



Learning Objective: The students will be able to understand the concept and tools of professional development as a lifelong commitment to their own education and safety.

So far we've learned what professional development is and where we can go to find educational support.

Annually in the United States an estimated 100 firefighters die and tens of thousands are injured, in the line of duty. Could many of these be averted by simple habits, such as reading smoke, understanding wind-driven physics, or even the routine of putting on one's seat belt?

William James (1892) wrote, "All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits." Charles Duhigg (2012) defined habits as "the choices that all of us deliberately make at some point, and then stop thinking about but continue doing."

Training turns our thinking (conscious theory) process into practically applied skills (unconscious activity). Most of what we do can be learned and stored in our unconscious brain. Muscle memory takes over, and our actions come from an automatic level.

Remember when you started as a volunteer or paid/career firefighter? You probably went to an orientation, followed by endless hours of classroom lecture, and then repetitious training evolutions designed to hone your skills. Training is the privilege your department bestows on you to turn you from a "chaotically thinking" employee into an organized expert.

Training gives you the ability to take what has been learned in the classroom and not only apply it to the situation at hand but also adapt various skill sets to meet the needs of the changing situation.

Find out more by going to <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/training/prodev/>.

Summary: Education and training are at the heart of professional development. Lifelong learning keeps us razor sharp to safely execute the operations that save lives and property.

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References:

Duhigg, C. (2012). "The power of habit." New York: Random House.

James, W. (1899). "Talks to teachers on psychology and to students on some of life's ideals." New York: Henry Holt and Company.