

The Value of a Clear Vision for Our Future

HANG GLIDING LESSONS

By Ann Hancock

Eco.logic • Sonoma West Times and News • May 1999

Skillful hang gliding pilots employ techniques that can show us how to reach the world for which we yearn—one that is beautiful, secure, healthy, fair and promises to remain so for our children's children.

In hang gliding, people jump off cliffs on single-person kites and glide down to safe landing spots below. The first lesson in this sport is to look where you want to land. Andrew Whitehill, a dashing, vivacious man and hang gliding instructor for 21 years, expands on this lesson in "Vision for the Future," source of the following excerpts.

"Hang gliding is really simple. People, however, are complicated. So, here is my basic philosophy of teaching

"First, I premise each lesson by defining the objectives – in order of importance:

- We are going to be very careful
- We are going to have fun
- We are going to learn some things.

The logic of this is justified when we consider that if we are not very careful, we will probably not have much fun. If we don't have much fun, we will not be motivated to learn.

So, rather than focus on or ignore ecological problems, scholars as well as hang gliding pilots point to a better strategy: Defining and holding a clear vision is key for moving toward a desired goal.

"Learning requires moving from the comfort zone of familiarity to the learning zone of challenge without entering the panic zone where

fear blinds us, we lose vision and learning ceases. So, keep it simple, one new skill at a time.

"Learning requires moving from the comfort zone of familiarity to the learning zone of challenge without entering the panic zone where fear blinds us, we lose vision and learning ceases."

Avoid multiple unknowns or variables. Start slow, stay low and master basic skills through practice and repetition. Here is the formula for flight: Look where you want to go, relax your grip, start moving, keep your eyes on target, relax and smile. Tinkerbell suggests that we think a happy thought.

"In hang gliding we have a concept called target fixation or object magnetization. Pilots often refer to this phenomenon as tree suck. It is, in effect, the law of directional orientation based on the object of attention. It is not enough to simply say, Don't look at the tree. On the contrary, it is very important to be aware of the tree, but keep the focus of attention on the intended target. Quite simply, you go where you look. So look where you want to go.

"In teaching, I like to keep the goals simple to understand and easily attainable. This reflects our general capacity to absorb new information and results in positive feedback upon realizing the goals. If we can keep an open mind about the possibilities, we can learn to fly."

Most agree that a real environmental threat exists. Indeed, even people in places around the

Continued . . .

