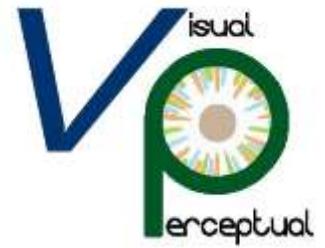


Refining Performance



Refining performance is something we all do all of the time; however, how we do this is a mystery to most.



Refined performance can be defined as: performance where impurities or unwanted elements have been removed and; where performance is developed or improved upon, so as to be precise or subtle. It is all about honing performance, by identifying and correcting any speed bumps within it. However, in order to gain the full benefits of refined performance, we need to go beyond a superficial understanding of how we do this, beyond ideas that practice will make perfect, and understand how we are doing this at the point it originates from.

Since the day we were born, we have been refining our performance, however, how we do this is a rather remarkable process. While most of us may believe that we just need to practice, in order to get better at something, we don't actually have to look far to discover that we have to have the capacity to perform the task in the first instance, or it won't matter how much we practice.

Core Performance

How we generate our performance is a very interesting process, but it is not something we can generally see. When we look at someone performing an everyday tasks, there is a phenomenal amount of information we are processing to see what we are seeing. This information and how it is structured actually obscures our ability to see beyond it. We are left looking at an image without being able to see beyond it, to discover how it was created.

Whatever action we perform in the world, was performed on the basis of something we perceived. It turns out that how we perceive and how we generate any action, utilises the exact same skills and, that by enhancing our perceptual performance, we will also enhance the quality of the actions we perform.

Perception is basically a process of taking sensory information in and making sense of it; however in order to do this things get a bit more technical.

We have to:

- Engage with a field of undifferentiated sensory information (basically sensory noise)
- Receive that sensory information through our senses
- Form inter-relationships or connections between the individual pieces of sensory information, in order to make sense of them.

The consequence of forming these inter-relationships is that patterns of information naturally coalesce or come together, as the objects we perceive and have named.

The naming of objects is not a part of perception, it is a function of mind and this marks a point of demarcation between, what is our experience of life (which we perceive), and what we think about our experience.

Perception is experiential and so is performance, and it is critical that we remain in these experiential states (rather than jumping to mind), whilst remaining aware, if we do want to refine our performance to the greatest degree possible.

To understand something of the mechanism by which we do refine our performance, things continue to be somewhat complex. I have outlined below, the relationship between perception and performance.

Our performance is generated and refined experientially. Ultimately, it won't matter how much we think about what we are doing, it all comes down to being able to get out of our heads and into the experience.

Performance has a deeply intimate and reciprocal relationship to perception and **cannot be refined independently of perception; it can only be refined by refining perception.** Action always follows or occurs after and as a consequence of perception.

AND perception cannot be refined independently of performance, because our performance (actions in and on the world) changes the landscape of our perceptions.



In perception: we are taking sensory information in, processing it (forming inter-relationships) and integrating it (forming patterns of information.)

In performance: we are generating integrated (experiential) patterns of task performance (by forming inter-relationships and constructing patterns of performance) and expressing them in the world.

As the information in our environment changes, it must be perceived so that we can respond to it appropriately; consequently an ongoing chain of performance is established, of perception leading to action or performance, which impacts on perception, which impacts on performance.

All refined performance is by nature integrated performance, and is spontaneous, instantaneous, highly accurate, efficient and effective and occurs without us ever thinking about it. However, the very thing that has the greatest capacity to disrupt our performance is our mind and its incessant thinking. Developing the means of co-existing with mind and thought, without resisting or going to war with it, is crucial in truly refining performance

The following is an outline of the interplay that exists between perception and performance, and how this impacts on the results we achieve.

The quality of our performance is entirely dependent upon the volume of sensory information we can process and integrate in any one moment. The more complex or demanding a task is, the more sensory information it contains.

Any sensory information left out of our perceptual performance will be left out of any and all task performance, with our overall performance diminishing as a consequence.

Any diminishment in **perceiving** will equate with a diminishment in **performance**.

CONVERSELY,

Any refinement in **perception** equates with a refinement in **performance**.

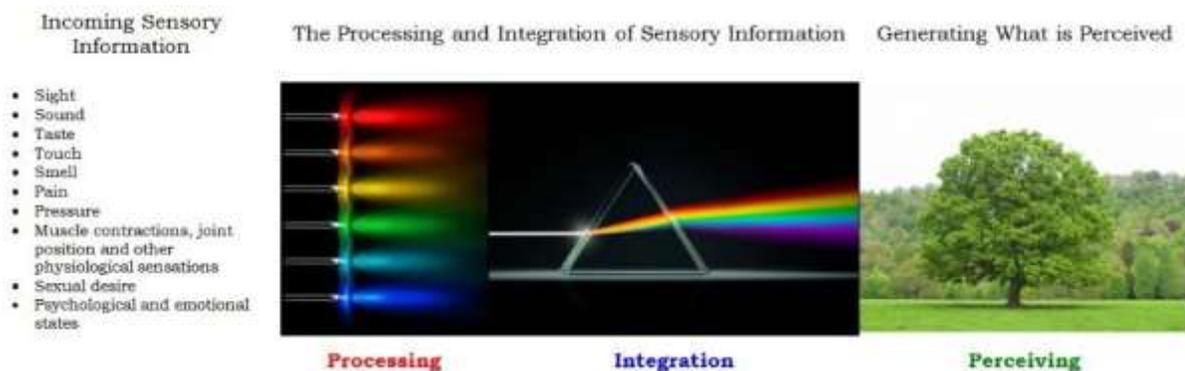


What is at the Core of this Refinement?



The more sensory information we can effectively and efficiently process, the more effective and efficient our performance becomes.

The level of our performance and its refinement comes down to the volume of sensory



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information we can process in any one moment. Any disruption in perception, regardless of cause, will always result in a decline in performance. It's really very simple, if you can increase the volume of sensory loading you can deal with in any moment, whilst remaining aware, calm, attentive, open and allowing, then performance will improve relative to this. There are two aspects required to do this:

1. Ensuring the core skills of both perceptual performance and integrated task performance are intact and fully functional.
2. Increasing the capacity to process large volumes of sensory information, and developing the capacity to remain aware, calm, attentive, open and allowing at all times ie; allowing our innate capacities to do what they do best and getting ourselves out of the way.

It is only by engaging with our performance at the subtle level it arises from that we can begin to understand how we do what we do and to modify this. All that science and research can never replace our own awareness of our own experience, and we see this in the truly great performers – calm, relaxed, intensely focused and aware.

In working at these subtle levels, the role of coach, trainer or specialist is to keep us on track, assisting us to be aware of our blind spots, when we are avoiding something, when we can change or improve upon something, and providing the means of addressing these things as they arise. However, I work with a lot of people, who have are attempting to manage, control, contain or avoid their experiences and it is obvious this doesn't work for them. It may have worked in the beginning but, ultimately, it is the same as blocking up the safety release valve on a gas tank; the pressure is only going to keep on building until it makes itself known in no uncertain circumstances, usually disrupting our performance at the very moment we don't want this to happen.

While the core of our performance may reside within our perceptual performance, our psychological and emotional status has the greatest capacity to disrupt it all, before anything else ever does and it becomes incredibly important to understand how the dynamic of our humanness is actually formed, so we can address these issues at their inception.

I am acutely aware that diminished physical performance often occurs, because we are attempting to bypass the consequence of a psychological or emotional pattern held in the body. These patterns result in contractions and constrictions, meaning the full physical capacity cannot be accessed or utilised. It also means that injuries are far more likely to occur in these areas. I've seen the consequences of clients attempting to avoid their inner states in most areas of life. Those that do the best in improving upon performance are the ones who can become as a Zen Master. Awareness is the key; become aware of what you are doing and how, and what is disrupting performance



Do this at a very subtle level, and change is inevitable and profound



Reciprocity, Perception and Performance



Our performance chains have an origin (in performance), are links and express



exists in chains. All (in perceptual) is comprised of various elements that exist themselves in the world



by way of the actions we perform. That performance we see is the consequence of an emergent process, arising from the point at which we are perceiving this world and everything in it, and cumulating in the actions we take as a result.

What we are seeing in the performance of those everyday tasks, is the consequence of layer upon layer upon layer of sensory information, interwoven with some very specific skills, abilities and processes, scaffolded together as

our task performance. Added to this, is the reality that everything we do right now is consequence of absolutely everything we have ever performed previously and how we have refined this. It is absolutely true that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, because that combining together of all of our integrated performance, in a staggering variety of ways always produces some incredibly outcomes. We may take our everyday performance for granted but it is truly a spectacular feat.



Our task performance is the cumulation of what we perceive, interwoven with the refinement of every movement and action we have generated from the moment of birth and beyond.

Walking and running began with the first kick of our leg, as a foetus in the womb and it has never left us; it was only ever added to. Walking or running did not occur in isolation, nor are they just a simple action. They are the consequence of considerable refinement of performance over time, scaffolded together with a phenomenal amount of sensory information and experience.

Our performance is constructed of fractals, layer upon layer of different levels of performance; and, permeating throughout all these levels, are the same fundamental skills, abilities and process. The origin of our performance is always the same; it does not change over time. The only variance is the faculty of performance, through which the end result is expressed eg; running, talking, writing, skiing, etc.

The most primary of these underpinning skills remains the ability to form inter-relationships between pieces of sensory information. This allows us to construct the objects we perceive and to make sense of this relative world of ours ie: how objects relate to one another, distance, orientation, speed, height, etc.



The natural consequence of forming inter-relationships is that patterns of information then coalesce out of an undifferentiated sensory soup. The world we see is the consequence of the patterns within patterns within patterns within patterns we have constructed. Just look at the trees in the distance. As we move closer we begin to discern individual tree tops. The closer we get, the more defined the patterns become; we can identify trunks, branches, leaves and flowers. Without our capacity to form inter-relationships none of this would ever happen.



In everything we do and every action we take, there is a very clear process involved:

- We are taking sensory information,
- processing it (forming inter-relationships) and,
- constructing patterns out of it (integrating that information and perceiving objects)
- And then acting upon this.

All actions we ever perform are performed on the basis of something we perceived. This requires:

- the formation of inter-relationships,
- allowing the patterns of movements to coalesce
- allowing the action to be performed

Perception and performance are so intimately linked that it is impossible to separate them, and yet, one comprises of processing sensory information coming in, and the other is all about generating integrated task performance going out.

Refinement becomes a matter of improving upon those processes of perception and performance, and on increasing the capacity of those processes to deal with ever increasing volumes of sensory information, without collapsing under the loading.

The only difference between the elite athlete and their capacity to deal with sensory loading, and the child struggling at school and their capacity, is whether or not the basic skill structure is intact and fully functional. When the basic perceptual capacity is damaged, the capacity to deal with sensory loading is naturally diminished and we go into sensory overload. However, the athlete who becomes overwhelmed in moments of high sensory loading is also going into sensory overload; and it is not just sensory information that can do this but all felt experiences, including pain and our psychological and emotional responses.

Ultimately, the refinement of performance involves sending clients into a controlled degree of sensory overload. Perceptual performance must be challenged enough to require it to respond



and adapt. If a client does not come out of a session feeling like their brain has been in a blender, they haven't been challenged enough.

Because our focus is on the client becoming aware of what is going on in every moment of their performance, there is an inherent requirement that they are also aware of their psychological and emotional states at all times; and actually engage with those responses in a very specific way. Everything must work in harmony (the absolute definition of functional), because of that potential for our psychological and emotional states to send us into sensory overload when it does not. It is critical to, not only be aware of all felt experiences at all times, but to also be aware of what happens when we attempt to avoid or distract ourselves from what is going on right now. When we get ahead of the game and are racing and efforting to get somewhere, without being aware of what we are doing to get there, we end up on the hamster wheel of life – rushing and rushing, efforting and efforting and going exactly nowhere. It is crucial to understand our underlying motivations and beliefs, along with our reactions and responses if we are going to understand exactly how they disrupt our performance. It has been my continued and ongoing experience that:

Our psychological and emotional states will disrupt our task performance before anything else will.

Consequently, it doesn't matter whether the client is a child struggling in school, an elite athlete or an everyday person wondering what is holding them back in life, we must deal with the entirety of the person and do so at a level within their performance that will have a lasting impact. Interestingly, the whole visual perceptual evaluation process has evolved in such a way that the client's total dynamic is revealed – how they are engaging in and performing a task at that very subtle level, and what their psychological and emotional responses are when challenged in various ways. As a tool for self-discovery, it is truly amazing, but don't think for a moment that I am taking credit for thinking it all up. The visual perceptual performance process used here have always had a life of their own and evolved in ways I could not have imagined if I had even tried. Fundamentally, pretty much everything about the client and their performance is revealed, and it is a fantastic tool for doing exactly that, as well as providing the means for correcting performance and responses, as required.

Because this is a clinically based program, the first step is to determine a client's level of performance, so it won't matter who you are and why you have come to see us, the process is the same. We have to find every client's beginning point and that involves getting down beside each and every client and discovering what they are doing and how they are doing it. Changing something at this level can and does produce profound results, rippling throughout a client's life, and often in ways that cannot be defined or put into words. Over the years, I have had numerous telephone calls several days after a session, from clients



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telling me how much their life has changed as a consequence of one visual perceptual session and how amazing these changes have been. Suddenly life has got a whole lot easier and simpler and it's always wonderful to hear these stories.

In the end it is all about refining a client's performance and that is a very individual thing, so I would encourage you to ask yourself what you want and what is holding you back, and to consider that the **VisualPerceptual** Programs can open new doors for you or someone you care about.

Visit the website at <http://www.visualperceptual.com> to discover what we have to offer.

Welcome to my world, the world of visual perceptual performance

Natoya Rose
Occupational Therapist



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