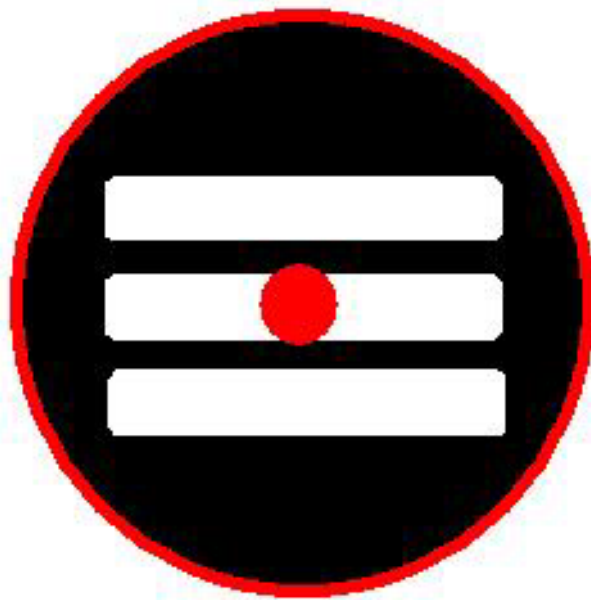


# **AWARENESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE**



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## ATTAINING FREEDOM THROUGH AWARENESS

The Awareness Principle and the Practice or 'Yoga' of Awareness is about how the power of awareness can transform our consciousness and free our everyday lives from all that is a source of 'dis-ease' for us.

If people get lost in watching TV or playing computer games, in work or domestic chores, in thinking or talking, in worrying about life or in feeling particular emotions, pains - or even pleasures - then they may be 'conscious' but they are not aware.

Whenever our consciousness becomes overly focussed or fixated on any one thing we are conscious of, dominated by it or identified with it, we lose awareness.

For unlike ordinary 'consciousness', awareness is not focussed on any one thing we experience. Awareness is more like the space surrounding us and surrounding all things we are aware of. For space is not the same as any 'thing' within it.

Living with and within awareness is like truly living with and within space – which both encompasses but is also absolutely distinct from each and every thing within it.

To transform our ordinary consciousness into awareness therefore, means first of all becoming more aware of space itself - both the outer space around us and surrounding things, and also the inner space surrounding our thoughts, feelings, impulses and sensations.

Enhancing our bodily awareness of the space around us is the first step to helping us to experience space itself – outer and inner - as an expansive spacious field of awareness – a field free of domination by anything we may be conscious of or experience within it.

'Achieving freedom through awareness' therefore means transforming our ordinary consciousness or 'focal awareness' into a new type of spacious 'field awareness' – for this is the true and literal meaning of 'expanding' our consciousness.

If we are able to sense and identify with the spacious awareness field around and within us, then we can do two things. We can both freely acknowledge and affirm everything we experience or are conscious of within that field – whether pleasant or unpleasant. And yet at the same time we can stop our 'consciousness' getting sucked into, stuck on, focussed or fixated on any one thing.

The capacity to constantly come back to the spacious awareness field frees us from all the things our consciousness normally gets so fixated on that we can no longer distinguish or free ourselves from them. True freedom is freedom from identification with anything we experience – anything we are 'conscious' or 'aware' OF. This freedom comes from sensing and identifying with that spacious awareness field within which we experience all things, outwardly and inwardly.

Awareness is not the same as what is often called 'mindfulness' - for it includes awareness of all we experience as mind or mental activity.

An old spiritual tradition has it that awareness itself is 'God' – understood as an infinitely spacious field of consciousness. This tradition also understood awareness as the source of all beings and as the eternal core or essence of our being – as our higher self. Just as through enhanced awareness of space we can experience it as a boundlessly expansive awareness field, so can we also experience our own spiritual core or essence as a powerful centre of awareness within that field.

Most forms of therapy or counselling are limited by the fact that they do not distinguish 'consciousness' or 'focal awareness' from field awareness. They themselves focus the client's consciousness on its contents – on things they are conscious or unconscious of – rather than transforming that focal consciousness into a clear and spacious awareness field - and centring the client's awareness in that field.

Both the Awareness Principle and the Practice of Awareness are founded on a fundamental distinction between consciousness and awareness, between any thing we are consciously experiencing on the one hand, and the pure awareness of experiencing it on the other. Identifying this pure awareness with space is the most effective way of experiencing it.

The fundamental distinction offers us in turn a fundamental choice – either to identify ourselves with things we are conscious of, or to identify instead with the very awareness of them – an awareness that will automatically free our consciousness from domination by any of its contents, anything we experience.

An important help in making this choice is to remind yourself of a simple truth: that just as awareness of an object is not itself an object, so is awareness of a thought, emotion or physical sensation not itself a thought, emotion or sensation. Awareness of any thoughts you have is something innately thought-free - just as awareness of any impulses, emotions and sensations you feel is something innately free of those impulses, emotions or sensations. Awareness is Freedom.

## EXAMPLE OF AWARENESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

LIVING WITHOUT AWARENESS	LIVING WITH AWARENESS
<p>A man wakes up in the morning. He feels grumpy and annoyed. The first thing that comes into his mind are feelings left over from what his partner has said on the previous evening, words that annoyed and left him feeling hurt.</p> <p>He turns the conversation over and over in his head while he prepares to go to work. The more he thinks about it the angrier he gets, feeling not only justifiably 'hurt' but hateful in a way he dare not express.</p> <p>He wants to find a way of putting his feelings of hurt and anger out of his mind and stop thinking about them, yet at the same time feels an impulse to let them out on his partner in an explosive and hateful way.</p> <p>Caught in this dilemma, he thinks, how can he possibly concentrate on work feeling all this?</p> <p>Identifying with this thought he does indeed end up being</p>	<p>A man wakes up in the morning. He feels grumpy and annoyed. The first thing that comes into his mind is the row he had with his partner on the previous evening, the words that annoyed him and left him feeling hurt.</p> <p>This time he is more aware however. Instead of just letting his mind run on, so fixated on his feelings and identified with them that they get stronger in a way he 'knows' will ruin his day - he practices awareness.</p> <p>First he says to himself 'It is not that I AM grumpy, annoyed or hurt'. 'I am simply AWARE of feelings of 'grumpiness', 'annoyance' and 'hurt'. I AM AWARE also, that the more I focus on them the stronger these feelings become, and I am aware too of the THOUGHT – not the 'fact' - that this will 'ruin my day'.</p> <p>Then he takes a second major step. Instead of identifying with these feelings and this</p>

unconcentrated, closed off and distracted all day, with no resolution of his feelings in sight.

When he comes home and sees his partner again he is still torn between repressing his feelings and expressing them in a vengeful way.

He feels even angrier towards her as a result of feeling himself in this conflicted state, seeing it too, as her fault.

As a result his feelings spiral even more in intensity and at the same time he tries to reign them inside his body, contracting the space he feels inside his body and making him feel even more explosive.

She in turn picks up his reigned-in emotions and bodily tenseness and finally unable to bear or contain the tensions herself says something that bursts the bubble, letting him explode in anger.

The result is that she now feels angry and hurt, and (another) mighty row results.

The row itself does not resolve anything or lead to knew

thought he chooses to identify with the simple AWARENESS of them.

He does so first by reminding himself that the AWARENESS of any thought or emotion is not itself a thought or emotion. Instead it is more like a free and empty space in which all thoughts and feelings can be held and affirmed - yet without becoming filled, dominated and preoccupied by them. He succeeds in identifying with AWARENESS by becoming deliberately more aware of the actual space around his body, sensing it as a larger, unfilled space around and between his thoughts and feelings too.

As a result of putting himself in this more expansive space, he no longer feels a need to close off, tense and tighten his body in order to prevent himself exploding with the feelings and thoughts that filled it. For he knows that this tightening is exactly what contracts his inner space and makes it feel so full.

No longer feeling himself 'in a space' that is so contracted,

and helpful insights that raise their awareness of important aspects of themselves and their relationship.

Instead it just leaves them temporarily relieved or emptied of their feelings - whilst at the same time still harbouring the same thoughts and judgements towards one another, regarding each other as the 'cause' of their own thoughts and feelings, and identifying with these feelings and thoughts towards one another.

The next day ends up being no better for either, with both feeling isolated in themselves.

Not able to identify with and feel themselves in a space of awareness big enough to make room for their own feelings - let alone those of their partner - they remain preoccupied with themselves and able to 'contain' their feelings only by contracting and withdrawing into their own separate and isolating spaces.

crammed and preoccupied by his initial thoughts and feelings, that it leaves no free space of awareness for other important things like his work, and no space too for new insights to arise into the feelings that might have been behind his partner's 'hurtful' words. Such insights do indeed come to him spontaneously in the intervals of his work, and the end of an undistracted working day.

Still identifying with his sense of being in a space 'big' enough to contain both his own feeling and those of his partner, he is able to not only calmly communicate his feelings but also share his empathic understanding of the feelings that might have been behind the words that 'hurt' him. The result is a hostility-free dialogue, which makes them both feel better and more 'together' - feeling once again that they dwell in a shared space of togetherness.