

## My Trophy Trout: Learning How to Fish Fall 1998

### Introduction

I have always had a great love for the outdoors. As a child, my family and I spent a great deal of time swimming, camping, and canoeing. In all of the time that I spent outdoors and around numerous streams and rivers, I had never attempted to fish. It always seemed too boring for me and I couldn't imagine myself spending hours on end waiting to catch an elusive fish. This negative attitude toward fishing emerged because I always considered myself clumsy and impatient. I seemed to be lacking the characteristics necessary to master the art of fishing. One day last summer, however, my perceptions of the past-time changed. I began to experiment with fishing occasionally and it finally fostered a true interest within me. This is the story of how I learned to fish.

### Learning to Fish

As I alluded to before, the most difficult obstacle that I had to overcome in order to successfully learn to fish were the negative myths that I held about myself. I had to make a conscious decision to ignore the ingrained ideas that I was too impatient and too uncoordinated. Until I was able to come to terms with these negative myths I could not develop the motivation that was necessary to learn this new skill. I was able to overcome these myths through a learning conversation (Harri-Augstein, 1991) that I had with an amateur fisherman. He was able to convince me that fishing was not about talent, it was about nature and the outdoors. It was about tuning in to nature and figuring out what it was all about. Once I thought about the art of fishing in these terms I was able to see fishing as something more than simply waiting around for a fish. This conversation made

fishing seem relevant to me for the first time in my life and with this newfound relevancy I was able to overcome my negative myths (Harri-Augstein, 1986) and try it out. I was ready to learn.

After deciding that I was willing to learn to fish, the next step was to find out how to do it. At this point I decided that I needed the help of a friend, and with his guidance I was able to learn the technique of fishing. The experience was extremely positive and the reason for this is because my friend allowed me to try out my own ideas. I had never realized how complex fishing could be. I soon found that there were different types of bait for different fish and different hooks for different fish and different knots that were used to tie on different hooks. In my ignorance, I had always assumed that you threw a hook into the water and waited for something to bite, but I found that I had to first decide what type of fish I wanted to catch and then “fish” accordingly. In other words what type of fish I wanted to catch determined every action that I would take. It would be impossible to cover every fishing technique for every fish in this paper (I only know three different methods anyway) and because of this I am going to focus the remainder of this paper on how I caught my largest fish, a rainbow trout.

The first thing that must be done in order to fish is to prepare the line. This consists of choosing a hook (or lure), tying the hook onto the line, and adding bait if necessary. My explorer (von Oech, 1986) found several ways to accomplish these things. It seems that my artist (von Oech, 1986) relied on activities that I already knew how to do in order to create ideas. For example in the case of tying the knot I attempted to picture the knot as a knot that would be tied into piece of thread. My artist (von Oech, 1986)

could picture the procedure perfectly, but my judge decided that this would never work with such a thick substance.

My explorer and my artist also had a great time choosing lures. I automatically went for the ones that were the prettiest or reminded me the most of jewelry. In the case of lure and hooks, however, my judge was assisted by the wisdom of my friend. He would either laugh at my lack of knowledge or occasionally let me try one out so that I would see for myself what worked and what did not. After much trial and error and outside input I finally came to understand that trout enjoy crickets, lures called green jiggers, and occasionally a good old fashioned worm.

Once I mastered the art of choosing a hook (or lure) and tying it on, my next obstacle to overcome was casting. I found this to be the most difficult aspect of learning my new task. Casting required a level of skill that I truly seemed to be lacking for quite some time. This learning experience was the one that called on my artist most frequently (von Oech, 1986). I had to invent several different approaches before I was able to solve the problem of casting. I began by trying to find something that casting was like (i.e. throwing a ball, serving a ball, pointing at someone, flinging something, etc.). It took me several attempts before I was able to find a successful connection. After creating all of these various pictures in my head my judge went through them and decided which ones most closely resembled the cast that my friend demonstrated (von Oech, 1986). After choosing the most likely candidates I settled upon all of the images that most closely resembled a flowing motion. Everything that was sharp, “flingy,” or un-smooth was ruled out. Once I had narrowed down the picture of the arm movements in my head into those that seemed to flow or glide I just started to try them out. After making this

connection between casting and gliding I was able to refine my method and after some practice I was able to cast with some success. This success was not continuous and I did manage to catch my fair share of trees, but with each failed attempt my judge learned from its mistakes and further refined my methods. Eventually I would make the perfect cast, using the perfect bait (a green jigger) into the perfect spot and catch a beautiful 19-inch rainbow trout in the trophy trout section of the Eleven Point River.

My warrior was finally repaid for all of its perseverance. Failure after failure allowed my judge to refine my method and improve my technique and my warrior continued to implement these new techniques. The exhilaration of finally reeling in a five-pound fish was all of the thanks that my explorer, artist, judge, and warrior needed (von Oech, 1986). And just in case any of you may be wondering, I released the fish just after snapping a few quick pictures. I love the sport of fishing, but in this case the fish was too big for my friend and I to eat (we were camping so we could not have frozen the left-overs) and I definitely did not want a trout trophy on my wall, so I decided to release the fish. Having learned to fish and then being able to catch such an amazing fish was an amazingly rewarding experience. I have since become an avid fisherwoman and try to fish as often as possible. It is because I was able to overcome my negative personal myths (Harri-Augstein, 1991) that I was able to learn a new skill and a new task. I was able to learn a new hobby that will provide me with hours of relaxation and entertainment for years to come.

#### Teaching How to Tie a Lure

After my learning experience I felt fairly confident in my fishing abilities. I did not consider myself a master angler, but I did feel as though I could perform the task

without any outside help. This feeling of confidence was increased after I was able to teach a particular portion of the fishing experience to someone else. The opportunity to teach was not a planned experience, but it proved to be a very important experience for my friend and myself. I was fishing with several friends one afternoon and it happened that a particular friend and I were alone on one side of the lake. My friend had fished before, but she had never had to tie her own lure onto the line. She usually reserved this task for more experienced fishermen. As I have already mentioned, she and I were alone on one side of the lake and it just so happened that she caught her line on a tree branch and lost her lure. At this point we had two choices. One choice was to hike around to the other side of the lake in order to have someone else replace the lure. Our second choice was for me to replace the lure. Not wishing to waste time hiking around the large lake I decided that I would tie on the new lure. My friend then surprised me by asking if I could show her how to go about tying on the lure. She told me that she always hated having to find someone to do this for her and that she would really like to be able to do this herself. I agreed to show her how it was done.

It is at this point that I tested whether or not I had actually learned how to tie a lure. I thought that I knew how, but it was not until I successfully explained the process to her that I knew for sure that learning had actually taken place. I began my lesson by explaining that every time a lure is replaced, the fishing line should be checked for flaws that could possibly weaken the line. Once this was done I remembered the instructions that were given to me when I was learning this task. I began to repeat them almost verbatim. I told her that she first had to slip the line through the opening in the lure and tie a single knot (the kind you would make when tying your shoes) around the lure. Then

I told her that you take the dog for a walk around the tree (loop the end of the excess line around taunt line one time). After the dog goes for a walk around the tree, the dog then jumps into the lake (place the end of the loose line through the opening that was created by the last action). That was it. She pulled the line tight and the lure was secured in place. I was able to remember the story about the dog, and I felt that like me she would be able to remember the dog story better than remembering instructions about knot tying. I hoped that by teaching her in this manner she would be able to make a connection between the dog and the direction of the line movement. If she could do this then she would be able to remember how to tie the lure in place. After speaking with her several weeks later I was pleased to hear that she did remember the story of the dog and was able to tie her own lures. I successfully taught this component of fishing to my friend and as a result my confidence in my fishing ability soared. I could not only fish, but I could also teach others to fish. I had mastered a task that only months before I had never even attempted. The learning experience had been a complete success.

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