

## Why Oh Why Oh Why Oh Why Oh Why?

Firstly, I have to say that the story about the Lincoln Memorial is something I found whilst trawling the web. It's a true story apparently.

When I read it the thought just struck me that it is quite appropriate to archery. Have a read and see if this applies to you or someone you know.

*The easiest tool for determining root cause is the 5-Why's. It is the process of repeating the question Why? five times, more or less, until you have found the root cause.*

*The Lincoln Memorial provides an excellent example. There was excessive wear on the Lincoln Memorial from all the cleaning it was getting because of bird droppings. The Park Service experimented with different cleaners and brushes to cut down on the wear.*

*That didn't work so they looked at it differently and asked "Why are we cleaning it so much?"  
Answer - Because of all the bird droppings.*

*They put up nets to keep the birds out and it worked some but not well enough and the tourists complained about them. They went one step further and asked "Why do we have so many birds coming to this monument?"*

*After studying it they determined it was because of the insects that swarmed the monument in the evenings. They tried different types of insecticides but nothing seemed to work for long. So they asked "Why do we have so many insects swarming the monument?"*

*They determined the bright lights that illuminated the monument in the evenings were drawing the insects. They found out that by turning on the lights one hour later each evening they could eliminate more than ninety percent of the insects and the resulting bird droppings. The brushes and cleaners, nets and insecticides all addressed symptoms of the root cause. The root cause was the lighting and once it was addressed the problem went away.*

We often work with archers who tell us, for example that they think they have a problem with their release. And nine times out of ten they are correct. So they set about trying to sort out their release. And what we end up with is a release that looks OK at first glance but is actually so "forced" that the arrow has little or no chance of going where it was aimed.

So rather than just try and "fix" the release we should be asking ourselves why it is such a problem. And don't think it's just releasing that this works for. It works for pretty much everything. You just need to think about it a bit.

Quite a few years ago when I actually had time to shoot, I realised that I had one of these forced releases so I took a bit of time to ask myself "Why???"

So out came the video camera and the result was two minutes of film that changed my shooting enormously.

The process went like this.

Q. Why is my release so forced?

A. Because I had loads of tension in my draw side forearm

Q. Why did I have loads of tension in my draw side forearm?

A. Because I wasn't using my back effectively to draw/hold

Q. Why couldn't I use my back effectively?

A. Because my draw side shoulder was too high.

Q. Why was my draw side shoulder too high?

A. Because my "prep Line" (straight line between my elbow, draw hand and pressure point on the grip) wasn't straight at the start of the shot. This caused me to raise my elbow at full draw to get it somewhere near level and straight. This in turn caused my draw shoulder to rise.

Q. Why was my prep line not straight at the start of the shot?

A. Because I was bending at the waist and leaning towards the target before I drew.

Q. Why was I doing this?

A. Because the draw weight was too heavy and I had too much / stabiliser weight. (This was back in the days when more stabiliser weight was thought to mean more tens). This made me lean forwards to keep me from supporting the bow weight for too long. It also made me stand up straight and draw at the same time.

So what I did was drop a bit of stabiliser weight and reduce draw weight by a couple of pounds.

The result was that I stood taller before I raised the bow. My prep line was straight at the start of the shot. My draw side shoulder was lower. I could then engage the correct back muscles more effectively. By doing this I could release a lot of the tension in my draw side forearm. This meant I could relax my fingers more easily. This resulted in a release that, although not perfect, was more like a good release should be. Groups tightened up and I wasn't nearly so tired at the end of the session.

And all this from taking a bit of mass weight from the bow.

So what I suppose I am trying to say is that instead of looking at the bit that's causing you trouble and trying to fix it - ask yourself why. What is causing this problem? It may not be easy to see at first and you may need someone (a coach??) to help you analyse what's going on.

Archery is not just about a number of individual tasks and movements. It's about how all those tasks fit together. It's about cause and effect.

And most of all it's about asking yourself "WHY???"