

THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

“Illusion of control is the tendency for human beings to believe they can control or at least influence outcomes that they demonstrably have no influence over”

Illusion of control is all about the relationship between the **conscious** and the **sub-conscious mind**.

To clearly understand, I am going to use an image to illustrate the concept. Picture an elephant with a rider. (as shown on the image below).



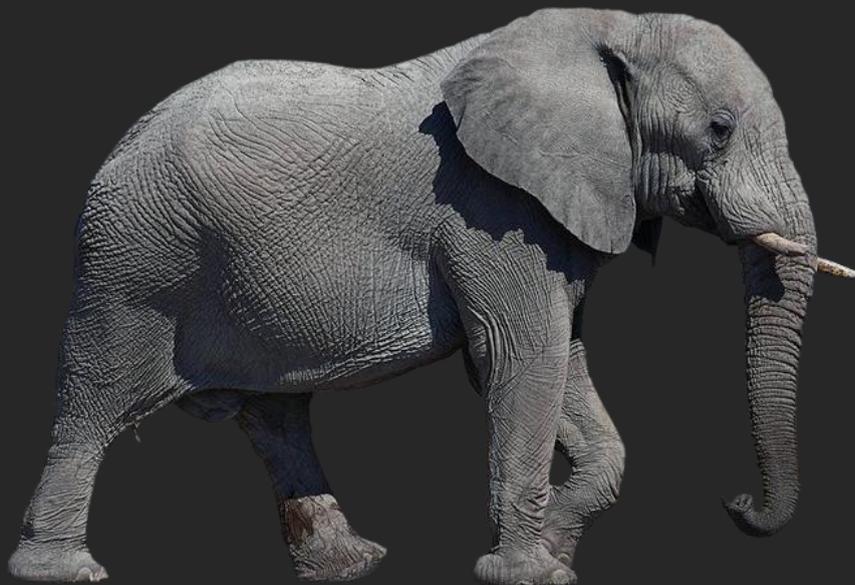
This is a tradition that comes from the far East, where boys are trained with the elephant at a very young age, where they are disciplined to move and work harmoniously with the elephant.

So, for this instance, the rider represents the **conscious mind** and the elephant represents the **sub-conscious mind**.



If we had to scale them, the elephant would have to be millions of times larger in comparison to the rider itself, because if we look at the capability of the **sub-conscious**, then it is by far, more capable than our **conscious mind**.

Our conscious mind can only handle approximately 5 to 9 bits of data per second, whereas the subconscious can cope with 20 million bits per second.



So, let us look at the difference between the rider and the elephant, or rather the **conscious** and the **sub-conscious mind**.

The main thing that differentiates the two, is that the rider believes that he is in control (which would be your conscious mind).

He is under the belief system that when he gives an instruction, the elephant will always obey his demand, but in fact, this is not always true.

The elephant works on external stimuli that is coming in, and that triggers automatic responses that are very strongly driven by our emotions and our “gut feel”, so even though the rider believes that he has control, he has very little influence on the elephant.

We are constantly exposed to external events that influence us and we respond based on the influence. Our thoughts, decisions and behaviors are all state dependent. This is the stimuli that causes responses in the elephant.

When we are in a good or controlled state we behave accordingly. Remember the last time you were in a bad state and how you responded/ behaved.

Like it or not the subconscious has an enormous impact on us.

If you look at the size of the elephant compared to the size of the rider, you can understand why in this metaphor, it represents the sub-conscious and conscious mind.

Let's assume that the rider decides he wants to go left, but the elephant wants to go right, where do you think the elephant will go?

The rider believes that he is in control of the process, but the elephant will always do whatever it wants to do in the end.

In reality, the rider really does not have as much influence over the elephant as the rider would like to believe. Your conscious mind has less influence on your subconscious than you might like to admit.



Let me use an example of John taking out a gym contract.

John noticed (conscious) that his body needs a remake. He watched social media that showed happy, successful people go to the gym, they look and feel great.



His emotions (subconscious) was triggered and stirred something inside of him. He wanted to understand this feeling and his conscious logic told him he needs to go to gym. So, John joins the gym and goes 6 times (conscious decision).

The morning of the 7th visit he decides to sleep in. According to John, he did so well the past 6 days, that he deserves this 1 day off.

I am certain you can see where this is going. 3 Months later John realizes that he has not been back to the gym.

Now he starts feeling bad. He has this voice in his head telling him that he is a lazy, undisciplined person. In fact, he starts to notice other areas of his life where this same lazy behavior has manifested. Within a few days John is depressed, anxious and frustrated.



Poor John.

His subconscious triggered an emotion, his conscious wanted to understand it and therefore made a decision based on the emotion. That was taking out the gym contract.

Then John acted on the decision 6 times, but ultimately that decision dissipated.

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You see, John never really wanted to go to the gym. He just wanted to feel better about himself and be happier, and the gym was an experience of pain and punishment. (Please note: this is an example. I know you go to the gym and love it)

Ultimately the decision not to go to the gym won. Simply because John responded to the stimuli in a way he thought is best, but he didn't really know what he wanted.

We are constantly making choices and decisions based on stimuli.



Recently I decided to buy my wife a new car. So off to the dealership I went and chose the car she wanted. Very excited that I am going to surprise her with a new car.

While the sales person was busy with the paperwork I perused the showroom floor. I noticed a flashy, hot and fast little model and asked if I could take it for a test drive while I was waiting for the paperwork.

While driving this little beauty my mind started to remember that the last time I did a long trip in my car, I think, that maybe, possibly, I heard a bad sound coming from the turbo. Understandably, that is very expensive to repair. The drivetrain, could have, possibly, maybe also started to act up. Now that could be very costly. Especially if something happens to both!

I ended up leaving with the hot little beauty of a car for me and not a new model for the wife. After all, it made financial sense. Or did it?



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External stimuli trigger an emotional response that arouses the subconscious and then allows it to make its own decisions.

Once that has happened the conscious asks “why and what just happened?”. It desperately attempts to understand and therefore creates (false) justification and motivation for the decisions and behaviors.

The reasons are simple. The rider looks at life completely differently, it wants to be structured, it constantly investigates the future, hypothesizes, plans ahead and often creates a strategy it wants to follow.

The elephant is always in the moment, the now. It creates internal movies and is filled with emotion. It is always aware of external stimuli and loves pleasure. The elephant prefers the path of least resistance.

It will make a decision very quickly and respond to whatever stimuli came in, so if the elephant would get a fright and run off, the rider will attempt to control the elephant but even if the rider believes he can, there is zero control because the elephant is going to do exactly what it wants to do, no matter what the situation.



It is important for us to realize that the rider does not have the control that he believes he does.

We need to see the role more as an “adviser” or think of it as propositioning the elephant. It’s more about suggesting to the elephant and then the elephant would decide to follow.

We don’t consciously think about the elephant per sei, we don’t go around thinking what our sub-conscious mind is thinking about.

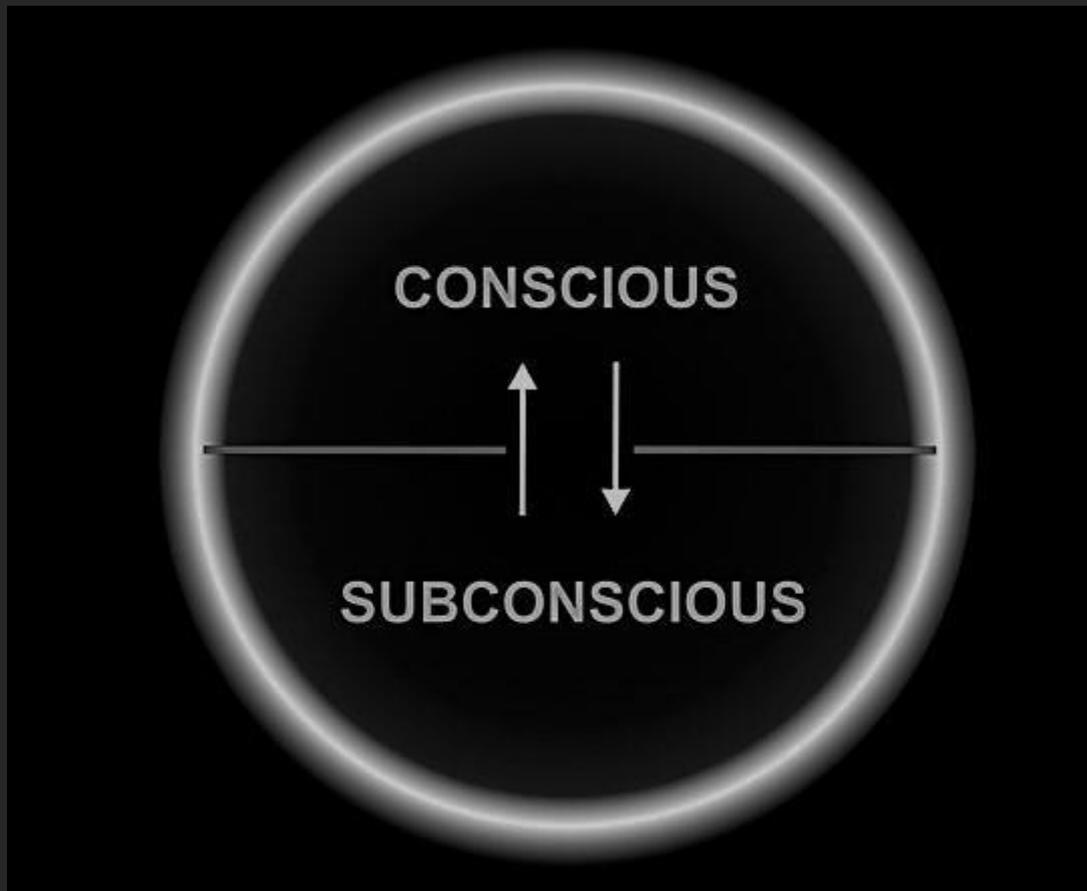
We live in this illusion where we are in control and we believe that the **sub-conscious** mind is aligned which is not the reality.



What would happen to your life if you could align you conscious and your subconscious to achieve the same goals and outcomes?

The critical part of coaching is to ensure that the rider and the elephant are in harmony and that they want the same thing, because should they ever compete, the elephant will win. So, it’s critical for us, as coaches to understand the difference between the conscious and the sub-conscious functionality that these are aligned.

The rider lives in its own world and in its own reality and it's a different one from the elephant. He has different needs and outcomes and it is of utmost important to understand these two. The rider also believes that he has control and that's why we call this section the Illusion of Control. The moment we realize that the sub-conscious is in control then we can start thinking differently about our sub-conscious programming.



Great Life Coaches work with the conscious and the subconscious in our clients. We understand that we are coaching both parts and not only one. That is the reason why, at Action Factory we teach Life Coaching and NLP in combination with each other.

We understand that as humans we have triggers. These triggers are the reasons we make choices and behave in certain ways. To satisfy the trigger, we build strategies in the hope that the outcome will be satisfactory.

As coaches it is our function to elicit the true reasons/triggers and align our client's strategies accordingly. This is the only way people can experience true fulfillment in life. Top performers around the world have great alignment.

Have you ever noticed that when you are doing something you REALLY enjoy; your focus and attention is great? The things we REALLY enjoy we do a lot better than the things we don't really enjoy. We are prepared to put in more energy and effort and yet we don't really get tired of it.

Well what if your career and your whole life was aligned to what you REALLY enjoy? Better yet, what if you were the catalyst to assist people to align perfectly and experience true bliss.

You can.



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