

# The Paralyzing Myth of Bad Habits Not Yet Learned and How to Conquer What's Real

Recently took up the game of golf. I have three sons, so we all took lessons together. How did I get to be 41 and never step foot on a driving range?

Its a long story, but part of it was because of a myth which applies equally well to PDR.

Here it is. 'If you want to learn right you must take lessons, or you will pick up lots of bad habits.'

So, I took lessons.  
Worth it? Absolutely.

## **Three Keys**

As a teacher, I believe there are three key elements to learning. Honesty, Hunger, and Humility.

First two, usually easy.  
Hunger is desire to learn, honesty is the understanding you don't know yet what you don't know. It can be easy to lose this, but usually the evidence slaps you.  
The instructor just made it look easy, you struggle with the same move. Keeps you honest.  
Humility? This one's tough, and seems to be getting tougher. Perhaps its the

understanding you reach mid life, that, "Hey, I'm self taught at everything." True, but this is a subject for another newsletter.

I commend my golf instructor for recognizing my loss of humility. About our 4th group session with me and the boys, I had the basics down. So he moved to tweaking my swing, and warning about bad habits. By the 5th session, he could sense I wasn't really wanting the criticism right then. I was happy just making contact with the ball.

I had reached the point where it was not fun any more.

Its like teaching a child to make a snowflake from paper. They fold and they cut, but the trick is to let them unfold it quick enough to dazzle them, to keep their interest.

Isn't this true of any endeavor?

We don't really want to learn the thing.  
We want to do the thing!

Its why magic pills sell so well. We want the result not the pain.

So it was for me with golf. It was time to play.

I've always admired Tiger Woods and his achievements. He is undoubtedly one of the best, yet a few years ago, he decided to tweak his swing.

Even being on top, he took lessons and asked for critiques.

You know it killed his game? At least for a while.

He knew it would, and I admire his sacrifice for improvement.

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For me, though, this only reinforced the false belief about bad habits. Surely Tiger fell into a few or he would see no need to reinvent his swing, right?

How many people fear learning a new thing for this reason? How many watch from the sidelines when they could join in and have a good time with what they know.

Myths are cruel this way.

Consider this. Tiger did not let an imperfect swing stop him from picking up a club. Or playing the game. Or winning multiple championships.

Nor did he make the decision to drop those bad habits until he was ready. It was not a lack of awareness, for you know he's been a big target for many years. Lots of people give him unsolicited critiques.

I for one, am glad Tiger keeps swinging away.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm glad I took instruction up front with golf. I learned some rules and techniques which help a great deal.

But when I began to play with people better and more experienced, I saw it. Yep. Gross violations of what good golf is and how its supposed to be played.

Fortunately, etiquette requires silence near the tee box. I saw guys line up so wrong, I was looking for a tree to shield me from the wild shot about to go off.

Instead, the ball would fly 300 plus yards and land right on the fairway.

Then, I began to hear stories of famous players who clearly used "wrong" methods, or bad habits. Yet they still won major tournaments.

Still, the fear created by this urban myth keeps people from moving, trying new challenges.

'If you don't learn it right, you reinforce bad habits'.

Kept me from starting golf for 41 years. Nonsense.

The only true bad habit is to not practice. To not start because of irrational fears.

Golf may well be the perfect metaphor for PDR.

They both have fundamentals which can make or break you.

Both are cruel about making you acutely aware of where your skills need sharpening.

Both activities allow success but never a complete confidence you are the best you can be. Tiger hits a shot and falls down a stroke on the next hole. Comes away with, "Gotta get better."

You fix a dent, look it over, and think, "Wonder if that could have been smoother? Could I have done it faster?" Or worst of all, "Bet there's another tech who could have waxed me on this dent."

Golf and PDR are games you play against yourself. Sure they compare scores and you can compete on a dent, but its you against you.

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My point here is to keep you from getting paralyzed for fear of what you do not know.

There is a well known PDR instructor who will tell you to stop practicing. 'Relax, when you come here we'll begin fresh. Get rid of your bad habits.'

If this were good advice, no one could do PDR.

What do you mean?

A whole industry was born from guys who were willing to practice. Guys with the guts to say, "If he can do it so can I!" Stopping? Quit practicing? Never even crossed their minds.

Why tell students to quit practicing then?

Its called "Not your fault marketing".

'Its not your fault, I know you are struggling, its the way you were trained. Your instructor makes a lot of mistakes'. He starts with his arm around your shoulder and ends with it in your wallet. He told you what you wanted to hear. You don't like practicing. You want to stop. Million other things you could be doing which are much more fun. Things you are good at. Like video games or watching TV.

Let me ask you, what do you suppose he will tell you to do when you leave his training?

You betcha. Go home and practice. You're smart enough to recognize a con when you see it.

Can you imagine a golf coach telling Tiger, "look, I think we can fix you, but you need to stay off the course till we can get together."

A good trainer realizes the fundamentals of dent repair are just a foundation. These you can practice at home. It is why I will not train someone who has not started practicing in advance. I do not run a day camp for PDR.

Get kindergarten and elementary down, and I'll put you through secondary so fast you'll be glad you came.

Same with golf. I am sore in muscles I did not know existed. If I quit practicing, how would those muscles develop?

With PDR, there are stabilizer muscles which must be developed for you to hold yourself in position and on the money spot of the dent.

### **Bad Habits?**

Still, when someone comes for PDR training with me one on one, I have spotted a few common issues which can limit your success.

I'll cover these now and tell you how to overcome them on your own.

### **Light placement.**

This is one thing you will want to take ownership of. What I mean is, prove to yourself by trying different light positions.

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Big thumb rule - most techs put the light at too high of an angle for accurate reading.

The illusion comes from what looks like accurate placement of your tip as you see the metal move.

Trouble is, you are not seeing the movement quick enough, before it makes a high. As can be seen in the illustration, lowering the angle allows you to look across the plane of the panel better.

You can prove this to yourself in good metal. Make a push with a high angled light and then with the light set at a low angle. Which shows up faster?

Comes in handy for glue pulling as well, especially when looking for points of resistance and knocking down.

How do you know where to tap next?

What's the highest spot?

Without a low angled light and your head also very low you're just not certain.

Craning your neck with a low angled light will make you sore at the end of the day.

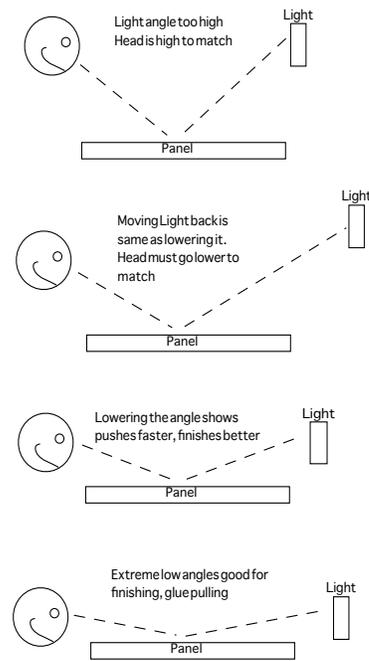
But your speed and accuracy will greatly improve.

A low angled light is also the key to removing the waves which are visible from far away.

Many of you ask why it is when you step back you can still see the dent just worked?

Does it make sense that when you step back, you are lowering the angle even

more?



If only you were Inspector Gadget with telescopic arms you could work from back here.

You're not an Orangutan with knuckles dragging the ground either, so what can you do?

This is where the long hammers come in handy. Often the wave you see after repair is an eyebrow or high spot.

Now that you've moved to an extreme low angle, you can still work it with the hammers from way back.

Why do my dents look like orange peel when I'm done?

This question can also be answered with the light angle. Too many techs find a

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favorite angle and look for it each time as if it were the one light setting to use. Far better is it to change the angle multiple times during repair.

Once your psyche absorbs this you'll eat it up.

Using natural reflection from a far off source can really help here too.

If you're finding texture in your dents and you feel it could be better, try this.

This is really a hybrid of the low angle, but its achieved by maintaining a medium height, while moving the light farther back, away from you.

This makes the light smaller and easier to read the texture. You'll still lower your head, but you've increased the resolution of your light. Now you should see the orange peel in the paint as well as in your dent.

### **The right push**

Creative light angle selection also helps with another problem area, pushing too hard at the beginning of the repair and too soft at the end.

The resistance or feedback from the metal changes all through the repair. This is why we listen close to what our eyes are telling us.

You know already a dent will be stiffer at the beginning, but I've actually found an increase in resistance as I'm finishing up on some cars.

Using a lower light angle will help you see the tip movement which signals you've just made a holding push.

### **The head bob**

Though I don't move my head near as much as I once did when using just the stripe, I still move.

When training folks in person, I've seen a locked neck, almost as if they are afraid to move and have to look for it again.

The head bob is what gives you the power of comparison.

Whether fog, sprayed fog, line board or stripe, you still want to "drag" it through the dent by bobbing your head just a little.

All you are doing is raising and lowering your eyes. But since your eyes are in your head and just along for the ride, we call it head bobbing.

PDR is a comparison game. Good to the bad, make this look like that as much as you can.

### **Holding the knock down**

There is a habit you can work on which will make you lightning fast as you knock down.

The challenge here is striking then reading, then going back to the same spot and repeating.

The secret is to use the area of your hand on the outside of your palm, pinky finger side. When you rest this on the panel and keep it there, you will find you can pivot the knock down up and down and come right back with little effort.

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This will especially help you when knocking down glue pull highs.

First, it gives you a very stable mount point and you have a firm hold on your knock down. You'll find it easier to maintain perpendicular to the panel and minimize slide outs and marking the panel.

Two, its fast because the movement is really just a roll of your hand to the outside, keeping the outside of the palm resting on the panel.

Three, when you roll back down for another strike, your knockdown is still in place and you naturally put it right back with ease.

### **Bad habits in business**

I believe you should do business on your terms. You pick your customers, you tell them how you want to be dealt with. They will tell you too, but a great deal more control lies in your hands than you might believe.

Free estimates can eat up your time, but the power of reciprocity is in your favor. Still people take advantage. This is doubly bad for body shops.

An estimator takes the time to write a conventional estimate for collision, keys it into the software program, takes digital pictures, a minimum of about 15 minutes. Some people are shoppers, and have been told to get three estimates. So they do.

One body shop handles this by requiring appointments.

When they call they are asked to schedule. No big deal.

When they walk in wanting an estimate right then, they are disappointed. Now they meet the gatekeeper. If you have a good one, they can make you tons of money. But they need to have some people skills.

A little empathy goes a long way. And your policy has a purpose, but it also is a let down. I have seen time after time the receptionist run off customers. She's so mean, I'm embarrassed to be in there when it happens. She'll even turn to me and say, "I don't give a \$%\$".

So, the habit of delegating is good, giving it away without accountability, not so much.

If you're going to make someone mad, let it be your policy and not your demeanor. What I mean is, you do get to choose whom and how you do business. You understand that your choice of how you do it is going to attract some and repel others. You don't want all the business in your area, nor could you even handle it. So be selective, but be polite.

Develop the habit of smiling to your customers. Even when you're on the phone. They can hear it.

This is really a no brainer, but the book "Buyology - The Real Reasons Why People Buy" confirms that people really do like doing business with people they like. And people like a smiling person.

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So I hope you can tell I'm smiling as I  
type this and you can sense how proud I  
am of what you have achieved thus far.

I hope you never let the fear of doing it  
wrong keep you from starting. Swing away.

Till next time,

*Jim Olson*

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