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It is a common misconception that the human mind is all one thing. That the thoughts, emotions, sensations, awareness, and other aspects of the mind are all one inseparable mass. In reality, the mind is made up of several distinct functions. Recognizing the separateness of these functions of the mind and working with them can greatly benefit the individual. I wish to emphasize here that this separateness of the parts of the mind is not just a semantic tool for purposes of describing the mind. The separateness exists, and failure to recognize and maintain this separateness can lead to problems for the individual. [Figure 1.1](#) shows a diagram of some of the parts of the mind, shown pictorially as being inside the head. The first part of the mind is the awareness. This is the part of the mind that is the real you, the real being. To get an idea of what awareness is, a simple experiment might be useful. Pick any object in the room. A rather dull, uninteresting object works best. Look at this object. Take in this object. Some might say meditate on it. Do not "think about it." Do not compare it with other objects, evaluate it, or draw any conclusions about it. If any thoughts come into the mind, ignore them. Just be aware of the object, its color, shape, location, and so on, for about a minute. Let your mind be blank except for your awareness of the object's existence. This is the pure awareness (or at least as close as we can come in a simple exercise).

The second part of the mind is what we will call the intellectual center. This is where information is stored. When information comes into the awareness through the senses and the awareness accepts this information as true, the awareness puts this information into the intellectual center. [Figure 1.2](#) shows this process. In this picture, the eye is used to represent the senses. However, the information can come through any of the senses.

The intellectual center is not just a passive collection of facts, however. When the awareness puts a piece of information into the intellectual center, this center compares it with other information already stored there. When it finds other information related to the new piece of information, it sends the related information back to the awareness. This is what is called associations. This is shown in [Figure 1.3](#). The awareness is then supposed to look at this information and be aware of which of these pieces of information are relevant to the current situation. That "supposed to" is the big catch, as I will discuss shortly.

There are two types of information. The first is pure statements of fact, like "The sky is blue" or "Things fall down." The second type of information is a value judgement, such as "This is good" or "This is desirable" or "This is bad." You could say that the two types of information are "What is" and "What is valuable."

This second type of information is where the third part of the mind, the emotional center, comes in. When information on the value of things is put into the intellectual center, it is also put into the emotional center. The information on what is valuable can come into the awareness directly from the senses, or can come up from the intellectual center as a result of an association. [See Figure 1.4](#) The emotional center also comes with some preprogrammed information at birth, such as "Pain is undesirable."

The emotional center, like the intellectual center, is not passive. It also sends messages back to the awareness. These messages are in the form of emotions or feelings. (There is a difference between emotions and feelings, which we will go into much later.)

The fourth part of the mind is the action center. When both types of information, what is and what is valuable, about a situation go to the awareness and the awareness accepts both of them as true, a decision is put into the action center. [Figure 1.5](#) A decision consists partly of facts from the intellectual center and partly of energy from the emotional center. Once a decision is put into the action center, action takes place (seems appropriate, doesn't it?).

Lets take a simple example. Suppose you stick your hand in a fire. Your senses provide your awareness with a piece of data: Fire causes pain. Your emotional center provides your awareness with a value judgement: Pain is undesirable, and should be avoided. This puts into the action center a decision: Remove the hand from the fire. This decision is acted on rather quickly.

Now let us say that some years after your experience with the fire, you observe (through your senses) that the building you are in is on fire. This information goes from the senses to the awareness, which puts this information into the intellectual center. The intellectual center does its duty, which is to send back to the awareness any related information. One of these pieces of information, recorded when you put your hand in the fire, is that fire causes pain.

Again, the emotional center reports that pain is bad. (By the way, when the emotional center first reported this to the awareness, the awareness probably also stored this in the intellectual center, so the intellectual center is also reporting that pain is bad.) The awareness makes the decision to leave the building, this decision is automatically put into the action center, and the action is carried out (again, rather quickly if possible).

This is the way it is supposed to work. However, trouble can develop when the awareness does not do its job of being aware of the nature of the thoughts (information from the intellectual center) and feelings and emotions (coming from the emotional center). The trouble comes when the awareness forgets that the thoughts and feelings and emotions are information being presented to it. The awareness sometimes (often) forgets its own separateness from these. When this happens, the awareness is said to be identified with these thoughts and feelings and emotions. When one feels anger or fear coming from the emotional center, one says "I am angry" or "I am afraid" rather than that one feels these emotions. When one feels sadness or happiness, one says "I am sad" or "I am happy." The awareness thinks that it is these things, rather than that it is feeling (experiencing) these sensations.

Likewise, the awareness believes that it is the thoughts that are presented to it by the intellectual center, rather than that these thoughts are information and suggestions being presented to it for evaluation. When this happens, the awareness tends to accept these suggestions as fact, and send this information to the action center immediately. When this has been happening long enough, thoughts and emotions can enter the awareness and be passed on to the action center so fast (since awareness is no longer making any attempt to really look at them) that awareness does not even see them. The process becomes automatic. Some would say that the awareness goes to sleep, or becomes mechanical. A psychiatrist would normally say that the person is acting subconsciously.

Let's take a simple example of this, going back to our person that put his hand in the fire. We discussed the fact that such a person would quickly flee from a burning building. (Of course, almost anyone would do this even if they had never been burned personally, since they have been told the importance of such action, but we will get to that later.) Now suppose that such a person walked into a room with a fire in the fireplace. If the awareness is not active, the thoughts "There is a fire" and "I must flee from a fire" could flow from the intellectual center through the awareness into the emotional center and the action center. The person could experience fear (from the emotional center) and flee from the building (the action center at work). The person is often said to have a phobia of fire. However, if the awareness is paying attention, it will see that the thought "I must flee from a fire" is merely a suggestion sent to the awareness by the intellectual center, based on previous experience. The awareness will then look at the situation more closely, gather more information, and see that the fire is properly contained and safe. If it experiences fear from the emotional center, it will be aware that this is simply a sensation coming into the awareness. It will see that this sensation will soon pass, and does not need to be acted on. The decision to flee is not put into the action center, and the person can remain in the room and enjoy both the fire and the other activities going on in the room. This has been an admittedly simplistic example. It is intended just to illustrate the differences between the workings of an active awareness and an inactive awareness. Better examples will follow in later chapters. For now, practice with the concept of this separation of the parts of the mind can be valuable.

As an exercise, imagine this separateness of the parts of the mind. Visualize yourself as the

awareness inside your own head. Visualize two objects below you that represent the intellectual center and the emotional center. (It is not necessary to visualize the action center.) The intellectual center will be sending you thoughts. Picture this center as something that you can easily associate with sending you messages. Some people find it easiest to picture this as a ticker tape machine with messages streaming out of it, or as one of those signs that form moving words out of lights, or as a TV or computer screen with words moving across it. Some people find it most useful to imagine it as some type of mechanical device like a catapult, flinging thoughts written on little pieces of paper or pictures on pieces of paper up to the awareness to look at. Some people who tend to think verbally rather than visually find it easiest to think of it as a tape recorder playing back verbal suggestions. Some people find it easiest to think of it as a person or even a demon of some kind whispering (or shouting) instructions at you. If you think of it as a person, I suggest that you make it a child, since most of the suggestions and information that will be coming from it were accepted when you were a child. This will help you not to take the suggestions too seriously. However you visualize the intellectual center, the valuable object of this exercise is to remember that all of these suggestions and information coming from it are just that. They may or may not be correct or appropriate from your current situation.

The same goes for your emotional center. We have all experienced physical sensations with our physical bodies. Typical sensations might be the warmth of the sun on our faces, a blast of cold from an open door, or sensation of wetness as we get rained on. In this picture of yourself inside your head, see the emotional center as some object that sends sensations to you, like a barrel or well that sometimes sends up blasts of warm or cold air or sprays of water. See Figure 1.6 The valuable thing is to visualize that these emotions are sensations that the awareness is being bathed in from the emotional center, not the awareness itself.

As for the senses, visualize this little person (the awareness) that is you looking at the world through these senses, but not being the senses. You could imagine this little person looking at TV screens to see what the body is seeing, listening to sound over a speaker to hear what is coming from outside, and likewise experiencing the other senses through instruments of some kind. The idea is to view the senses as information.

Let's do this exercise for about a week. For the next week, as much as you can, see every thought that comes into your awareness from your intellectual center as a piece of information, a piece of information that is separate from the awareness itself. Be aware that it may be correct or incorrect, but it is just a suggestion being shown to you by your intellectual center. This center is just doing its job of showing you memories that might be relevant to your current situation, based on its mechanism of association. When you feel a feeling or emotion (happiness, sadness, anger, fear, guilt, etc.), be aware that this is a sensation coming from the emotional center, and be aware of your separateness from it. Do not try to fight or resist the feeling, just be aware that you are feeling it, not being it.

You will not be able to do this exercise 24 hours a day. It is very easy to get caught up in the thoughts and feelings as you rush about your daily activities. Do not be discouraged if you realize that you have been identified with your thoughts for a few hours. Just resume the process of being aware of your separateness from these thoughts and feelings. The benefits (the strengthening of your awareness) are cumulative. If you are aware for 10 minutes one day and 5 minutes the next, you have gained a total of 15 minutes of awareness, not lost 5 minutes from one day to the next.

Take care to do this work as much as you can for the next week. After you have done this and gotten the hang of it a bit, we will discuss some specific thoughts to watch for and possibly reevaluate (in the next chapter). For now practice, practice, practice.

If you have been doing the recommended exercises for about a week, you have begun to experience the feeling of separateness from your thoughts and feelings and emotions. You have probably begun to notice that these thoughts and feelings and emotions no longer have quite as much of a grip on you as they once did. You may even have come to realize that all the things you "believe" and "know" are really just specific thoughts that you had previously stored in the intellectual center at a time when they seemed reasonable, and that each one of these thoughts may or may not be true in your current situation. A more detailed look at specific thoughts may now be useful.

One of the problems with allowing the awareness to be asleep and automatically accept any thoughts sent up by the intellectual and emotional centers is that the first thoughts sent up by these centers is usually expressed in absolutes and extremes. When the senses report a situation to the awareness and the awareness sends this information to the intellectual center, this center immediately tries to compare the current situation with the closest related situation in memory. The intellectual center and the emotional center then often report the situation as being either BAD or GOOD, something that SHOULD or SHOULD NOT be. When the situation is valued as BAD, the intellectual center sends up the first and strongest association, which is usually something like "I've got to get out of this!" If the sleeping awareness passes this on to the action center, there is a strong feeling of urgency, fear, anger, and so on. The person does not evaluate the situation, look for alternatives, etc. The first thought to come into the awareness is usually very simplistic.

Now suppose the awareness is awake and realizes that this simplistic, urgent thought is just a suggestion, one possible course of action. The awareness does not immediately send this suggestion to the action center. It can wait while other information comes up from the intellectual center. This information is usually less extreme, clearer, and offers more options.

The first thing that the awareness may realize if it takes the time to get the whole picture is that the current situation is not really the same as that other situation that was so bad or good. For example, many people are afraid of having other people angry at us. This is because as a child, having someone (usually a parent) angry at us often was immediately followed by punishment. Punishment to a child is very scary, so the intellectual center has the information stored that having someone mad at us is BAD, and something must be done about it. If the awareness does not immediately pass this previously made decision on to the action center, however, it may have time to see that in this particular case, you are in no immediate danger.

Now suppose that in this particular case, the additional information that come from the intellectual center does reveal that the current situation is the same as the previous situation. Let us assume for the sake of discussion that the consequences of the current situation are quite likely to be the same as they were in the past. We can still take the time to evaluate how BAD this BAD is. That is, we do not have to immediately accept and act on the thought that we MUST do something about this situation. That thought too is just a decision that was made previously and stored in the intellectual and emotional centers. That thought too is just a suggestion being shown to the awareness.

When we do not automatically accept that we must react to an unpleasant situation, the awareness can look at information (both from the senses and from knowledge stored in the intellectual center) on the pros and cons of acting on the current situation. Is it worth the sheer effort involved in avoiding the unpleasantness? For example, if someone is displeased with you, is it really worth doing what you would have to do to please that person? Do you really care that much about that person's opinion? Is that person in a position where you need their approval (for example, your boss)? How much is it worth to you, both in sheer effort and other personal sacrifices you would have to make, to have that person's approval? The same kind of evaluation can go into the decision regarding any unpleasantness, whether it is physical or emotional. The same kind of evaluation can go into deciding how much you are willing to do

to gain a pleasant situation, as opposed to avoiding an unpleasant one.

Assuming that we decide that the current situation is worth doing something about, we still do not have to automatically accept the first suggestion that comes up from the intellectual center telling us what to do about it. The first suggestion that comes into the awareness about how to handle the situation will often not be the best one for the the current circumstances. The first and strongest suggestion will often be a simplistic solution. Remember that the intellectual center is simply free associating with the information it is receiving. It will tend to come up with the simplest solution that may have worked in the past, usually in your childhood. If you do not identify with this first suggestion and act on it automatically (i.e. - if you remember your separateness from your thoughts and treat them like suggestions), you will find that other, often more useful, suggestions will come into the awareness. We will discuss this subject more in the next chapter. For now, let's stick with the subject of this chapter, which is the tendency to think in extremes about the need to do something about the situation.

It may be useful to look at a few of the extreme thoughts that sometimes come into the awareness, so that we can be on the lookout for them. Here are a few of the more common ones:

I have to ...
I must ...
I must not ...
I should ...
I should not ...
You should ...
You should not ...
I need ...
... is good.
... is bad.

If you think about these carefully, you will see that these statements have no specific, real, definable meaning as they stand. What does it mean when you say "I have to" do something? What does it mean when you say "I need" something? By themselves, they literally mean nothing. Yet when one of these thoughts pops into a sleeping awareness (one that is not doing its job of seeing these thoughts as suggestions), it is immediately passed on to the action center as a decision, and you're off and running with a great sense of urgency.

Many of these are actually incomplete thoughts. For example, "I have to ..." or "I must ..." really means that you need to do something in order to accomplish or prevent something. That is, it is a means to an end. For example, "I have to go to work." really means "I have to go to work in order to keep my current job and make money." Often it translates in the end into "I have to (insert unpleasant task here) to prevent (insert name of particularly scary person here) from being angry at me, or at least severely disapproving of me." Likewise, "I need ..." basically means that you require that object in order to achieve or obtain something that you want. For example, when a person says, "I need you." in a romantic situation, what they are really saying is that they need you to be with them and say you love them in order for them to feel happy/secure/fulfilled. Another commonly heard phrase that has no clearly defined meaning is "I should ..." or "I should not ..." or "You should ..." or "You should not ..." In general, that things should be a certain way. Exactly what "should" means is seldom if ever clearly defined. This leads to considerable disagreement over what "should" be, often resulting in violence. For the sake of discussion here, let us say that "should" means that if things are the way they should be and everyone does what they should do, an outcome that is particularly pleasant to the speaker will occur. When we say that something is bad, what we really mean is that it will result in some unpleasant situation. When we say that something is good, we really mean that it produces some pleasant or desirable situation or makes us feel happy.

Now that we have a better handle on what these phrases mean, we can look at them more reasonably. When one of these thoughts pops into the awareness, we do not want to accept them as a final decision and pass them immediately on to the action center. We can be aware that they are poorly defined or incomplete thoughts, and look at them more carefully. For example, when a thought like "I have

to..." or "I must ..." or "I must not ..." pops into the awareness, we can look at what we hope to accomplish by doing what we "have to". We can evaluate just how valuable that desired end is. Is it really worth that effort? If it is worth the effort to go ahead and do it, is it really the end of the world if we somehow fail to do it? If we take the time to realize what it is we want to get out of it when we say "I have to ...", we can decide whether it is worth it to do this thing in this particular situation. If we decide that it is, we can still do it calmly and without panic, fully aware at all times that if for some reason we do not succeed, all that will happen is that we will not achieve the particular desired effect that we were striving for, and we will probably survive anyway.

There is one particularly nice effect of examining the "have to" thoughts this way. If you look at what you "have to" do in terms of "If I do (insert task here), I may obtain (insert benefit here)", you will find that the task is much more pleasant. You will find yourself looking at the task as a positive experience that will lead to a reward, rather than this threatening, forced, "I have to do this." experience.

When we have the thought "I should ...", it means that if I do what "I should", it will result in a pleasant situation, or avoid some unpleasant situation. Often this unpleasant situation is having someone strongly disapprove of us. This can make your motivation for doing what you think you should a bit less evident, because you are not totally aware of your own motivation. Many people will say, "No, I do what I should because I really SHOULD do it." However, if you ask them what will happen and press them long enough, it will always come down to the fact that someone (society, parents, God, or whoever) will disapprove of them, and they wish to avoid this. If you do not believe this, try it on yourself. Think of something that you do because you believe that you SHOULD (or SHOULDN'T) do it, and ask yourself what would happen if you did (or didn't) do it. Seriously consider not doing this thing you SHOULD do (or doing this thing you SHOULDN'T do). You will find that the intellectual center will quickly come up with a very personal reason to do what you SHOULD (like, "Your mother will kill you if you do that.")

Again, if you look at this "I should" in terms of pros and cons, benefits and costs, you can make a balanced decision about whether the benefits of doing it are worth the costs of not doing it. It loses the scary absoluteness of an absolute "I should". The same thing applies (in reverse) when you find the thought "I should not" racing through the awareness.

When we think "You (or they, or whoever) should" or "You (or they, or whoever) should not" do something, what we really mean is that it will be more pleasing to us if the other person does what they should. For example, we may say "You should not talk to me like that." or "I think you should apologize for what you did to me." When the thought comes into the awareness that someone else should or should not do something, it is often accompanied by a thought that we should make them behave as they should. Usually, this thought is limited to a lot of yelling at the other person or criticizing them for the way they are behaving. Sometimes people go a lot further in trying to get people to do what the thoughts suggest they should do. This is an area where it is very definitely useful to evaluate the pros and cons of trying to get others to do as the thoughts suggest they should.

When the thought "I need ..." comes into the awareness, you can look at what you need it (whatever "it" is) for. Then you can evaluate whether obtaining it is worth the price required to get it. Even if you decide it is worth the price, the "I need" becomes "I want", and you can be more relaxed about getting it.

When the "... is good" or "... is bad" thoughts come into the awareness, you can see the situation in terms of relative goodness and badness. That is, in terms of relative pleasantness and unpleasantness. This can be especially useful when you are confronted by two or more bad situations that you must accept one of. Instead of "This is bad and I must avoid it and that is bad and I must avoid it and I cannot avoid both of them and oh, my what am I going to do, I think I will fall apart or kill myself.", you can observe that this is an unpleasant but survivable situation and that is an unpleasant but survivable situation, and which one would you rather have. Your exercise for this week is to be aware of absolute thoughts (have to, must, should, need, good, bad) that come into your awareness. Intercept them on the way to the action center. Do not accept them immediately. When you do not act on a suggestion immediately, the intellectual center will send you more information on why you have to, should, should not, need, etc. act on the suggestion. Observe this new information. Observe that the situation does not

really fit into such absolutes, such black and white. Observe that there are degrees of desirability of the results of the various "have to" and "should" actions. You may still decide to do the original action suggested by the absolute thought, but you will find that it will be a calmer, more relaxed, more pleasant action than the compulsion suggested by the original thought.

Continue to do the work of seeing your separateness from the thoughts and feelings and emotions. Of course, this is necessary in order to do the exercise of observing the absolute thoughts and suggestions.

As you have been doing the exercises for the last few weeks, you have gained some experience with looking at the thoughts that go through the mind. You have seen that these thoughts are separate from the awareness that experiences them. You have had some practice looking at certain specific thoughts (those that see everything in black or white, as being either totally bad or totally good). It may now be useful to look at the origins of some of these thoughts, and the results of some mutually contradictory thoughts that try to achieve certain goals by mutually exclusive means.

Before looking at the specific thoughts that the intellectual and emotional centers often present to the awareness, let's look at some of the goals that people are trying to achieve by these thoughts. Everyone has four basic desires. Each of these desires has a gain and an avoid aspect, for a total of eight desires. That is, each desire has something that a person likes to gain and something that a person likes to avoid.

The simplest of these desires is physical sensations. Everyone likes to gain pleasant physical sensations, like warmth or pleasant tastes in food. Everyone likes to avoid unpleasant physical sensations, most notably pain.

The other three desires are usually a bit more subtle, and involve social interactions. The first of these is the desire to have other people pay attention to us. We begin to feel an experience known as loneliness if nobody pays any attention to us for a long time. We also dislike the opposite of having people pay attention to us, which is to be ignored.

The third desire is the desire for approval from others. It is not enough that people are paying attention to us (the second desire), we also want these people to like us and approve of us. We dislike having people disapprove of us, dislike us, or think poorly of us.

The fourth desire is a desire for importance, for power. We like to be able to control people, or at least influence them. We all have a certain natural desire to be dominant. We also dislike feeling inferior to others and being required to do as they say.

Now it is necessary for further growth of our understanding of ourselves for us to understand that every person has all eight of these desires (that is, the gain and avoid side of each of the four). There is no person on Earth who does not have these desires as an inherent part of their inner instincts. People may have these desires in different proportions and different priorities. Some people may have largely subjugated their desire for power in order to have approval, for example, or vice versa. Many people will be strongly tilted toward either the gain or the avoid aspects. That is, some people may be so concerned with avoiding pain that they do not dare to strive for much pleasure, preferring safety from pain. Others may be so heavily weighted toward gaining pleasure that they seem almost immune to pain (we usually call these people thrill-seekers). However, everyone has these eight urges to some extent. Anyone who says that they have no interest in one or more of these (like "I, of course, have no desire for power over others.") is deceiving themselves (which will be discussed in the next chapter - no peeking ahead). For now, let us just accept that these desires are a natural part of human instincts and go from there.

At a very early age (at birth, to be specific), we start trying to find ways to satisfy these desires. We do not think in words, of course, but we do begin to detect at a very primitive level that certain actions bring about a reduction in the pain and an increase in the desired comforts. The first technique that we develop is to complain (largely because certain crying instincts are built in). We find that if we complain (wail at lot, to start), someone comes along and gives us something to relieve the hunger (pain) and will give us warmth (physical pleasure) and attention. Thus, the first set of thoughts that we develop is to complain when we don't get our way. After we have had something pleasant a few times, we come to feel that it is a natural part of the world order and that we have a right to it. We feel that we can continue to get what we want by demanding our rights. As a child, we do this by throwing temper tantrums. As we get older, we

develop slightly (but only slightly) more sophisticated methods of getting things that we feel we have a right to. I say only slightly more sophisticated methods, because they still tend to be some form of demanding or belligerence to cow others into giving us what we consider our rights, not working to promote our ability to do the things we want to do. Note that in this book, when I use the word "right", I am defining it as those things that we want and in some way we feel are a natural part of the universal order for us to have. I am not using the word to refer to political "rights", which are a man made political set of rules, something else entirely. After a person has spent a while complaining and sticking up for his/her rights, others around this person start to get tired of this. They start convincing the person to change his/her behavior to please them (a good spanking or two will usually accomplish this). The person develops an understanding that it may be necessary to do things to please other people. The person develops many ways to do this, such as flattery, doing favors for others, and so on.

One of the ways that the person learns to please others is to believe what they say. We learn to believe what our parents tell us in order to avoid angering them by disagreeing with them. Most importantly, we accept what they say is good or bad, right or wrong. This is one of the ways we collect many of the thoughts that something is good or bad, as discussed in the previous chapter. I mentioned in that chapter that we decide what is good or bad by what pleases us. Often it is what pleases us directly, like "You should be nice to me." However, sometimes we believe that something is good or bad, or we should or should not do something, because believing this gives us the pleasure of the approval of someone, particularly someone we are afraid of (or were afraid of when we originally accepted the belief).

One of the ways we learn to please others (or at least avoid displeasing them) is to not complain or stick up for our rights. This creates inner conflict inside the mind. A bunch of thoughts are popping into the awareness saying to complain and stick up for our rights, and another bunch of thoughts are popping up saying to please others by not complaining or being belligerent and by believing them when they say that complaining is a bad thing to do.

Now it is necessary to understand that once we have accepted the decision to act in a certain way, that way of thinking takes on a life of its own when the awareness is not paying attention. The thought that it is time to act a certain way, like complain, is generated by association when a certain situation occurs, even if the current situation is not exactly like the former one and the particular action would no longer be effective. Likewise, when a particular belief has been accepted, even if it was originally accepted to please someone who is no longer present, a sleeping awareness will accept this belief as a fact when it is sent to the awareness by the intellectual center. If the awareness is not looking at these thoughts that say to do all these conflicting things, they all get passed on to the action center. The person is torn apart trying to do several conflicting things, or to believe several conflicting things. For example, they may believe that they have a right, based on the fact that they have had something several times and they want it again, while someone is telling them that they do not have this right. There are several ways for a person to handle this inner conflict. One is to finally pick one of the opposing lines of thought and suppress the other. This usually leaves the person feeling unsatisfied or uneasy. If they decide to complain and stick up for their rights, they experience conflict with others around them, and occasionally some physical violence. If they decide to please others by doing what others say and believing them when they say that the person should not complain, should not stick up for their rights, and generally should not have things their way, the person feels like "I never get to have any fun."

Another way that people often resolve the inner conflict is to do both things, usually very ineffectively. A very common example we see is the person complaining bitterly about something, but only to someone who is not involved in the situation and cannot possibly do anything about it. Someone (a boss, spouse, parent, etc.) does something that you don't like. The intellectual and emotional centers send up the suggestion to complain about this. The sleeping awareness passes this on to the action center as a decision. Energy is generated to be very forceful about complaining and sticking up for your rights in this matter. By God, you're going to do something about this! But before you can actually do anything (it takes a few seconds for the physical body to get moving), another message is sent up to the awareness and passed on to the action center saying "Bite your tongue. This person could really hurt/fire/reject/disapprove of/leave me if I make them mad. Smile pleasantly and nod." The person smiles pleasantly for the person they are afraid of, but then goes out and complains to someone else. That

someone else is someone who would not be offended by (and may even approve of) the complains against the person the complainer is mad at. Another method of both complaining and not complaining is to complain inwardly, gritting ones teeth and filling oneself with resentment, while showing little or no outward signs of complaining.

A very useful exercise to do this week (and to continue doing indefinitely) is to watch for these thoughts (complaining, sticking up for rights, pleasing others, believing what we are told) as they come into the awareness. Observe whenever you get the urge to complain, especially if the complaining cannot possibly help. Be aware that this is simply a suggestion. Be aware of your separateness from this suggestion. You may still decide to accept the suggestion. There are times when it can be quite useful to complain, like when you are getting poor service in a restaurant or store (if you complain to the right people, not your spouse when you get home). If you decide not to complain, do not fight the suggestion or try to bottle it up. Just be aware that it was a thought passing through the awareness and you do not have to act on it. The same goes for sticking up for your rights. Be aware when the thought that you have a right to something goes through the mind. This thought can have many subtle disguises. For example, you may sometimes have thought something like, "You have no right to talk to me that way." What this really means, deep down, is "I have a right to have you not talk to me that way." Likewise, the thought "You should not treat me that way" really means "I have a right to have you not treat me that way." What for these thoughts as they enter the awareness. When they do, ask yourself, "On what grounds do I have this right?" Remember, a right here means something that you want and it is an intrinsic law of the universe that you have. Is there any intrinsic law of the universe that says that people should treat you nicely, or even fairly? (I'll give you a hint: The answer is no.) Be aware of these thoughts that you have a right to things and you must stick up for this right whenever they are infringed upon. Be aware that they are only thoughts popping into the awareness that you do not have to act on. You will find yourself being a lot calmer. Be aware when you find yourself trying to please someone. This does not mean that you never what to do it. Sometimes it can be very useful to please others. (You catch more flies with honey, and all that.) It can even be rather enjoyable to make someone happy sometimes when there is nothing in it for you. But be aware when the thought comes into the awareness that you **MUST** please someone. Be aware when beliefs pop into the awareness, especially beliefs that are hard to define like good bad, evil, should, shouldn't. (Remember them from last week?) When you find yourself believing anything, ask yourself where you acquired this "knowledge". Did you observe this yourself, or did someone tell it to you? If someone else told you this, why did you believe it? Was it to please them?

Lastly, be aware when you find yourself trying to satisfy the basic desires (physical pleasure, attention, approval, importance) and avoid the basic unpleasantnesses (physical discomfort, being ignored, disapproval, inferiority). This does not mean you necessarily do not want to satisfy these desires. There is no reason not to have a little pleasure in life. But by being aware of what you are trying to gain from some action, and being aware that you do not necessarily **NEED** these pleasures (or pain avoidance) in order to survive, you can be a lot calmer and more relaxed as you pursue them.

Watching for all these thoughts (and those of last week) and observing your separateness from them should give you a lot to do for the next week. If you are having trouble getting the hang of all of this, please feel free to take more than a week to work on it before going on to the next chapter.

In the last chapter, we discussed some of the methods people adopt to gain pleasure and avoid pain. These included complaining, sticking up for rights, and doing and believing as other people tell them to. I also mentioned that this creates inner conflict when two methods are mutually exclusive or contradictory. If you have been doing the exercise of observing these thoughts while remaining apart from them (subtle hint to do the homework), you have observed these thoughts in yourself. Unless you have had a remarkably dull or blissful week, you have had the opportunity to observe the conflict this creates within you. In [Chapter 3](#), I also noted some of the ways that people have of avoiding these conflicts. One is to do one or the other of the things the thoughts tell you to do, while feeling bad about not being able to do the other. Another is to do both things, but do one or both of them in an ineffective way (like complaining to someone who will not be offended, but who cannot change the situation). In this chapter, we will discuss two other ways that people also attempt to deal with these conflicts.

The first way is to try to convince themselves that they do not have any conflict. That is, they try to convince themselves that they do not have certain desires or thoughts. They may decide that they do not want to complain. They may try to convince themselves that they have no desire for the approval of others, and therefore do not need to please others. They may try to convince themselves that they have all the qualities that others have told them are good, like patience, generosity, and so on. In short, they build up a beautiful picture of themselves, and convince themselves that this is what they are really like. That way, they can praise themselves for being such a wonderful person.

The problem with this technique is that the person is usually unwilling to admit that they even have the thoughts in the mind that they do not like. They just try to cover them up with a lot of other thoughts and drowned them out. Psychiatrists would call this suppression.

Now we know from the previous chapters and the self-observation we have been doing for the last few weeks (another subtle hint) that we all do have these thoughts. The only way to really be free from these thoughts is to allow them to come into the awareness, recognize them as separate thoughts and suggestions, and then choose not to obey them. However, this attempt to convince ourselves that we do not have these thoughts and feelings and emotions has the exact opposite effect. It prevents us from looking at the thoughts and reevaluating them. In some ways, it actually makes it easier for these thoughts to get past the awareness and get into the action center, because the awareness is trying not to see them.

Rather than decreasing the conflict, this attempt to be something that you aren't actually increases it. You not only need to deal with all the conflicting thoughts and emotions, you have to deal with the fact that you have them when you are trying to convince yourself that you don't. In exchange for a few moments of self-adulation at what a wonderful person you are, you have greatly increased your inner conflict. You have also made yourself susceptible to self-criticism for not living up to this ideal of what you should be. (Go back to [chapter 2](#) if you need a refresher on ideals, which are another term for absolute should-be's.) This conflict between what you inevitably find that you think and feel and what you believe you should think and feel leads each person to the last of the major methods of trying to gain pleasure and avoid pain. This is the ultimate solution to all the inner conflicts: Blame someone else. Whatever is wrong, whenever the person is not happy, whenever they fail to be the wonderful person they know they really are, it is someone else's fault. If they are not happy, it is because someone else will not do what is necessary for the person to be happy. If the person is somehow not this wonderful person they think they are, it is someone else's fault. For example, "I really am a patient, kind person, but you are so absolutely insufferable that it is impossible for me to be the wonderful person that I really am." (Stop and think for a minute about what self-contradictory nonsense this is.) There are two purposes to this blaming. The first is to shift the blame off you. That is, it is a defensive reaction. If someone says that you are not being the perfect person that they say you should be, you can try to find someone else to blame. This is an old habit left over from our childhoods, when we tried to avoid punishment by finding someone else to blame when

we were in trouble. The second purpose of all this blaming is to get the other person to change so that everything will be wonderful again. If we are not getting out way, we can find someone else that needs to change in order for us to be happy. If so-and-so would just do what they SHOULD do, I would be so happy. Then we try to convince that person to change their ways so everything would be just perfect. This is also an old habit from childhood. Children don't have much power to do anything on their own, so they have to get someone else to do things for them.

The problem with this method of gaining pleasure and avoiding pain is that all these stupid people who are to blame just will not do what they should. We explain to them that they are to blame and what they should do, and they don't do it. Of course, they are to blame for not accepting the blame, also.

This last method of getting what we want is usually the least effective of them all. The other person usually just gets defensive themselves when we blame them. After all, they have the same decision to blame as everyone else. This blaming usually just ends in a big argument, or even a fight. Even if you manage to find someone who will accept the blame (usually someone with very low self-esteem), it does not really help. The other person can seldom really do anything to help you, because the problem was really within you. The other person just does not have the power to do anything to help you. Of course, a really talented blamer will usually manage to blame the person for not being able to help them.

Since these last two methods of gaining pleasure and escaping pain cause so much trouble, it can be worth while so spend a week or so looking at just these. First, consider the idea of trying to pretend (even to yourself) that you do not have certain thoughts and feelings. First, let's consider the idea that everyone has the same basic desires and thoughts. That is, everyone has the eight basic desires. They may be in different proportions. There is nothing incorrect about the idea that you may be more interested in one pleasure than another. You may, for example, have very little desire for power. The only problem comes if you try to convince yourself that you have none of a certain desire, so that when the desire comes into your awareness, you are unable or unwilling to recognize it. The point here is that there is no need for you to feel ashamed or afraid to have the same feelings as everyone else. The same thing applies to all of the methods of trying to achieve these desires. Everyone has the thoughts that they should complain, stick up for their rights, please others, accept what others tell them, try to be something that they are not, and blame others when things go wrong. There is no reason to pretend that you do not have these thoughts. There is a very good reason to admit that you do: Until you admit that you have the thoughts, the awareness cannot recognize them when the intellectual center sends them to the awareness as suggestions. Until the awareness recognizes them, it cannot make the choice (if it decides it wants to) not to obey them. Instead, they will be passed on to the action center, usually with some rationalization that they are something else. Thus, you have every reason to recognize these thoughts and feelings and no reason not to.

In addition, consider the fact that these thoughts and feelings are not really you (remember good old chapter 1). These thoughts are simply suggestions that you were given and that you put into the intellectual and emotional centers before you know any better. They are simply suggestions that are sent up from these centers for consideration by the awareness. THEY ARE NOT YOU. You do not need to be ashamed of them or afraid of them. You do not need to change them. All you need to do is recognize them, be aware that they are just suggestions and, if you choose to, decide not to obey them. They will still be with you (although you will find that they will be presented by the intellectual and emotional centers less and less often if you do not act on them), but they are not you.

So, your first experiment for the week is to be on the lookout for how often you find yourself believing (or trying to convince yourself) that you are a certain way simply because it is desirable to be that way. Also, be aware of how often you try to be a certain way because someone else has said that you should be that way. The most common reason for trying to be a certain way is to please others, or to be what other say we SHOULD be (usually some authority figure, like a parent, priest, etc.).

As a part of this experiment, freely face up to any suggestions and feeling or emotions that you find coming into the awareness. When you experience them, remember that they are not you. You do not have to "not be that way" or "not feel that way" or "not think such thoughts" because they are not you. Be

aware that you do not need to be afraid or ashamed of these thoughts or feelings or emotions, because (I think I've said this before) they are not you.

The last experiment for this week is to watch out for blaming. Be aware when blaming thoughts enter the awareness. Watch for thoughts like "If he would only do . . ." or "It is her fault that. . ." or "I could do . . . (or be . . .) if only that other person would . . .". When such thoughts enter the awareness, other thoughts usually accompany them, such as "I must make him (or her) accept (and/or admit) the blame and do what they should so that I can be happy." (Usually this is not specifically expressed as "so I can be happy", but as a more specific event will occur. This event is then something that you feel would ultimately make you happy.) Be aware of these thoughts too. Be aware that they are all only thoughts. Be aware that you do not have to accept or act on these thoughts. You also might find it useful to be aware of how unlikely it is that you will gain anything from acting on these thoughts. (That is, that the person will ever accept the blame, mend their evil ways, and dedicate their life to making you happy.) Be aware of all the thoughts that come up if you decide not to blame or try to force the other person to change, such as "But they really should . . ." or "But it really is their fault." or "But it is so unfair that they do not . . .". Be aware that these are only thoughts too, being sent up from the intellectual and emotional centers.

That will keep you busy for another week or so.

In some of the previous chapters, I have been promising to explain the difference between feelings and emotions. Well, now is the time.

Feelings are certain natural, built-in sensations that we all have and which are completely natural (and unavoidable) to experience. Some of these feelings are pleasant, some are unpleasant. Some of the pleasant ones are happiness, joy, love, and satisfaction. Some of the unpleasant feelings are loneliness and rejection. The common denominator of feelings is that they are a direct result of the current situation. If you gain attention and approval from someone, you will feel pleasure, joy, and happiness. If someone or something gives you pleasure, you will probably feel love for that person or thing. If you are alone for a while, you will start to feel loneliness (you don't have to wallow in it, however). If someone tells you they do not like you, you will feel rejected and disapproved of. The situation exists and we feel a sensation that is connected with it.

Emotions, on the other hand, are a secondary or indirect response to our environment, based on how our inner thought processes respond to it. A combination of thoughts that are in conflict with each other or with reality produces a mental energy that is undirected or misdirected. This mental energy cannot easily be used and therefore produces a generally unpleasant sensation we call emotion. Typical emotions are fear, anger, anxiety, and guilt.

There are specific thoughts that lead to each emotion. Studying which thoughts lead to which emotions can have several benefits. First, knowing which thoughts cause which emotions can allow the awareness to be on the lookout for these thoughts and recognize them when they come into the awareness. It can then not accept them unquestioningly, just as it has learned to not accept thoughts discussed in previous chapters. This will prevent them from being put into the action center, and will decrease the amount of emotions we experience. (Note: Some people refer to "negative emotions." I am declining to use that term here simply because all emotions are negative as we are defining them here. That is, all emotions are a response to inappropriate and mistaken thoughts that are accepted by the awareness. All emotions generate violent or destructive mental energy which has no place to be effectively channeled to, and are therefore destructive to the body and mind. Therefore, all emotions are negative. Please be aware that we are using the term emotions here in a specific sense that is slightly different from the common usage of the word. Some people include feelings in the things we are calling emotions here, which we do not.)

A secondly reason for studying which thoughts produce which emotions is that it can help us be aware of what thoughts are slipping past the awareness by observing what emotions we are feeling. That is, if we find ourselves feeling certain emotions (note that we are feeling emotions, not having or being those emotions. Remember [chapter 1](#), we can look back at what thoughts caused those emotions. This can serve as a sort of biofeedback on our thoughts that will help us be aware of thoughts that we may have missed as they passed through the awareness while it was not on the job.

The first emotion to understand is fear. Fear is caused by a combination of two thoughts. The first is that something unpleasant is going to happen soon. "Soon" may be in a few seconds, hours, days, or years, but the person feeling fear thinks of it as "soon" (usually "too soon"). The second thought is that you must do something about this situation NOW. Both of these thoughts are usually in error. The first is in error because we cannot really know the future with total certainty. That is, we may know that it is fairly likely that something is going to happen in the future but we cannot know with absolute certainty that anything (except possibly death and taxes) will happen. We also cannot be sure that it is going to be as bad (unpleasant) as we think it is. We may be building it up in our minds to unrealistic proportions. The second thought, that we must do something NOW, is always wrong when we are experiencing fear. That is, fear is always caused by trying to do something about a future situation before it is possible. We envision the situation as we expect it to exist in the future. We try to respond to this situation now. The

body releases chemicals such as adrenaline that generate tremendous amounts of energy in the body to deal with this situation. But the body has no use for this energy, because there is nothing for the body to do about this situation, because the situation does not presently exist. Thus, all this tremendous energy is flowing through the body with nowhere to go. The person feels great urgency, a need to do something, to run away or fight someone. This is the sensation of fear.

For example, let's say that a person is due to give a speech in front of a large crowd. The person has the thought that he will make a mistake and embarrass himself, or that the crowd will be hostile to his speech. He has the thought that he wants to run away from this hostile crowd. He has all this energy mobilized to run away from these dangerous people. However, he has not yet made any mistakes in his speech and the crowd is not yet hostile. Perhaps he has not even started his speech yet. In fact, the speech may be days in the future. Therefore, he has no place to run and nobody to run from at the moment. This sensation of wanting to do something about an unpleasant situation before there is anything that can be done is fear. The second emotion to understand is anxiety. Anxiety is very similar to fear. In anxiety, the person also has a thought that something terrible is about to happen or is happening now. As in fear, the person has the thought that they must do something about this terrible thing. In anxiety, however, the person has no idea what to do about the situation. With fear, the person had a pretty good idea what they wanted to do (usually either run away or fight someone). With anxiety, the person still has the thought that they want to do something about the situation, but does not know what to do. Sometimes, the reason the person does not know what to do is because they do not know what the terrible thing that is about to happen is. That is, they have a suspicion that something is about to go wrong, but they do not know what it is and therefore do not know what to do about it. As in fear, the body generates tremendous amounts of energy to do something about the situation, but the body has no way to expend this energy. Anxiety can be described as unfocused or uncrystallized fear. The third emotion to understand is anger. Anger is caused by the thoughts that something unpleasant has happened to you and that someone or something specific is to blame. That is, if that someone or something else would behave differently, you would be happy. It involves the thought that you must make that person behave differently. Again, the body releases lots of adrenaline and related chemicals into the system in order to give you the energy to go force that person to behave differently. Often you have only a fuzzy idea or exactly what you are going to do to this person. Sometimes you feel that by beating this person up, or even killing them, the situation will improve. This is especially true when the person has made you feel inferior (powerless) or rejected you. By severely injuring that person or even killing them, you can at least feel that they are no longer more powerful than you or can no longer reject you. Occasionally, you have only a fuzzy idea of exactly who the person is that is to blame. You just are angry at the world. Sometimes you are angry at a situation or inanimate object. The principle is the same. The body still generates energy for you to use to fight this person, situation, or inanimate object. Remember that when the awareness is asleep, it is accepting and acting on suggestions coming up from the intellectual and emotional centers. These centers are just providing these suggestions based on the closest situation in their data files. Often that information says that when you have had something unpleasant happen to you, someone has probably done something to you, and you should punish that person to make them stop. The sleeping awareness will pass on this suggestion to the action center and it will try to hurt someone, even if that someone has not been clearly identified.

Hatred is similar to anger. The difference is that in anger, you actively feel (at some level of the mind) that you intend to take action against someone soon. In hatred, you have accepted that you cannot do anything in the immediate future, but you intend to do something if and when you get the chance. It is basically anger put on hold. The body still generates energy to hurt someone, but it puts it on hold. The thought is then put into the intellectual center to be on the lookout for ways to hurt the target of the hatred. This makes for easy associations with violence within the intellectual center.

Guilt is when you decide that you are to blame for the current situation, rather than someone else. You try to punish yourself, rather than someone else. This is certainly easier than punishing someone else (someone else will probably resist the punishment), but it is a rather unpleasant solution.

Depression is caused when you feel that an unpleasant situation exists, and there is nobody at all to blame (not even yourself) and nothing that you can do about it (like run away or fight). Instead, the

suggestion being followed is that since the situation cannot be made any better, you may as well make it worse, or at least make it seem worse by finding worse and worse ways of looking at the situation and describing it. At least that way, people will pity you or you can wallow in self-pity. People who are accepting the depression thoughts will usually actively resist any attempt to make things better, since if the situation gets better they will miss out on all that pity. Suggestions like, "Why don't you do something to cheer yourself up, like go to a funny movie?" will fall on deaf ears.

As an exercise for this week, let's be on the lookout for any of these thoughts that generate emotions. We can look at them as suggestions and decide whether we want to act on them. In all cases, we can look at (and not identify with) the suggestions that the current situation is so bad that we **MUST** do something about it. Looking at things in terms of relative unpleasantness rather than absolute good or bad will go a long way toward reducing the urgency of the emotions. We can also look out for specific thoughts that lead to specific emotions.

For fear, be aware of any things that enter the awareness that suggest that something terrible is going to happen. Look at whether you really **KNOW** that this is going to happen. If it seems fairly certain that the event will happen, look at whether you really **KNOW** that it is going to be as bad as you are imagining it. Most importantly, look out for thoughts that suggest that you must do something **NOW** about this situation. That is, look at whether you are living in the **NOW**. When the thought comes into the awareness to run away from this situation, look at whether there is anything to run away from **RIGHT NOW**, or are you simply envisioning something that may appear sometime in the future. If the person, thing, or event that you want to run away from is not present now, you can realize that the suggestion to run away (or fight) is not practical. In that case, you can make the decision not to accept the suggestion to run (or fight) now, and therefore not to generate all that energy right now. Practice living in the **NOW** and responding to things that exist right now, rather than the things your intellectual center is showing you could happen in the future. If the event does happen in the future, you can always accept the suggestion to run away or fight then, when you actually have something you can do. By not generating all that energy until you can use it, you will save yourself having all that energy running through you with no place to go.

The same basic idea goes for anxiety. If you feel that something bad is about to happen, look at how sure you are that it will happen and how sure you are that it will be that bad. When the suggestion enters the awareness that you must do **SOMETHING** about this situation, look at that suggestion. Does the suggestion give you any idea **WHAT** to do about the situation? If so, is it something you can do? If you look at the suggestion and see that it does not offer anything specific you can do, you may see that it has no value to try to do **SOMETHING**. If you see that the thought is just a suggestion that popped into your awareness and that it has no value, the awareness will not accept it, the suggestion will not be passed on to the action center, and you will feel less anxiety.

For anger and hatred, look at the suggestion that someone is to blame for the situation. Is there really one person or thing that is to blame? That is, was the situation really caused by a single individual or group or thing, or was it a combination of events that lead up to it? Is it possible for this one person that you are blaming to fix the situation or make it better? If not, there is little use in your trying to take action against that person. If it is possible for that person to fix things (make the situation more pleasant again), is there a snowball's chance in Hell that you will be able to persuade them to do it by arguing with them, or even by violence? If the answer to any of these questions is no, you might look at the suggestions that you blame them and try to get them to change as just suggestions, and decide whether you really want to expend the effort and make the personal sacrifices (which will be discussed in the next chapter) to act on these suggestions. Remember that if the awareness can separate itself from these suggestions and decide not to accept them, they will not be put into the action center. If you detect the thoughts that lead to guilt entering the awareness, look at these suggestions carefully. Is there any benefit from punishing yourself? If you decide that you really do not want to do the thing that you were starting to feel guilty about, you can stop doing it. It is not necessary to punish yourself to get yourself to stop doing it, just stop doing it. And if you decide not to stop doing the thing, what is the benefit in punishing yourself for doing it if you are still going to do it? You might as well go ahead and do it, and enjoy it. Be aware of thoughts that say you should (there is that "should" again) punish yourself by feeling guilty, and decide if you want to do that.

As for depression, watch out for thoughts entering the awareness that suggest that you make the situation worse. That is, watch out for thoughts that look for the bad side of a situation. When you detect such thoughts, ask yourself if you really want to make things worse, or if you would prefer to make things better (even a little better). You can talk yourself into thinking things are worse, or you can look at the bright side and make the most of the situation, and maybe even do something to make the situation better. The choice is up to you.

Spend a week or so practicing being on the lookout for the thoughts that lead to these destructive emotions. In the next chapter, we will discuss emotions some more. For now, getting some practice at being aware of the thoughts that create these emotions can be well worthwhile.

One aspect of emotions that makes it difficult for the awareness to remember its separateness from the emotions is that the emotions can be self-perpetuating. There are several feedback cycles (otherwise known as vicious cycles) that can keep emotions feeding on themselves. It can be very worthwhile to be aware of these cycles so that the awareness can spot them as they occur and break the cycle.

The first of these cycles is caused by an old habit that many people have of trying to justify or rationalize the emotions that they are feeling. This is especially true if it is an emotion that they feel they should not be having. First, some thought or event occurs that triggers some emotion or feeling. We begin to feel the emotion rising up within us. If the emotion is one that we have been taught to believe we should not have (such as anger), we then start to justify this emotion.

For example, suppose someone does something that we do not like, and we start to experience anger. We start building up a case in our mind to justify this anger. We start thinking of other things this person has done that we do not like. We may even start imagining things that this person might be doing or might do sometime in the future. Of course, all these thoughts about what the person has done or might do trigger more feelings of anger. These feelings of anger then cause us to think of even more terrible things about that person, and so on. Before you know it, some poor person who has done one little thing to you (at least recently) has become the worst person in all of recorded history, and probably for some time before that. What is happening is that the intellectual center is providing associations based on the information it is receiving from the awareness. The awareness is identifying with the anger and with the thoughts that the person you are experiencing anger against is bad. It is accepting these as true, and therefore putting them into the intellectual center as true. The intellectual center is therefore providing the awareness with information that seems relevant based on its associations. This information is more information about how bad this other person is. Of course, these thoughts of what a terrible person this is seldom trigger pleasant associations about the person, such as a few of the nice things this person has done.

Even if the emotion or feeling is not one that we try to justify, we often look for reasons we are having this emotion if it is an unpleasant one. For example, if we are afraid, we look for reasons why we are afraid. If we are feeling sad, we often look for things that are making us sad. This has the same effect as justifying the emotion, because we are still generating reasons or excuses for having the emotion. The big problem with this attempt to find reasons for our emotions is that the reasons we come up with then help to increase the emotions and feelings. Take fear, for example. Suppose something startles you or scares you. You start to feel the fear. The intellectual center receives the information that something terrible is about to happen. It therefore provides more information on terrible things that can happen by providing previously stored information on scary situations. These thoughts trigger more fear, and the cycle repeats. Before you know it, one little noise downstairs has convinced you that a squad of foreign terrorists have driven a truck bomb into your living room. [Figure 6.1](#) provides a graphic representation of the process.

The same process can occur for just about any feeling or emotion, good or bad. If you are feeling guilty, the intellectual center will provide you with lots of thoughts about what a terrible person you are. If you are feeling sad or down, it will provide you with lots of thoughts about what a miserable life you have. On the other hand, if you are feeling cheerful, the intellectual center will provide you with thoughts and memories of how nice everything has been and can be. If you feel good about someone, the intellectual center will be provided with lots of thoughts about nice things about that person.

The cycle of negative feelings or emotions can be broken at several points using the same techniques discussed in previous chapters. That is, the awareness can maintain its separateness from the thoughts and emotions. When you feel the emotion or feeling, be aware that it is simply something that you are experiencing, a sensation coming from the emotional center. If it is an emotion, remember that it is simply something that was triggered by the conditioned thoughts discussed in the [chapter 5](#).

There is no reason to reason to justify having it. For example, if the emotion is anger, be aware that one of those blaming thoughts managed to get through the awareness when it wasn't paying attention. You don't need to justify the anger. You don't need to look for additional reasons to be angry with the person. If such thoughts about other reasons to be angry do come up from the intellectual center due to associations, just view them as suggestions that the awareness can reject. Remember, there is no value to you in getting angry, so you have every reason to ignore these thoughts providing you with "reasons" to be angry. The same goes for being afraid, or any of the other emotions or feelings. You can break the vicious cycle by disidentifying (that is, remembering our separateness from) with either the feelings and emotions, or with the thoughts which then feed them (or with both).

You also can go a step beyond breaking the negative cycle by creating a positive one. Decide what emotion you would like to be feeling. Act as if you are already feeling that way. If you want to feel happy, smile a lot and act happy. This will generate associations with happy thoughts, which will cause the intellectual center to send these happy thoughts to the awareness. This will then generate the feeling of happiness, which will generate the same cycle shown in [figure 6.1](#), only with a pleasant, positive feeling.

Another cycle that can cause runaway emotions is the adaptation cycle. It works like this. When a person experiences a strong emotion such as fear or anger, the person's body releases certain chemicals that affect the metabolism, such as adrenaline. This is a holdover from our ancient history when we lived in the wild. Our primitive ancestors had a lot of trouble with dangerous animals, violent human enemies, and other dangers. When they experienced anger or fear, it was usually because they were in some physical danger, such as having someone or something attack them. In such a situation, it was very valuable to have a sudden extra supply of energy. Because of this, our primitive ancestors developed these glands that squirt all sorts of chemicals into our bloodstream when they felt these emotions. These chemicals released the necessary energy to fight the threatening creature or at least run away very fast. Unfortunately, we still have these glands even though we seldom need to fight or run when we experience strong emotions. For example, it is usually strongly counterproductive to get into a fist fight or run away when your boss is yelling at you or your spouse is threatening to leave you. As a result, we experience the emotions (that is, until we get really good at disidentifying with the thoughts that cause them) and have all this energy released into our systems, but we do not immediately use the energy. When the body realizes that you are not going to use all this energy by fighting or running, it must find another way to get rid of this energy coursing through your bloodstream. It usually finds some simple (although not necessarily pleasant) way to get rid of it, such as causing your heart to beat faster or your stomach muscles to tie themselves in knots or your neck muscles to tighten up (which often gives you a headache). This deliberate waste of excess energy is called adaptation, because your body is adapting to excess energy by using it up.

Now ordinarily, these adaptations are short-lived and harmless, even if they are uncomfortable. The problem comes if the person is not aware of this fact and allows the adaptations themselves to trigger other emotions. The most common emotion is fear of the adaptation itself, such as fear that you are having a heart attack or other serious problem. Some people also get angry about having the unpleasant sensations, such as blaming the person they are arguing with for giving them a headache.

Of course, the new emotions then release more chemicals into the bloodstream, which generates adaptations. This can easily become a vicious cycle. [Figure 6.2](#) shows the process. Eventually, it is quite possible for the part of the body that is using up the energy to become worn out and start to break down. Then you can start to have real problems, such as ulcers.

As before, there are several simple ways to break this cycle. The first thing to do is simply be aware that the physical sensations you are feeling after experiencing a strong emotion like fear or anger are a normal, healthy way for your body to get rid of some excess energy, even if it is a bit uncomfortable at the moment. If you just leave it alone, it will go away by itself. This knowledge alone is often enough to break the cycle, since you are no longer afraid of the adaptation. If this is not enough, then you can actively observe all the thoughts coming into the awareness telling you that you must do something about the physical sensations, and reject these suggestions. You also can disidentify with the emotions that you experience that are caused by the physical sensations, such as fear, anger, etc. Disidentifying with the

thoughts and emotions will greatly reduce or even eliminate the release of chemicals, and therefore break the cycle.

There is a third cycle that can make it more difficult (notice I do not say impossible) to quiet the emotions. Some of the chemicals that I have just described that your body releases when you experience strong emotions can actually be addictive. If you have been experiencing a certain emotion for a long time, you can become somewhat addicted to the chemicals associated with that emotion. When you stop feeling that emotion because you have started to disidentify from and reject the thoughts that cause it, you may actually start to feel an almost subliminal craving for that emotion. We all know someone who has held an emotion (resentment, fear, self-pity, etc.) for so long that they only seem to be happy (I use that word very loosely here) when they are wallowing in that emotion. If you have been dominated for a long time by some particular emotion and you start to observe and reject the thoughts that cause it so that you stop experiencing that emotion, you may start to experience a temporary emotional discomfort. This could take the form of an uneasiness or edginess, a slight feeling of emptiness, or a craving or desire to have that emotion again. This can tend to draw you back to experiencing the emotion. If this happens, just be aware of the feeling and disidentify from the feeling of wanting or missing the emotion. It is just temporary, although it may return with decreasing frequency and intensity as time goes on, just like any craving for something unhealthy you give up. If you are aware of it, you should have no difficulty rejecting this suggestion, just like any other.

For the next week (and the rest of your life), be on the lookout for the vicious cycles described in this chapter. These are fairly easy to spot, because you have the emotions associated with them to act as a little "alarm" to warn you. As soon as you start to feel an emotion, start looking for any thoughts that begin to follow the emotion that tend to reinforce the emotion. If you feel anger at someone (or something), immediately look for thoughts that pop into the awareness that tend to agree with the anger. If you experience fear, be on the lookout for associations that will reinforce the fear. The same goes for all unpleasant emotions. When such thoughts do enter the awareness, observe that they are just suggestions and reject them. You have enough to do with what is going on NOW without having all these associations to deal with. Of course, ideally you will eventually learn to spot and reject the thoughts that cause the emotions in the first place (as described in chapter 5), but when you are just starting out in this work a few may get by the awareness and into the emotional and action centers. If that happens, breaking the self-perpetuating cycle is the next best thing. If you do have a strong emotion and begin to feel a physical reaction sometime afterward (it may be only a minute or two, but it could be as long as several days), be aware that this is a normal reaction. Observe and reject any suggestions that you need to feel fear or anger (or any other emotion) about these physical sensations.

As you become successful at the techniques described in this chapter and the preceding ones, you will find that you will experience less and less violent emotion (even fear or guilt can be considered a violent emotion here, since they are destructive to the body and mind). Once that happens, be on the lookout for any cravings to go back to these emotions. It may not happen at all, but if it does, just disidentify from the sensation and suggestions. They will fade some enough, and you will be rewarded by a much calmer inner state.

Take care to do the exercises for this week and to continue to do the ones from the preceding weeks.

One of the reasons that the thoughts coming from the intellectual center sometimes get sent on to the action center is that the awareness sometimes does not pay close attention to whether images that come to it are actually happening now. Ideally, the awareness would look at information coming to it from the senses, evaluate what to do about this situation, and send the correct decision on to the action center. The information that comes from the intellectual center would be used for reference only, to help evaluate the current information coming from the senses. Unfortunately, the images that come from the intellectual center can sometimes seem so real that this information is reported to the action center as if it were currently happening.

Let's take a simple (and common) example. Suppose you are at a social gathering and you spot someone who once did something to you that caused you pain or prevented you from getting pleasure (as defined in [chapter 3](#)). By association, the intellectual center will send images of this event to the awareness when you see this person. In short, you will remember the event. As these memories are being shown to the awareness, it can seem to the awareness as if the events are actually happening. The awareness can send this information to the emotional center and the action center, causing strong emotions and the physical reactions discussed in the previous chapter. This is not to say that the awareness has totally lost touch with reality and is totally unaware that these things are not happening now. It merely means that in the moments that the awareness is seeing the vivid memory images, they can seem real enough to be acted on by the emotional and action centers if the awareness is not careful.

The same thing can happen with memories involving other emotions, such as fear, depression, and so on. As an association causes the intellectual center to replay scenes from past events, the images can be so vivid that for a few moments the awareness relives the event and passes the same decisions made then on to the emotional and action centers. The same situation can even exist when the awareness sees images from the intellectual center that have never happened. This occurs when you are worried about something that might happen in the future. The intellectual center puts together hypothetical pictures of what might happen and shows them to the awareness for consideration. The awareness, however, is half asleep and views these as real events. It makes decisions based on these images and sends instructions to the action center.

For example, suppose you expect to face a situation that you consider threatening tomorrow (such as going into battle). The intellectual center may create images of what this may be like. As the awareness sees these images, it reacts to them as if they were happening right now, and sends instructions to the action center to fight or run. The action center releases the necessary chemicals into the bloodstream to release energy to do this. By the time the awareness wakes up and realizes that this situation does not exist right now, this energy is rushing through your body. You then have the situation described in [chapter 6](#) (all wound up and no place to go).

What can you do about this? The solution is for the awareness to make the extra effort to stay awake and be aware at all times of where its information is coming from. Is it observing something that is actually happening, or is this simply an image being shown to it? When images of past events or possible future events flood the awareness, focus on what is actually happening now. This does not mean to try to block out these images coming from the intellectual center. To make this attempt would only increase the tension, and would be impossible. Simply keep in the awareness the knowledge that these images are not actually what is happening, and that there is no need to act on them. As you see the false images and at the same time see the knowledge that these images are not happening now, the effect of these images will fade automatically.

You also can remind yourself as often as possible that it is more valuable to be aware of what is happening right now than to react to what has happened in the past or what might happen in the future. Reminding yourself of this will send a message to the intellectual center that the awareness is not very

interested in rehashing old scenes or seeing hypothetical events in the future. This will slowly have the effect of decreasing the frequency and intensity of these mental images, because the intellectual center will slowly get the message that they have little value. As your exercise for the week, make a special effort to be aware at all times of whether what the awareness sees is real, or images from the intellectual center. Practice acting on what is happening now, and reminding yourself that there is no point in dwelling on images of things that are not happening now. Remember that even if these are events that did happen in the past or might happen in the future, you cannot respond NOW to a situation that does not exist NOW. Therefore, dwelling on these images or reacting to them is useless (and potentially harmful).

This is a short chapter with a single subject. However, it is such a valuable subject that it is well worth devoting an entire week solely to it. It also will be worth continuing to do for the rest of your life.

In the first chapter, we discussed seeing thoughts as separate from the awareness. We discussed seeing these thoughts as suggestions that could be acted on or rejected once we saw them as separate from the real awareness. In the chapters that followed, we discussed many specific thoughts and emotions from the viewpoint of seeing that most of these actually had little value under most circumstances and would best be rejected as suggestions. In this chapter, we will toss out a few ideas (many of which have been discussed in the previous chapters) that can be valuable to consider when some of those suggestions come into the awareness.

- When any suggestion that you do something comes into the awareness, you ALWAYS have at least two choices. You can obey the suggestion, or you can reject it. The thought that you MUST (have to, need to, etc.) do something is always wrong. You always have the option of simply not doing anything about the current situation. You can accept it, and allow yourself to experience it without resisting. Although our culture often glamorizes struggling against impossible odds, being able to accept what you cannot change is a valuable ability.
- You can only respond to and deal with the situation at hand, as it is NOW. There is nothing you can do to change the past. You cannot respond to a situation in the future until the future arrives and the situation occurs. Concentrating on what is happening now and responding appropriately to it is the most the most useful use of your energy.
- Many people have a mental picture of the way they would like things to be, of some ideal situation. They then expend all their energy trying to achieve this ideal situation, no matter how impractical or unrealistic it is. It is more constructive to look realistically at what the situation is, then see what small improvement you can make in this situation, rather than complaining because the situation is not perfect. There is an old saying that it is better to light one little candle than to curse the darkness.
- Although the suggestions that come into the awareness often are expressed in extremes, the situation is never totally "bad." There is always something desirable or useful in every situation. It can be very valuable to see the benefit of any situation. For one thing, it will improve your mental health. For another, once you have seen what is valuable about the situation, you can start putting that value to some use and making the value grow.
- If nothing else, every unpleasant situation gives you a chance to strengthen yourself by overcoming it. Consider the possibility that the real purpose of life is personal growth and development, rather than the accumulation of personal wealth or the experiencing of personal pleasure. If you can look at it that way, every experience you have can be interesting and enriching.
- When any thought that takes the form of a belief ("I believe that . ") comes into the awareness, it can be valuable to ask yourself what is the source of that belief. Is it something you experienced yourself, or did you accept something someone else told you? If someone else told you this, does that person actually have any real basis for their belief, or were they simply repeating something they heard?
- When a certain situation occurs, we will often associate it with a previous situation and think it is exactly the same. It is not. No two situations are ever exactly the same. Before you react to a situation as if it were the same as a previous situation, stop and look at how the situation is different. Ask yourself how these differences might affect how you can respond to the situation.
- The phrase "I should" or "You should" has no real meaning. When it comes into your awareness, try to pinpoint exactly what it means. You cannot do two things at the same time, especially when they are mutually contradictory. When two contradictory suggestions come into the awareness (usually something

like "I must" and "I must not"), pick one to act on and drop the other COMPLETELY. Do not try to do both. Of course, you also can always decide not to accept either suggestion.

- It is not necessary (or even possible) to get rid of any thoughts that are bothering you. All you can do (and all you need to do) is observe that they are separate from you, that they are just suggestions, and that you do not have to act on them or accept them.
- There is no value in blaming someone (or something) for an unpleasant situation. If a situation exists, then it exists. Period. Attempting to place blame for it will accomplish nothing. It will only create turmoil, both within you and between you and the person or thing you place blame on. Your time is more constructively spent doing what you can about the situation.
- No situation lasts forever. If things seem really bad (unpleasant), just wait a while and things will get better. Of course, you are free to make whatever contribution to helping them get better that you can.
- When you make something important to you (when you think in terms of "must" or "need" or "have to") you create great inner turmoil and anxiety. When you find this happening, stop and ask yourself if achieving this thing is worth this inner turmoil. You might just decide to give up the struggle for this thing that you thought was so important. Interestingly enough, once you have fully and really realized that you are free to give up this thing you thought you "must" have, you can pursue it freely without anxiety.
- There is an old saying that "Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so." That is, a situation is not bad until you accept the suggestion that it is. You may find almost any situation tolerable or even pleasant (at least interesting) if you do not accept the suggestion that it is bad and you must change it.
- There are two kinds of freedom: Being free from all unpleasant situations, and being free from the control of the thoughts and emotions by learning to see that they are not us and we do not have to accept them. The first type of freedom is impossible to ever attain. There will always be some unpleasant situations in our lives. The second kind of freedom is attainable. It is possible by practice to view each thought as a suggestion, to look at each suggestion, and decide if we want to act on it (put it into the action center). If we select wisely (which we can learn from experience to do), if we decide to act only on those ideas that are beneficial to us and are possible to act on, we will be free from inner turmoil. If we learn to see the feelings and emotions that come up from the emotional center as sensations that we can live with, even when they are unpleasant, we can find that they cannot control us. This is real freedom.



Introduction

Chapter 1 - Parts of the Mind

Chapter 2 - Thinking in Absolutes and Extremes

Chapter 3 - Inner Conflict

Chapter 4 - Self Delusion and Blame

Chapter 5 - Feelings and Emotions

Chapter 6 - Vicious Cycles

Chapter 7 - Living in the Now

Chapter 8 - Thoughts to Ponder

The Automatic Car - A Modern Parable

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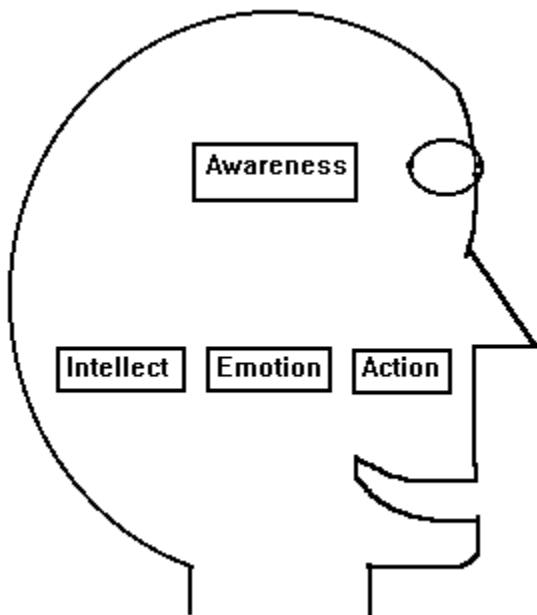
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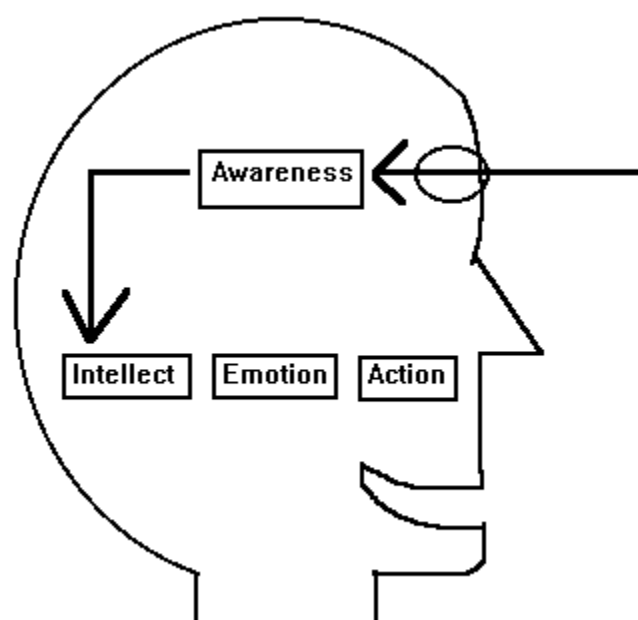
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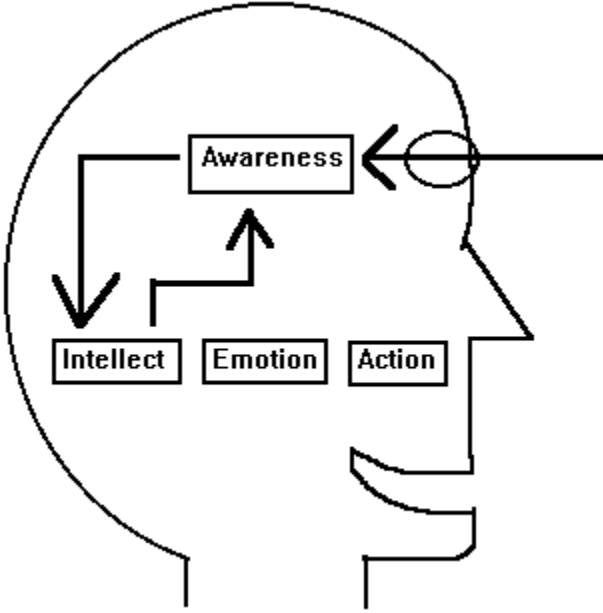
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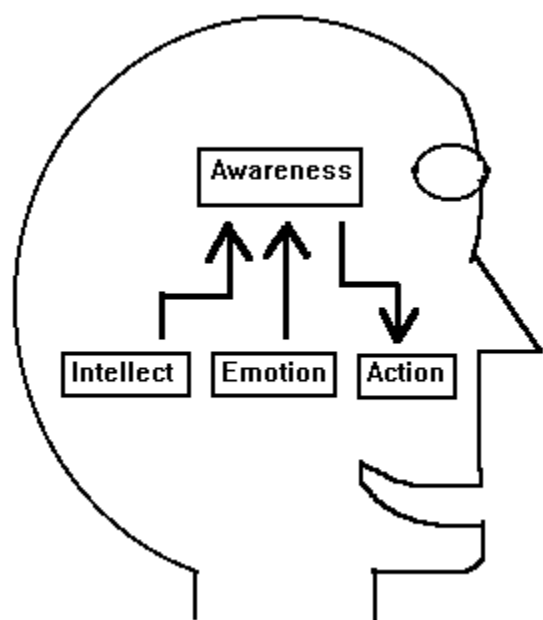
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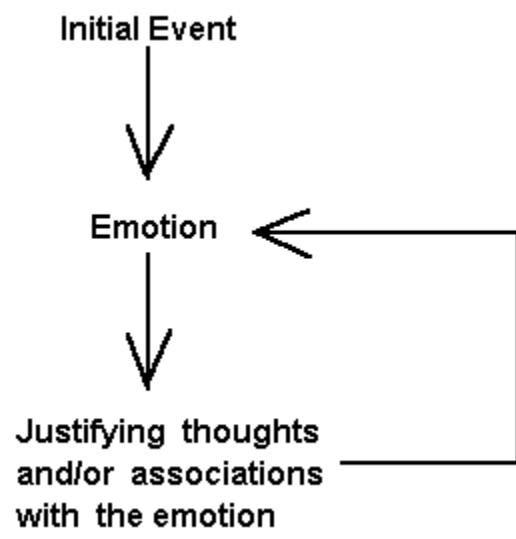
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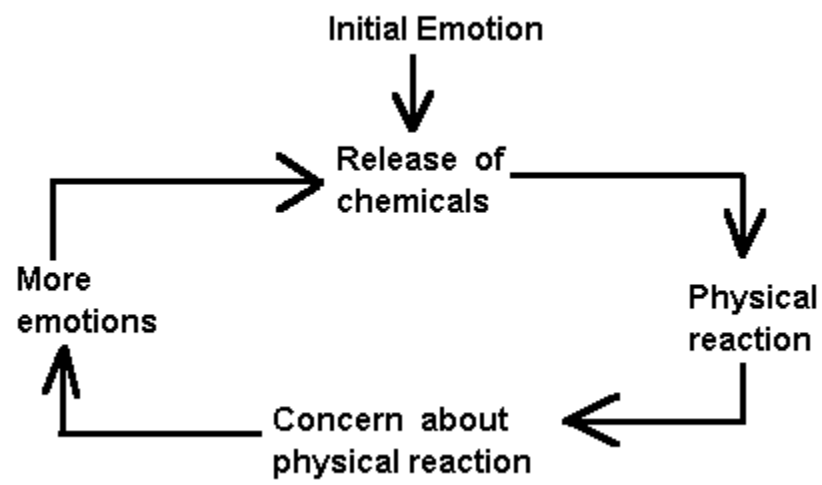




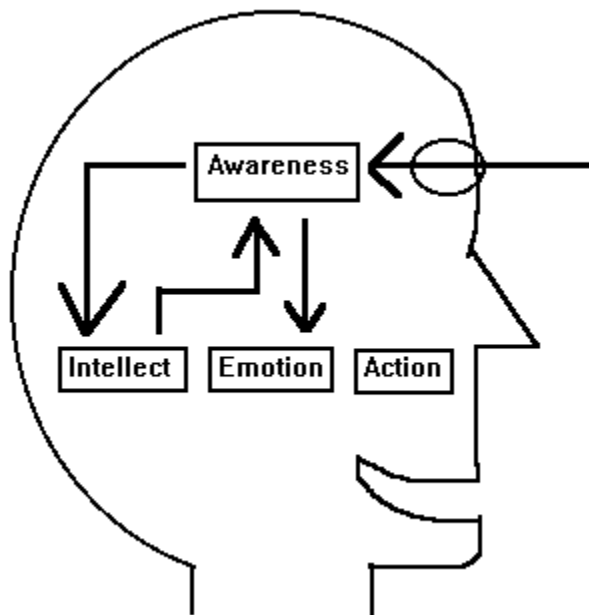


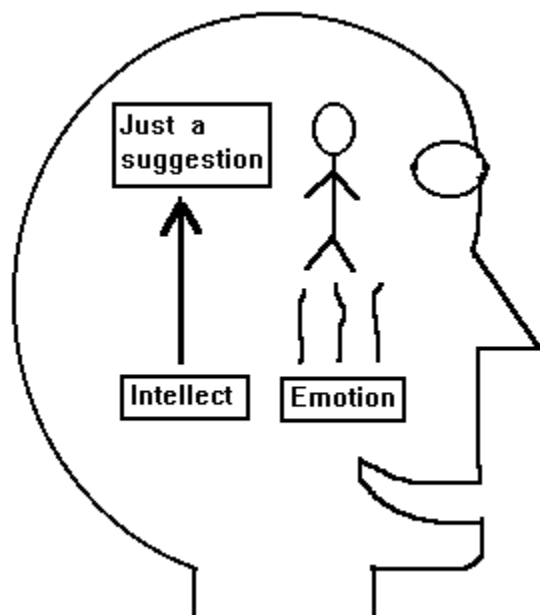






As the title suggests, this book is about how the human mind works, and how to make it work better. "Better", in this case, really means the way it is designed to work. Making it work better means recognizing and eliminating certain mistakes in the way people think about their minds and use them. Each chapter of this book starts with an explanation of how the mind usually behaves. This is followed by an explanation of a more effective way to use the mind. Each chapter then ends with some exercises designed to help the reader get back on track with using the mind the way it is designed to be used. The exercises at the end of each chapter will take most people about a week to get the hang of. You will benefit most if you stick with the exercises in one chapter until you at least get some experience with them and get the feel of doing them before you go on to the next chapter. When you do go on to another chapter and start the exercises in that chapter, you will benefit from continuing to do the exercises from all preceding chapters. In fact, you will continue to benefit from doing the exercises for the rest of your life. This is because the "exercises" actually consist of using your mind the way it is designed to be used. Do not be discouraged if the exercises seem difficult or unfamiliar. They will work if you keep at them long enough and diligently enough. The work will be very rewarding if you stick with it. It can give you an inner freedom and peace that you have never experienced before.





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Once there was a man who had a nice, new car. He was very happy with the fact that he could drive the car wherever he wanted to go. After a while, however, he thought it would be nice if the car would take him where he wanted to go by itself, without him needing to drive it. He installed a computer in the car that could learn the routes to the places that the man drove to. After the man had driven the car someplace, he could tell the computer something like "This is the way I go to work. Take me here every day from Monday to Friday." or "This is the way to my girlfriend's house. Take me here every Friday night" or "This is the way to the grocery store. Take me here when I am hungry." After a while, the car learned to drive the man everywhere that he normally liked to go. The man found this so relaxing that he could just get in the car and go to sleep, and the car would go where it had learned to drive. After a while, the man got so comfortable that he would just stay in the car and sleep, and the car would take him everywhere.

This worked all right for a little while, but soon problems began to develop. He broke up with his girlfriend and got another one, but the car still took him to his old girlfriend's house. The grocery store moved to a new location, but the car still took him to the old location. Sometimes the car took him to work on holiday's when he did not need to go to work. Worst of all, sometimes there were obstructions in the road, like road construction or heavy traffic. The car did not understand these things, and just plowed on through them, which gave the man a very rough ride indeed. Unfortunately, the man had gotten so used to sleeping in his car, he still let it take him wherever it was used to going. He even stopped going to new places, because the car did not know how to go there and it seemed like so much trouble to wake up and drive himself.

One day, the man had a very bad day. The car plowed through a detour sign and took him over a very bumpy road to a place the man really didn't even want to go to. The man finally decided to take charge of the car. He considered destroying the computer, but he realized that some of the information in the computer was still worth keeping. He checked the computer's memory and threw out all the old routes that took him places he no longer wanted to go or took him where he wanted in an inefficient way. He left in the routes that were still good. However, he also developed an override switch that allowed him to take over if he saw obstacles in the way or changed his mind about where he wanted to go. Then he resolved to stay awake and watch where he was going so the computer would only be a servant and not control where he went.

