Noise

Contributed by Allan Besselink, PT, Dip.MDT
Tuesday, 08 July 2008
Last Updated Wednesday, 09 July 2008

It's a noisy world we live in.

Â

"Noise" is not just of the "sound" variety. We are bombarded with sensory information all day long. It is a 24/7 process. We live in a world of data. Our senses take in so much data about the world around us that we can't even process all of it. You can't get away from information. Some have even gone so far as to call it "information overload".

Â

And I can't agree more.

Â

Why even discuss noise? It was brought to my attention by a client's comments to me yesterday. He remarked that in the time I have known him, I've always been able to "filter out the noise of the situation" to find solutions - as a PT and as a coach.

Shortly thereafter, as serendipity would have it, I wandered upon an article that mentioned the Pareto principle - which states that 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. This got me thinking about some things.

Â

It's all about the noise.

Â

The ability to get to the root of a problem is to see the 20% clearly (that which typically accounts for 80% of the effects, remember) and find a way to filter out the other 80% (that accounts for just 20% of the effects). This brought to mind a clinical concept that former McKenzie Diploma program instructor David Poulter always used to tell us - the importance of finding "the essence of the problem". What we're trying to do to truly be effective is to remove all of the extraneous factors and data - the noise in the situation.

Â

But here's the thing - so many people are desperately trying to get more data, more information, with the thought that the solution lies in more options created by more data. In many ways, all it's doing is creating more noise. Let's look at a few examples.

Â

The goal of many clinicians is to collect more clinical data ... to make (better) decisions. But as you add more data, much of it is unreliable, invalid, and thus becomes a mess to try and understand and process. The net result is the ineffective

micromanagement of the situation - perhaps even driven by the minutiae and oftentimes putting the treatment cart before the diagnostic horse.

Â

The goal of the patient has gradually evolved as well. For years, patients would "go to the doctor to get a diagnosis". It has evolved into a multifaceted process of collecting more information about the signs and symptoms reflective of their problem ... from any and all sources available (and information and opinion is readily available on the Internet!). Of course, the more opinions you have, the less sense everything makes, producing fewer effective solutions and actually creating more confusion in how to actually resolve the problem.

Â

All we're doing is creating more noise.

Â

I would propose that our primary daily task - in our personal and professional lives - should be to remove or diminish the noise from our world. Noise limits our capacity to thrive, limits our potential, and stifles our performance. When we try hard at something, when we are fighting the noise, we are challenged and perhaps uncomfortable in doing so. When we simply just "let it go" and "flow", then suddenly we're moving forward. Some call it "flow", some call it "Zen", some call it "being". It's about "less effort, greater impact". It's getting to the essence of our world.

Â