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THE ADVENTURE OF THE MIND AND HEART

- *Thinking Maketh It So
- *Non-Judgmental Self Observation

Ever notice that love totally transforms your life?
By the Same token, fear can turn an average day into hell.

All emotional thoughts have power over us. If we're afraid we'll be taken advantage of, afraid others are talking about us, afraid of making a mistake, or of not being perfect, ect., then these fears will act as the filter through which we interpret everything in our world. It doesn't matter whether the fears are actual reality, they become true to us because we believe them so strongly.

President Roosevelt reminded us that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. What this means is that when we're afraid, we're consumed with the thoughts of fear, which causes the thoughts to rapidly escalate so we're totally caught up in the fear. We're transformed into fear itself.

Likewise, you're totally uplifted by happy feelings of contentment and pleasure, anticipation at the beauty of the day, of your work, your relationships, and you're full of creativity, spontaneity and the ability to life fully.

The ability of thoughts to affect how we perceive ourselves and everything in our lives means that we will become whatever we think about and whatever we feel. Thoughts and feelings have the ability to transform us in any direction.

The Bible reminds us that 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' We realize how closely related feelings and thoughts are.

Not only are our thoughts and feelings intertwined, our entire physiological system is affected by this process. Unpleasant, fearful or embarrassing thoughts are enough to cause stomach upset, headaches, blood pressure escalation, sweating, heart palpitations. The mind goes into panic, swirling all over the place, perhaps causing us to blank out, feel paralyzed. Time stands still.

Remember a time when you almost had a car accident, flunked a test, were reprimanded by a parent or boss, or when you were frightened. Notice what happens in your body as you recall it.

Now notice how you feel as you remember and imagine a lazy day. You're lying on a warm sandy beach far away from civilization, cool breezes gently lapping water at your feet. There's just enough shade for your needs and the birds in the trees are singing. There's nothing to do. You feel so happy, appreciative of this experience, so grateful to be alive. You're feeling pretty special. Everything's taken care of. Your breath deepens into your body. You exhale and let go.

It's obvious what the difference is. You feel better in all ways when you think quiet, peaceful thoughts. Even if you're not at this beach, thinking of this experience and allowing

yourself to **feel into** it will change your mental, physical, and emotional being. As you feel into the imagination, your body will respond and shift into the para-sympathetic aspects of the nervous system, creating relaxation in the body.

Other thought processes which keep us off balance, are the following:

- Thinking negative thoughts when you notice something less than perfect about yourself
- Calling yourself negative names, such as stupid, ugly, fat
- Thinking negative, hateful, hurtful thoughts about others

If you continuously think these 'self poisoning' thoughts, your body and mind will respond and you'll spiral downward, into more negativity and hopelessness. And, you'll feel these stress effects in your body. Please note that there's a difference between (1) negative comments that condemn yourself and your basic essence and (2) thoughts that are merely assessments (without the self-critical judgments) about how skillfully you've engaged in certain behaviors or thoughts.

I can notice that the meal that I have prepared was sloppily done, over or under cooked, and not well seasoned. I can notice this and be unhappy and determine what I have done and how to do it better. That is an assessment. If I call myself names, remind myself how stupid I am, and believe that I am this way and there is no hope for me, then I have lapsed into self-critical judgments. This state of judging myself creates a trap for me that makes it very difficult for me to be willing to try to cook again because I already feel totally inadequate and like a real loser.

The key is whether I am assessing how skilled or unskilled my behavior/actions were, or whether I am judging myself as bad and wrong, totally inadequate and without hope. Behavior assessments give me room to move, room to improve. Self-critical judgments keep me trapped in fear and beliefs that I am inadequate and will never be good enough or 'perfect'.

By the same token, when you fill your mind with positive thoughts about yourself, thoughts of love, beauty, peace, and the fullness of life and yourself, then you'll feel a sense of well being, competence, and eagerness for life and your life/ your actions will reflect this.

There's a certain powerful truth in the saying 'Thinking maketh it so!'

Observe what happens when you think about yourself: Do you see yourself through a kindly filter or through an impatient, critical, hateful filter? Notice the power of your belief system/filter to determine how you feel about yourself. With this in mind, now let's explore how to develop a non-judgmental observer that can shift how you're feeling about yourself.

Consider the possibility of looking at yourself and everyone else through the eyes of compassion. Say the word. Compassion. Say it again. Compassion. Feel the effects of this word throughout your being.

Notice how the eyes of compassion soften your attitude and release your tension. The more you practice this state of consciousness, the easier it is to live in this state of consciousness. You may not be able to live in this state all of the time, but, at least consider the possibility of developing this state..

Consider the possibility that you could move in the direction of living in this inner compassionate state of being. In hatha yoga, we notice that our bodies are stiff and tight and we can't bend forward or touch our toes. However, as we do the asanas, and practice moving in the direction of touching our toes, over time, we'll find ourselves flexible and touching our toes.

So, how does one **move in the direction of**?

First, begin to cultivate the habit of just noticing your thought process, just noticing ... noticing without self critical judgment. And when you do notice yourself making critical judgments (and it's predictable that you will judge yourself), just notice the judgments and let them go. Don't hang on to the thoughts. Just release, release again and release again.

Take a nice deep breath and remind yourself 'I'm okay', 'I'm good enough.' This simple shift can begin to make a real difference. The thoughts you pay most attention to are the thoughts that have most power over you. And, you're more likely to pay attention to thoughts you have a strong positive or negative emotion attached to.

Until you're aware of what you're doing, you're more likely to notice and believe the negative self talk, especially fear and self judgment, than you are to notice and believe the positive self talk. The more you engage in negative self talk, the more negative you'll feel about yourself. The negativity feeds on itself creating more and more negativity.

Exhale and let them go, let the thoughts go from your mind as you exhale the breath out your feet. Let go **all** the way. Release your shoulders and jaw. Exhale all the way out your feet.

As you begin to just notice the thoughts that rise and fall in your mind, you can learn to be at observation of your mental processes... not at the effect of them. When you just notice, you notice as if you were a surveillance camera, just noticing. No editorial comment. This is a kind scanning, not attached to any particular thought process, just noticing.

It's as if one aspect of you is observing the rest of you. In this step of self-observation, you learn to separate your *inner observer or witness* from what you're observing. You can identify this inner observer and then watch it observe you. You just watch it and learn to let go of self-critical judgments, regardless of what you think you've observed. The more non-judgmental you can be when you observe yourself, the greater your chance of being an objective observer.

As you just notice, you'll begin to detach from the thoughts and witness the thought process.

When you can just observe/witness your thought process, you'll begin to see that these thoughts are not all of who you are. They're just thoughts. You'll be able to differentiate between thoughts that are 'stories you've made up about the truth' and thoughts that are **the truth**'. Sometimes I think that all thoughts, and especially self-critical ones, are just 'stories we've made up'.

As you continue this process of observation, you can begin to separate yourself from the thoughts, and watch the thoughts rising and falling. You begin to see that thoughts are just 'word groupings' that pop into your awareness. After you've separated out your thoughts and can observe the thought process, you'll notice thoughts and self-observations

you've ignored before. Then you can begin to watch yourself think these thoughts... that is, you can watch yourself as you allow these thoughts come into your awareness.

This process of non-judgmental self-observation is a critical step in being able to live consciously.

The next step is to combine the process of just noticing with a compassionate state of mind. When we have compassion for ourselves, then we can begin to have compassion for everyone. We notice that others are subject to the same thought patterns that we are, and that we all are doing the very best we can, regardless of what the judgmental mind says. Compassionate observation makes it possible to cut some slack for ourselves, as well as others.

The basic truth here is that everything we *think* is going on in the outer world is actually going on in our own inner world. It is actually 'the stories we've made up' about who we are and what is going on. It isn't the objective truth. It is our subjective experience. We interpret everything through our own filter that is based on our conscious and unconscious thoughts about life and ourselves.

The mind is the most amazing inner process. Developing the ability to be self-observing is a most amazing and profound personal capacity. The beauty of this is that everyone can learn to be self-observing. **The more self-observing you are, with compassion, the more inner freedom and peace you will have.**

. Even more amazing is that once you know the principles, you mostly teach yourself by asking *your own deep self* to help you be aware all the time. Sometimes, you may find it helpful to have an aware outer teacher who can assist you to develop a discriminating ear and eye to break old habit patterns. A teacher can be helpful because these old habits and filters are all unconscious to us, and when something is unconscious, it is unconscious. We do not know it is there. In fact, we would swear that it is not! Remember to be non-judgmental, compassionate, and patient with yourself, just observing moment-by-moment.

It's a noticing by noticing process, noticing awareness after awareness. You learn one step at a time. Patience is required. It's going to just take as long as it takes to learn to observe and observe yourself observing, and then be able to consciously choose to see things differently. You might think of this as shifting your perspective or point of view to get another angle. Then you could see how many different perspectives about a given situation that you might be able to see.

The ability to be self-observing makes possible the next steps of your personal development, ever deepening into resources of Unconditional Love and of the Unconscious. As you learn to observe you can see and accept all the positive aspects of yourself that you haven't been able to acknowledge as of yet. Also, you'll not be so afraid of the parts of yourself that you have difficulty acknowledging and accepting about yourself because you'd judge yourself too much because of those attributes. These so called shadow aspects can be seen and appreciated in a different way when your inner witness just observes and makes no self-critical judgments. Shifting perspective or point of view gives you a much broader view, enabling you to experience yourself in a totally different context, one that brings inner freedom and peace.

As you observe within, you can shift your state of consciousness by just noticing your thoughts. Then, if you call to memory various images that recall positive feeling states, your body/mind will respond favorably. You'll notice the difference when you breathe an

inner smile through your body than when you breathe fearful, negative and judgmental thoughts through your body. These images can be experiences, places, people or thoughts that have the power to trigger that inner quiet inner place, that place that provides inner resources for you and adds richness to your life. Remember the images and allow the feeling.

It's a process, a journey within, a step at a time, that leads to Conscious Living.

Namaste,
Judith