

Live a CONSCIOUS LIFE

We need to learn how our minds and emotions work together in order to break self-defeating cycles, writes Carolyn Moody.

I tend to think a lot. I never thought it was a problem until I came up against alternative therapists, shamans and spiritual teachers who told me that I was “too much in my mind”, making it sound as though as though there was something inherently wrong with me.

It took me a while to realise that of course I am very much in my mind, just like the vast majority of people in the western world where we have developed the mind, the rational and thinking part of ourselves, out of all proportion to the rest of us. This has left us very lopsided and disconnected from all the other aspects of being human. During our formative years we learnt to ignore our physical, emotional and spiritual health: “of course you are well enough to go to school”; “you can’t go to the toilet right now, you must wait until lessons finish”; “big boys don’t cry”; “put a smile on your face, nobody will like you if you look miserable”; “don’t be sad, have an ice cream instead”; “fit in, don’t stand out from the crowd”.

Around food, we learnt to suppress our innate appetite regulatory systems because others ‘knew best’ what was right for us: “eat everything on your plate (even if you aren’t hungry)”; “eat to please me (and others)”; “it’s rude to leave food on your plate”.

Many of us grew up feeling empty, lonely and anxious, our inner self crying out for recognition, like the soul knocking on the trap door to be set free. We wander around in a spiritual desert seeking happiness in material things and relationships which cannot fulfil us because we are disconnected from our authentic self and the source from whence we came (whatever that might be). Looking outwards for happiness is doomed to failure because everything begins and ends with us and our internal state of being.

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Our beautiful, wise selves have grown up with a distorted self-image. We neither trust ourselves nor think we are wise and beautiful. The first tenet of all ancient spiritual teachings is ‘know yourself’, yet the two questions that are guaranteed to evoke an emotional response in people are ‘who are you?’ and ‘why are you here?’ These existentialist questions have been around since philosophers first set foot on the Earth.

Usually people answer with their role, gender, work or marital status. But when pressed, “who is the real you?”



they get stuck and start to feel anxious or sad at the loss of self and meaning to life.

DIVINE BEINGS

To live a conscious life the journey of a lifetime, an exciting voyage of self-discovery that starts with the first step. The philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, said: "We are spiritual beings having a physical experience." We are divine beings fused with a body, personality, mind and emotions that, at a primal level, are hard wired for survival. The body, mind and emotions are intrinsically linked. Whatever affects one affects all other parts of being human.

We can use our 'observer' mind to monitor our thoughts and consciously change them

There are many routes to 'knowing yourself' and being at peace with who we are, yet it is easy to spend a lifetime frantically following the advice of 'experts' when all the time what we are seeking is within. Because we don't know or even trust ourselves to be wonderful, complex and whole human beings we continually cause our own suffering. We feel stuck and unable to change our self-sabotaging habitual behaviours, whether through food, drink, in our relationships, finances, being aggressive or passive, depressed, unwell...There are so many ways human beings can limit themselves.

To live a conscious life means starting with where we are now, stuck in our minds. We can harness the power of the mind and learn how our mind and emotions work together to either create the life we want or keep us running around in self-defeating circles. We can use our 'observer' mind to monitor our thoughts and consciously change them. We can also use the power of guided visualisations (imagery with a purpose) to uninstall sub-conscious beliefs about who we are and our place in the world.

When we wake up and live a conscious life, instead of being driven by our programmed fears and anxieties, we are connected to our authentic self. We become clear about who we are and what we want; we stop struggling and learn the art of patience, trust and surrender; we switch off self-sabotaging buttons and start nurturing

ourselves; and we are physically and mentally healthier. Above all we learn to trust our intuition and have the courage to follow our own unique path through life, fulfilling our life's purpose, whatever that may be.

BECOME THE OBSERVER

1. Observe and say to yourself:

- "Look at what I say to myself to keep myself stuck in the same patterns."
- "Look at how I reinforce the same behaviours through attaching to my thoughts."
- "Notice how my energy levels drop when I have that thought - I don't feel good"

2. Question or challenge your thought or statement:

- "Is that thought true?"
- "Is it really true?"
- "Let's look at the facts without all the emotion."
- "Do I want to keep on having that thought?"
If the answer is 'no', then dump it!

3. Change the thought or limiting belief

For example, you could say something like:

- "I choose to believe that I can and will transform my negative thought patterns to create a higher sense of self-belief and confidence."
- "I choose to love, respect and support myself even though I am finding the process of change very challenging."
- I choose to believe that everything is happening just the way it's meant to and for reasons for which I may not yet be aware."
- "I choose to follow my path towards wisdom, serenity and peace of mind no matter what."

RECOMMENDED READING

Loving what is: Four questions that can change your life by Byron Katie with Stephen Mitchell – Harmony Books
The Power of Now and *A New Earth*, both by Eckhart Tolle – Penguin books

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