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CHAPTER TWO



THE PROCESS OF SENSORY EXPERIENCE

As living creatures we continue to exist because we successfully respond to our changing environments. We develop ingenious methods to gather, understand, and use information about our world. Once we receive information from our environment we assess it, make a decision about what to do, and take action. Each stage depends upon the previous: without information being received, there is nothing to assess; without assessment, decisions cannot be made; without decisions there is no action; without action there is no life.

This process of experience occurs over years or in a fraction of a second. Imagine standing next to someone striking a match. Our senses gather sensations and transfer them to the brain instantaneously undergoing the following steps:

1. *Sensory experience*: We hear the sound, see the glow, smell the sulfur, and feel the heat.
2. *Perception*: We blend all the relevant information into a single event.
3. *Attention*: We choose those perceptions on which we will concentrate.

CHAPTER FIVE



MEMORY AND ACTION

The preliminary determiner of whether an event or concept will be remembered seems to be the type of processing given to it at the time it is experienced. If the information was integrated into a schemata or action, it is likely to be remembered. Otherwise it is not.¹

The Memory Process

Memory involves the encoding of incoming information for storage and its subsequent retrieval. The retrieval of memories is essential for recognizing new information and preparing it for storage. Experiences create memories; memories help modify and recognize experiences. We are not born with a bank of memories; we learn all our perceptions, we form our memories.

You will recall (as you retrieve from your memory!) that learning begins in infancy. At this time the “storage bins” of memory begin filling. The infant’s world is full of diverse sensory experiences. These sensations, including a growing awareness of cause and effect, build the memories each child relies on to make sense of the world. As memory banks grow larger, more