



Safety in many different flavors

I must be getting through to many of you because I've written and talked a lot about proper packaging of your parachute(s) when you send them to your rigger for servicing. My subliminal messages are working. In many cases too well. I now receive boxes that take me longer to open and get the parachute out of than it is to pack. I'm sure the people selling the bubble wrap and tape are very happy, and so am I.

I read many aviation magazines each month as I'm sure most of you do as well. They all have safety articles on how to do things better and safer. Many are reports on accidents or incidents and how to prevent them. Most are repeated over and over in many different flavors by many different people in many different magazines, trying to get you to take on various mindsets about safety. They often have a familiar message; just the names and dates are different.

I've noticed most of my customers are paying closer attention to keeping their parachutes properly maintained between repacks, and for that I'm glad. They probably don't want me to call and remind them to be more careful. Whatever works is fine with me. Taking on a positive mindset about your equipment and your safety is important. It saves me a lot of unnecessary repair work, and

your attention to detail could save your life.

However, I still have parachutes arrive with missing elastic keepers, bent rip cord pins from not being careful when climbing in and out of your aircraft, and a few other issues. The elastic keepers may not seem important, but they are there to keep the webbing from blowing around in the wind. If you are clawing your way out of your aircraft during an emergency egress, one of those loose ends could catch on something and leave you hanging on the side of your aircraft. A bent rip cord pin could prevent you from pulling the rip cord. Don't make a bad day worse. Paying attention to the smallest of details could be the one factor in the equation that saves your life. My seminars discuss in detail keeping a positive attitude (mindset) about bailing out. That's the focus of this month's column.

I just finished reading an excellent article about mindsets. The author did a wonderful job about explaining the difference between a "fixed-mindset" and a "growth-mindset." The author got some information from a book entitled *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck, published by Ballantine Books (2008; New York, NY).

For those who don't know, I've been jumping out of perfectly good aircraft for more than 50 years. I've slowed down quite a

bit, but I still make a few jumps every year (not having missed a year) since 1962. Have I ever seen changes in the world of sport parachuting over the years. When I started jumping my parachute equipment weighed more than 50 pounds. That was almost half my weight, at that time. Now the equipment is less than half that weight. If I had kept a fixed-mindset and not been willing to keep an open growth-mindset, I would still be jumping in the dark ages.

Many people keep celebrating their 39th birthday each year and have never learned to think beyond a typewriter let alone how to use a computer. Most of us have adapted and have a growth-mindset. We found the time to learn how to use a computer and our cellphones. A while back I had a young brother and sister in my shop, and they pointed to my typewriter and asked me what it was. They'd grown up only knowing a computer keyboard. I know there are kids today that if you ask them what time it is when the big hand is on 12 and the little hand is on the 3, they will look at you kind of funny.

Fixed-mindset people believe their qualities are carved in stone when they are born. They're the best they can be, and believe their skills, talents, and intelligence are something they cannot alter or change. They believe they are destined to be who they are and that's

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that. They will avoid that which takes much effort and hard work. A challenge is scary and is often avoided because they fear failure. Their thinking is if they have to work hard at a task, then it means they lack the ability to

do it in the first place.

Our minds are wonderful things. Don't waste it with a fixed-mindset. Challenge yourself to learn a new skill, and don't be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help is not a sign of

weakness. Over the years I've had numerous pilots tell me that they only wear a parachute because it's required at a contest, and they'll never be able to get out of their aircraft in an emergency anyway, so why try. That's a fixed-mindset.

What is a growth-mindset? It's *you*, it's *me*, and it's *all of us* accepting a different perspective on life—*when life requires it*. A growth-mindset challenges us to believe our basic qualities can change and



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