

Are you a Serial Studier?



There's a link between knowledge, dopamine and taking action, says CAM coach **Mark Shields**. What that means in practice is that "serial studiers" take limited action: a recipe for failure.

Cast your minds back to the chapter in *The CAM Coach* where Simon Martin and I talked about the percentage of CAM graduates making it successfully into private practice. The numbers are significantly low, much lower than the rate of success in other jobs and career paths.

We talk at length in the book about the reasons why CAM practitioners fail; and about the huge group of CAM graduates that don't even bother to set up in practice despite years of study.

One category of CAM students deserves more attention. And they are students, perpetual students. I am sure you've heard them described as "serial studiers" or "lifetime students". They always seem to be on a course and never seem to do anything afterwards.

I'm sure someone you know comes to mind as you read this. Maybe it applies, a little bit, even to you.

Addictive

People don't realise that researching for information and studying can be addictive.

Every time we research a new piece of information or get an answer to a question, we get a dopamine hit.

Dopamine, as I am sure you know, is part of the brain's reward and pleasure centres. Every time a serial studier learns something new, they get a dopamine hit and immediately feel great. The more they learn the better they feel, and the better they feel the more they want to learn.

Scary, isn't it? The cycle of learning,

learning more, and feeling good is all very well, but we are forgetting one missing ingredient: taking action! Serial studiers rarely put their knowledge to any practical use. They study, study and study some more, often trying something new for a while, then enrol themselves on another course to learn and study some more

The triangle of congruence

The right balance of education is important, however to be truly congruent, run a successful practice and get great results, true congruence means we need a fair balance between competence (education) and confidence (belief).

This is where a lot of practitioners fall down. In the CAM world there is a heavy bias towards competence and education, with less emphasis on fostering self-confidence and belief.

Imagine passing your driving test but not having the confidence to get into a car on your own and drive.

CAM practitioners are far more likely to take action when they are congruent, aligned, and have the right balance between knowledge and confidence.

Congruence ensures less internal resistance against taking action. Once you begin to take action you begin to get results, which in turn begins to motivate you and so on.

In fact it's the same for our clients. Educating them with your knowledge is one thing, however motivating them to take action is another. We'll come to this later.

Fear of taking action

The one common theme that stops people taking action is the fear of making mistakes, or the fear of failing. Serial studiers believe that if they just learn that one missing, vital piece of information, they'll be inoculated against making a mistake and they will never fail.

The limiting belief that making a mistake is "wrong" and that it inevitably leads to massive failure is, perversely, responsible for a lot of practitioners failing in practice and even more so failing to get positive results with clients.

Yet if you think about human evolution, it is obvious that as mammals we are designed both to make mistakes and equally to learn from those mistakes. That's how we make progress. The ability to make mistakes – and to live with not knowing everything – is an inbuilt part of us. It leads us to explore, to try new things, to find out by trial and error what works for us. Looked at that way, we could argue that attempting to do everything perfectly, never making a mistake, and being severely self-critical when we do so, is going directly against how we were evolutionary programmed.

Serial studiers need to think about this long and hard. Serial studying is a mistake!



About the author

Mark Shields, life coach, author, media expert and motivational speaker, is director of The Life Practice (www.lifepractice.co.uk; 01462 451473) and co-author with CAM editor Simon Martin of the new book *The CAM Coach*. For more info on CAM Coach workshops or to buy the book visit www.thecamcoach.com.