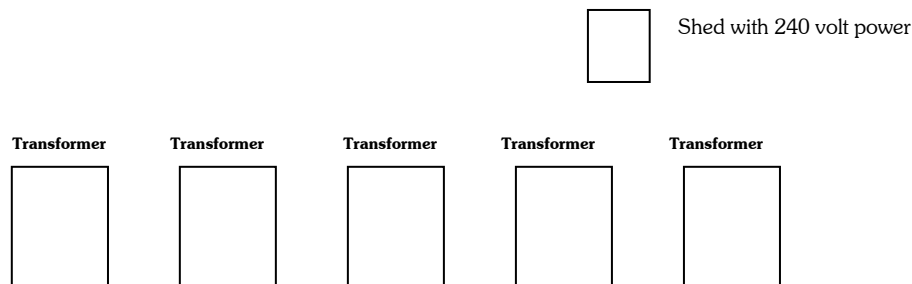
# CHALLENGING UNSAFE DEFAULT SETTINGS

## The Rationale for Establishing Safe Default Settings

When accidents do occur they frequently involve situations where a person or group have been acting in unsafe ways over a long period of time (often without incident), and then something extra happens which 'exposes' the unsafe actions. For instance a driver has developed a habit of doing 65kph in a 50kph zone close to home, and has done so for years without incident. One day a child bikes straight out into the road in front of the driver 20 metres up the road and they cannot stop because they are doing 65kph, not 50kph.

A huge challenge in safety is to convince people to take the right actions when people who take shortcuts can often work faster, achieve more and not have an accident or incident for years (indeed sometimes they may never have one). For example, people could go through a lifetime pulling plugs out without switching the plug off first. However people who always turn the switch off first have **totally eliminated** the risk of getting a shock while pulling the plug out.

Remember the following example of the person in the substation whose unsafe habit of 'ducking' under the ropes significantly contributed to his death.



## Encouraging People to Establish Safe Default Settings

- Explain the rationale of subconscious default settings
- Make it clear that you are only prepared to accept 100% adherence to safety procedures
- Make sure you model the correct behaviours
- Give positive feedback, on an intermittent basis for doing it correctly
- Stop incorrect practices from occurring **every** time you see them

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# IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOLUTION VERSUS PROBLEM MESSAGES MATERIAL FOR SAFETY

Two of the three times when problem messages are a disaster have major implications for adults in safety situations. These are when a person gets stressed and when a person stops concentrating. The third time, when a person is very young, has implications for children, and the comments outlined below are also relevant for child safety issues.

## When People are Stressed

Because people follow their imagery and the fact messages that they have given themselves (or been given) it is essential that:

- Safety messages state solutions as fact e.g. *“Don’t panic”* becomes *“Stay calm”*
- Emergency instructions only tell people what to do e.g. *“You must not open valve X at any stage”* becomes, *“Make sure valve X always remains closed”*
- When teaching people tasks that they will need to do when they are stressed, only tell them what to do
- Practice, practice and practice again the correct behaviours
- For tasks that will need to be implemented in very high stress situations. When ‘real’ practice is not possible ensure that lots of ‘visualised’ practice takes place.
- Review the mental messages you are giving yourself about how well you would cope in an emergency situation. Actively challenge any negative thoughts you may have and replace them with positive affirmations that STATE THE SOLUTION AS FACT.
- Practice positive visualisation and ensure that your practice sessions cover a wide variety of scenes you may find yourself faced with.

## Ensuring Safe Actions occur when People stop Concentrating

For safe actions to occur when people stop concentrating, they have to become strongly ingrained habits. You can increase the likelihood of this occurring by:-

- Insisting that people apply the correct procedures when they are learning the task and whenever you see them doing it.
- Encouraging people to take a 24 hour approach to safety e.g. wearing safety glasses, ear muffs, etc. when undertaking tasks at home.
- Make sure people receive feedback on how safely they are working

# ***About Gilmour Consulting.....***

## **The Company**

Gilmour Consulting is an organisational psychology practice that provides professional services throughout New Zealand and overseas. The majority of time is spent conducting training workshops in the 'people skills' area. While some standard 'public' programmes are conducted, the majority of workshops are tailored to meet the specific needs of clients. The areas of training focused on include

- Management training for:
  - Senior Executives*
  - Managers*
  - Supervisors/Team leaders*
- Stress Management
- Safety (including how to turn safe habits into subconscious actions)
- Team building
- Motivating yourself and others
- Time management
- Customer relations (including how to stay polite & professional when dealing with difficult customers)
- Sleep management
- Managing and coping with change
- Changing organisational cultures
- Resolving conflicts
- Managing your manager

The consultancy also has a strong interest in providing training via e-learning and has an association with two websites devoted to stress & sleep management at [www.stressproofing.com](http://www.stressproofing.com) and [www.sleepwell.co.nz](http://www.sleepwell.co.nz). The company's own website is at [www.gilmourconsulting.co.nz](http://www.gilmourconsulting.co.nz)

## **History**

In 1981 Ross Gilmour established the business in Wellington, New Zealand. The company provided psychological treatment services to individuals, couples and small groups, together with training and consultancy work for organisations.

In 1983 Mike Keenan joined as a Director and the company became Gilmour, Keenan & Associates and when Keith McGregor joined in 1986 it became Gilmour, Keenan, McGregor & Associates. Mike later relocated to Auckland and for several years the company operated in both locations. When Mike left the company in the late 1980's the name became Gilmour, McGregor & Associates Ltd.

In 2003 Ross and Keith created their own separate companies. Ross established Gilmour Consulting Ltd and Keith established Personnel Psychology New Zealand Ltd. They also remained Directors of Gilmour, McGregor & Associates which was the clinical team until October 2005, when it became a separate entity as Cavana, Dyne and Associates.

The following list is a sample of clients for whom we have recently worked on an in-house basis:

## **Private Sector:**

AMP  
ANZ  
EFTPOS  
Employers & Manufacturers Association  
Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union  
Ernst Young  
Firth Industries  
Humes Pipeline Systems  
Industrial Research Ltd (IRL)  
Juken Nissho  
KPMG  
OMV New Zealand  
Rabobank  
Schering-Plough Ltd  
Shell New Zealand  
Shell Todd Oil Services  
South Pacific Tyres  
Stagecoach  
Telecom New Zealand  
Te Runanga O Raukawa  
Transfield Worley  
TVNZ  
Westgate (Port of Taranaki)

## **Public Sector:**

Accident Compensation Corporation  
Civil Aviation Authority  
Department of Internal Affairs  
Department of Labour – OSH Services  
HORT Research  
Maritime Safety Authority  
Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry - NCDI  
New Zealand Fire Service  
New Zealand Police  
Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives  
Parliamentary Services  
Te Papa – Museum of New Zealand  
Upper Hutt City Council  
Wairarapa District Health Board

## **UK Organisations**

Aker Kvaerner  
BHP Billiton  
Bluewater  
BP (Drilling team)  
Diamond Drilling  
Halliburton Manufacturing  
Shell Expro  
Step Change in Safety  
Technip  
Total  
Wood Group  
KCA Deutag