

Self- Con- trol of the Mind:



Making Higher Consciousness the Default Mental Mode *Part 1*

Self-Control of the Mind is a guide to ending compulsive, uninvited thought and learning to maintain mental focus on the “spot” in the mind where thoughts arise. Minimizing the thoughts that busy the mind, and paying attention to this now-silent area, we perceive a different kind of mental event occurring in what was formerly an unconscious area of the mind. This is direct, unmediated, intuitive perception, non-discursive thought, primary perception, pure awareness without a filter of concepts, words, or interpretation of experience according to sense perception. It is the realm from which language and concepts arise, and indeed from which the material world has been made up by humans.

This form of mental training is called the zone game, and it can be played as a game or sport. When we perceive ourselves, others, and the world without the veil of thought, we are living in the zone: you are one with the world, and beyond all harm. The body may suffer pitifully – but you know by daily experience that the body is a small, transient part of your true self.

Here is one way of

Distinguishing lower and higher consciousness:

Lower and Higher Consciousness

Lower consciousness accepts the evidence of the senses without serious question. Lower consciousness consists of the *products* of the mind: thoughts and concepts, descriptions of reality and labels. It is a filter over reality, giving form to reality, which has no form or labels but simply *is*. Discursive thought – thought that goes somewhere, as opposed to intuitive thought which occurs all at once – is lower consciousness. Awareness mediated through language and other forms of expressing experience.

Higher consciousness is nonmaterial. It considers the 5 senses as ways human organisms organize perception – it does not consider the five external senses to provide an accurate representation of reality. Higher consciousness is pure perception without labels. Direct, intuitive perception of reality.

Higher consciousness is a more advanced state of mental development.

When we perceive the world through the lens of higher consciousness, lower consciousness can be used for its proper purposes – that is, basically, to function in the inaccurate version of the world that our embodied consciousness has made.

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When we perceive the world through lower consciousness, higher consciousness is ignored, unrecognized. The ease of grasping lower consciousness: It is obvious to the senses, Reinforced through social structures, language, and history. It appeals to physical desires and fears. The ego or sense of a separate self. The difficulty of grasping higher consciousness: It cannot be perceived by the five exterior senses. It is usually described in terms of lower consciousness, and so it is inaccurately described from the beginning. The struggle to survive in the world of lower consciousness that thought has made makes higher consciousness seem a luxury irrelevant to most people.

Transforming lower consciousness to higher consciousness:

1. Experiencing Higher Consciousness
2. Making Higher Consciousness the Default Mental Mode
 - The first stage: uninterrupted immersion in the zone for an entire game
3. Mental Training through the zone game
 - Decluttering the mind
 - The Spot: Opening the eye of wisdom
 - Tuning in to higher consciousness
 - Measuring results and getting feedback
 - Criteria for levels of proficiency
 - Specific aids: Decluttering attention, Problems and remedies
4. Mental Training through Daily Activity
 - Waking from the dream of waking life
 - Involvements
 - Values and goals

Self-control of the mind shows how to play the zone game, going from the Lobby of ceaseless mental busyness to the Garden of a quiet mind, and discovering the universe that appears in the space between thoughts. In this guide, rhetoric has been minimized and the straightforward *how-to* made as clear and step-by-step as possible. This is a simple game, although it may be frustratingly difficult to master. Nonetheless, it is normal human development.

Keep in mind that progress is cumulative. I practiced for thousands of hours before making what felt was significant progress. No doubt you will be able to shorten the learning curve by having a clear step-by-step guide from someone who has gone through the process. This is a developmental task that has a clear end point. Just as there comes a time when you can say, “Yeh, I have learned how to talk,” or “I can swim,” you will get to the point where you have eliminated uninvited, intrusive thoughts and perceive the world free of that filter.

More than anything else, learning this ability depends on remembering to pay attention to both the world around and to what the mind itself is doing, without the filter of discursive thought or inattentiveness. Discursive thought refers to thoughts (or images or emotions) that “go somewhere”, that have a beginning and then continue. The current default mode of the mind is *sleepwaking* – simply not paying attention – or to get *caught by thought* – by discursive thoughts that percolate up and engage our attention before we even know it, and then are very difficult to disengage from. We must end these habits in order to be free of thoughts that prevent us from perceiving reality as it is – or rather, perceiving reality as clearly as humans are capable of.

Each of us is unique. Alter these guides as seems fit to your own experience and learning style. That’s how you learned to walk and to talk, and how you will learn to take control of your own mind. Experiment and be willing to change your strategies to suit your own learning style.

If you are unable to control negative and destructive thoughts and feelings, you will need to find help to overcome that particular difficulty. We all have our limits, and none of us can overcome by ourselves deep-seated traumas or destructive habits learned early in life. Freeing the mind from *sleepwaking* and “commonsense realism” is not a small thing. That’s why it has taken humans thousands of generations longer to learn to do it than it took to learn to walk on two legs and use symbolic language. This ability is

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correspondingly more advanced and powerful. You are one of the pioneers. It is healthy in every way. Go for it.

The key to making the transition from a life that is primarily asleep to being awake at all times, is to form the habit of remembering to stay attentive. The process of reaching this stage of human development can be thought of as a game. It has a clear, attainable goal, and clear feedback on your progress toward it.

Before the first lesson in playing this game, it might be helpful to have a clear image of the mental state you will experience while sitting, once you have learned the ability. Your particular experience will reflect your own nature, but this portrait can serve as a starting point:

There is a felt, imagined physical space within the brain. It is here that attention is held. Thus, rather than a vague floating mentality, one has a home to enter, in which thoughts are left outside, and attention is given easily to that which arises in their absence. An unbroken, clear focus is maintained, rapt attentiveness without interference from thoughts or drifting inattention. You can do this because you have found the Spot: a clear center of silence which, as the silence lengthens, becomes increasingly rich, interesting, and rewarding. Balancing without falling into thought. Fully attentive, without any slacking of attentiveness. This Spot is the feeling that accompanies free and attentive perception.

It appears that nature has strived from the beginning to become more aware. Humans have an apparently unquenchable hunger to understand the signification, if not the purpose, of their existence. Aristotle begins the *Metaphysics* with the statement that “By nature, all humans desire to know.” πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει.

Carl Jung gives a marvelous insight into this deep feature of human nature, and how awareness makes the difference between existence and not existing:

From a low hill in the Athi plains of East Africa I once watched the vast herds of wild animals grazing in soundless stillness, as they had done from time immemorial, touched only by the breath of a primeval world. I felt then as if I were the first man, the first creature, to know that all this *is*. The entire world around me was still in a primeval state; it did not know that it *was*. And then, in that one moment in which I came to know, the world sprang into being; without that moment it would never have been. All nature seeks this goal and finds it fulfilled in man.¹



How often we get caught up in the events of the moment and live no differently than one of the vast herds. Wisdom is always urging us to wake up and see. And when we do, we are no longer trapped eternally in a

¹ Carl G. Jung, 1968. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 2nd ed. Volume 9, pt. 1 of the Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Trans. by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 95f., ¶177.

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single dimension, or a single moment of time. What a momentous experience for Jung. By articulating it, he makes it possible for all of us to experience the same remarkable realization. It may take a while for you and me to feel it; but this is one of the paradigmatic understandings, the *prajñā*, that every wise person has.

Let's put our mirror neurons to work here, using this example. Go to the place within where you 'get it', where you arrive at the perspective Jung did: a world void of self-consciousness, which springs into being when a mind realizes, "How remarkable. How strange!" An entirely new dimension of experience then opens that did not exist the moment before.

This is not an insight that is likely to get lost in the rush of things that have to be done, or in getting caught up in the activity of the moment without any consciousness of how strange it is to be here.

Could we say that the purpose of the human organism's life is to become aware? Attaining direct consciousness of reality, beyond the inaccurate representations of the five external senses and the erroneous assumption that the material world is ultimate reality. To have such an experience is to go beyond the material world, which never says to itself, "I exist. How interesting. How wondrous and odd."

When we end compulsive thinking and production of mental representations of reality, and perceive the world attentively, intuitively, and directly, without the filter of thought, we perceive that beneath and beyond thought, concepts, and all mental representations lies an entirely different mental experience, far closer to reality itself. This nonconceptual, experience of insight sets conceptual knowledge in its context: conceptual knowledge is an interpretation of a prior nonconceptual experience.

The land beyond thought is the goal of our journey.

The land beyond thought is the goal of our journey. The voyage is not always easy, but from the beginning you will experience insights and delights that are beyond the realm of everyday, material reality, no matter how luxurious it may be. This is a different world, and you will soon realize that the material plane is a child's idea of reality. To attain direct perception of reality is to attain full humanity. We have not fully developed until we can control the activity of our own mind, and perceive the inner and outer world without the filter of thought.

In short, we are proposing that humans learn to experience the world without the filter of concepts, descriptions, interpretations, and learned knowledge. Without the habituation or selective inattention that leads us to ignore most of our environment. How many of the trees we pass by every day do we notice? It has been found that most people can be talking to a stranger and then have a long board pass between them and after the interruption not even notice that a different stranger has been substituted. (This mental lapse is known as inattentional blindness.)

Humans can become much more attentive than they usually are, and can experience the world without the veil of habituated interpretations. That is the ability this book will help you achieve. You can learn to be aware in your dreams; that is, to have lucid dreams. We can learn this ability as a game. It is enjoyable and the discoveries one makes revolutionize existence. It will certainly change the interpretation we give things such as life and death. After all, if you are actually inseparable from all that has affected you and that you affect, then although the individual organism ceases to live, this does not mean that "you" cease to exist. The organism is only a small, transient part of your full self.

But this is a truism of spiritual teaching. It is essential to actually experience this reality, and to live in the light of this knowledge. Learn the game and find out for yourself.

Self-Control of the Mind is a practitioner's guide to increasing awareness and decreasing involuntary, automatic, repetitive, and compulsive mental activity. It is a guide to 1) paying attention to what is occurring in your mind, and 2) paying attention to the world without interference from mental commentary or unmindful labeling of experience. That's all it is. Just these two changes in attentiveness will transform your life on Earth more than anything else possibly can.

Being-here-now becomes the default activity of the mind. When you have gained the mental strength to control the compulsive production of thoughts, you will be able to use thoughts for their proper purpose

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of drawing distinction, and examining and using them. You will no longer be controlled by thoughts. You will be present to the world free from distorting it by enculturated ways of interpreting experience, or by thoughts, desires, fears, emotional reactions, selective attention, or images and urges that arise from primitive regions of the body. Your mind will be quiet. You clear out, as it were, the weeds and extraneous growth of the mind, making space so that its path, its inborn goal, becomes visible. This goal is hidden as long as we naively accept the appearances of the material mode as ultimate reality.

In developing this ability, as you play the game you get feedback regarding your performance and progress by keeping track of the number of thoughts that occur as you sit quietly with the intention to be free of such intrusions. You also keep a training log to note particular features of each practice session, and record the insights occurring along the way. Thus the game provides both 1) a clear goal – achieving self-control of the mind by ending compulsive thinking, and discovering what appears when the mind is silent; and 2) feedback on your progress.

Until you learn to control your mind, you will be controlled by the creations of your mind. By choosing the contents you admit the mind to engage with, rather than allowing it to do whatever *it* wants, you will have more life: aware of more and more aware. Learning to control your own mind is a straightforward process. The process is set forth in this book. It involves observing thoughts, mental images, drifts and feelings, with the goal of eliminating such mental contents at will. It is an effective method for putting an end to compulsive, seemingly uncontrollable mental activity, and finding the peace of a quiet mind. I have done it and you can too. This is a practice that gets more interesting the better you get at it.

The human journey is from perception of separateness and a small fraction of the world, to union with our entire context. That is the true, complete self.

We learn to pay attention to the mind rather than to the products of the mind. This is direct, intuitive insight into reality.

1. Playing the Game

The zone game is played by keeping attentive, awake, alert, and free from involvement in the thoughts, images, feelings, fantasies and dreamlike drift that appear. The game involves turning attention from the contents of the mind to direct experience of reality. Perhaps this is expressed more accurately as direct experience of the mind itself. Then, having quieted the mind of all intrusive thoughts limited to practical affairs, you perceive the images, feelings, and understandings of the world that lies behind the world of practical affairs and the distortions caused by limitation to the material body. That is, the primary perceptions from which the world of practical affairs arises, and which the world of practical affairs is an attempt to portray by means of matter and its properties.

The objectives:

1. Quiet the mind from thoughts, fantasies, drifting – from all production of mental contents.
2. Attend to what appears in the silence, the space between thoughts.

The process:

- a. Unclutter the mind of all relatively trivial, repetitive, compulsive and unobserved contents. As soon as you notice a thought occurring, stop it.
- b. Locate the Spot of focus, which is a distinct feeling or place in the mind, where mental silence is like a tangible presence, around which thoughts, insights, and deeper perceptions arise.
- c. Develop concentration to focus unwaveringly on the Spot for the entire game.

There are two levels, or tiers, of this game: first is uncluttering and quieting the mind; second is perceiving what appears in an uncluttered, quiet mind; that is, when one is perceiving the world through higher consciousness. This chapter presents the Tier 1 game.

Put another way, the steps in practice are:

- a. Quieting interference from lower consciousness.
- b. Extending mental silence – the space between thoughts.

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c. Attending to what appears when the mind is silent.

Milestones along the way are

1. Making a solid connection with the Spot.
2. Being able to return to it throughout the game.
3. Keeping a solid connection throughout the game.

Two abilities are necessary for success:

- Finding the correct focus of attention, and
- Being able to keep attention on it.

It is my experience that finding the focus spot is a process and not as simple as it seems it should be. Therefore, the description of the Spot, and guides for finding it, are as explicit, detailed, and easily comprehensible as I can make them.

Two levels of the game

In **Tier 1**, the effort is primarily to unclutter the mind, creating space in which you are attentive and receptive, unoccupied with thoughts or emotions. The objective in Tier 1 is to gain familiarity with the spontaneous activity of the mind and achieve a moderate ability to keep attention from being caught by thought. You are caught by thought when you become involved with the thoughts, emotions, or mental wanderings that spontaneously appear. You could compare Tier 1 to the minor leagues. While interesting and rewarding in itself, it is preparatory, like the hours of piano practice that precede your professional career.

There is no sharp separation of the two Tiers, but there are two distinguishing features of the more advanced level. In **Tier 2** there is 1) a clear sense of the Spot and 2) the ability to hold attention on it throughout an entire game. The feeling is also distinct. I will attempt to describe this feeling later on.

While it may be most productive to begin practice in games that last fifteen minutes, it is most interesting when you can sit for at least two hours without losing contact with the Spot, being caught by thought. At that point, the game becomes exploration of higher consciousness. At this level, perhaps, exhibitions can be held and the results of different practitioners evaluated and compared. Such exhibitions are more in the nature of an art show than a win-lose athletic competition: they are celebrations of human consciousness and explorations of a realm that to this date is almost undiscovered and unknown. Hopefully, before too long, a simple and inexpensive way of recording brain wave patterns will be developed so that the patterns characteristic of such unfaltering concentration can be measured. This biofeedback will be a great help in learning the ability. That is, assuming that the Tier 2 mode of perception is accompanied by a characteristic brain-wave pattern.

Encountering reality directly, awake and attentive without the distorting lens of conceptualization or mental representations of any sort, is something most humans never experience. We accept, without ever seriously questioning, the world as it appears to the external senses and as we have been taught. But such an understanding and experience is sadly incomplete. To be deprived of the experience of reality *as it is*, to live and die without knowing that the structures and forms we perceive and enculturate our children to perceive are actually conventions rather than reality plain and simple, is to be deprived of the quintessential human experience.

In any case, the ability to control your own mind is a fundamental human developmental task, no less than learning to talk, walk, or make tools. This is true even if almost none of the 7,832,000,000 humans currently

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living believes this is so, or has even imagined the possibility.

Now for Tier 1.

Tier 1

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Mastering Tier 1, in few words: Take one thought-free breath. It doesn't have to be perfect, just good enough. Then continue.

By "bare awareness" is meant awareness of what the mind is doing. Not "choiceless awareness" of the world around us, or "attention to the present moment with acceptance" – although those sorts of awareness are certainly valuable. The objective of opening the eye of wisdom is to locate higher consciousness (which is currently unconscious), the source from which all constructs such as the sensory, material world arise. This nonconceptual, direct, intuitive perception becomes the default mental mode. Once you achieve this perception, you can use the conceptual language of self-evident and enculturated mental representations to communicate with those who have not yet achieved this developmental task.

To experience this direct perception, focus on awareness rather than on the contents of awareness.

The following more detailed directions are suitable for an advanced player as well as a beginner. At least in part. Keep in mind that the goal is to quiet the mind and be attentive and receptive to what then appears. There will be aspects of this practice that are unique for each person, no doubt. Therefore, use the following directions as they seem suitable to you at this time. Do not hesitate to explore and find the way best suited to you for quieting the mind.

What to do: Place attention in the Spot of focus². Perhaps, like a foetus, attention must sit passively, growing and developing until nature tells it what to do next. The energy of natural development knows what to do if left alone and is given what it needs. Attentive and receptive, with no thought – certainly no mental verbalizations or conceptualization. Your complete human development is still in an embryonic stage. You do not know what to do, but the embryonic awareness does know. Give it all your attention. Trust it.

For the duration of the game, consider the material world and your life in it is as no more than a dream. Your home is this Spot now, where you will grow and live. Forget everything that concerns your past and what you thought you knew.

This requires setting aside your many plans, actions, situations and projects, at least during the game. Some memories are perhaps worth noting. More about them later.

Attention should not stray for even a half-breath. Keep bringing it back until it has been implanted into the Spot. Higher consciousness is truly a qualitatively different perception of reality, a different world than is assumed by conventional consensus reality. A different dimension.

You are safe in here and healthy. You are nourished by all the love and wisdom that has brought you here and that cares for your development and birth in the life of higher consciousness. Though you do not perceive it at present, you are one with all that exists and that has or will ever exist. You are the bearer of the hopes and love of all creation.

A quiet mind is hard to find. When you have taken one breath that is *good enough* all you have to do is continue the same. Don't falter for even half a breath; but no matter how much you falter, keep setting attention back into the Spot until it is firmly implanted there.

And then, fully attentive – abide. That's all. Stay. One day you will realize, "I am perceiving something strange and wonderful."

To keep attention fixed in the spot of focus, it may help to use a mantra, such as "im/plant", "here/now", or another simple term that resonates with you. Do not pronounce the words mentally, only think them, if possible, as you visualize the Spot as your spiritual womb.

Sit in a place, quiet if possible, where you will not be disturbed. Close your eyes if you want, but beware of the tendency to fall asleep. It is possible to train the ability to improve wakefulness as well. Use a timer with a gentle sound, set at a reasonable length for you, from five minutes to an hour. Experiment. Practice with-

² As stated above, this is a distinct feeling or place in the mind, where mental silence is like a tangible presence, around which thoughts, insights, and deeper perceptions arise.

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out a timer. Practice until it is time for your next activity. Practice for 1 breath. Fifteen minutes might make a good standard length for your games at this point.

Take a moment to center before beginning. Read something that helps. Repeat a prayer or phrase. Take a deep breath. If you are a bit unrelaxed, think of something pleasant that occurred in the past day. Be grateful. Take a moment to quiet the body and mind. For the duration of the game, let everything else go and just pay attention to what the mind is doing. *Not thinking: aware.*

Follow the breath until the mind has entered a relaxed state, and thoughts are largely quieted. Then let go of the breath and shift to the Spot.

Finding the right Spot is more difficult than you might think. At least it was for me. I used a number of different places, for several years, until settling within the brain itself, a couple inches down from the skull and about three inches behind the brow. This seems to be around where the back of the frontal lobe meets the motor association area. Or at the back of the frontal lobe and in between it and the corpus callosum. Just speculating, trying to place this feeling on the map.

Other spots of focus I visualized: a spot just outside the head, between the eyes and slightly above them. Then, a spot in the far distance as I looked outward with closed eyes. Next the ajna chakra (the third eye, between the eyebrows). That was a major step forward. All of them worked well for several months, at least. But the Spot/ feeling around the center of the brain worked best. Experiment if you want. Find what works best for you, and be willing to change it if something better appears. Maybe your Spot of focus will just be a particular feeling.

The goal is to stay in this attentive mode for the entire exercise period. When a thought arises, stop it. If you have an insight or recall something you are afraid of forgetting, make a written note of it. When you lose focus, start again visualizing the breath.

A reminder to yourself before beginning the game: Find a sense that is good enough. It doesn't have to be perfect. Focus on the breath until I get to the Spot.

Or: Focus on awareness itself, not contents of awareness. Return to the Spot after falling into thought. When mental content is recognized, drop it immediately. Stay attentive.

Connecting with the zone of higher consciousness is not a laid-back resting, but the intense alertness of involvement with something of great interest. This is sacred ground, vitality at its peak, truly awake. It is not merely a relatively passive restraining and prevention of thoughts from capturing attention, but an exertion of attention to perceive the messages from direct, nondiscursive intuitive perception: an active seeking, attempt to listen, to register feelings that arrive in unaccustomed ways and that bring information hardly relevant to conventional reality.

Even after a few thousand hours practice I was prone to settling into a comfortable languor. Don't do what I did. Remind yourself to stay alert and effortful.

The goal is not to extinguish thought intrusions, but to reach ever-deeper connections with higher consciousness, bare awareness. Not "no thoughts and no conceptualizations", but "no wandering into irrelevant thoughts and concepts". No getting caught by thought. No losing the thread.

It is not always clear what insights, memories or plans are irrelevant. My inclination is to count them as interruptions when in doubt, especially when the ability to hold concentration on the Spot is not perfected. But to be overscrupulous will impede your learning as well. I will try at some point to be more specific about this.

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That said, the process itself is the goal. Also, as you learn to prevent unwanted, trivial, repetitive thoughts and feelings from hijacking your attention, rarer insights and memories are able to appear. You can visualize this process as something like this: The crowd of dots at the bottom represents the untamed mind, each dot representing an habitual or relatively trivial thought. As this clutter is removed, that which is above it in higher consciousness (or buried beneath it in higher consciousness) comes forth.



Developing concentration, and learning to identify the activity of the mind, is no different than learning anything else. If you go about it with a good method and serious effort you will optimize progress and grow naturally into the complete self.

☞ Thought impulses, etc., occur extremely rapidly, and imperceptibly. Even after you have played the game for a long time you may not even be aware they are arising until after the thought has come and gone. Eventually you will a) be able to hold the mind in pure awareness, and b) have become *familiar enough* with mental intrusions and *vigilant enough* that you will catch mental contents before they catch you.

An easy way to connect with the zone:

With eyes closed, picture attention balancing on a wire. Once there, the energy itself takes over. It is like plugging it in to an energy source.

No matter how poorly you think you are putting mental contents aside, *this* breath is all that matters. With every inhalation, higher consciousness energy enters; with every exhalation you empty out to receive more. The eyes are closed, or partially closed and facing a blank wall or dimly lit area where there is no activity and minimal noise.

Practice this for as long as you can, as often as you can. As ability to maintain focus increases, increase the length of the sessions. When you are able to maintain focus on the breath, forget the breath and focus solely on the Spot. Eventually you will let go of the Spot as well, let go of body and mind, and simply be aware. Perfection is not necessary: find a state that is ‘good enough.’ When you find it, tell yourself, “All I have to do is continue what I am now doing.” When mental content appears, you can think “Content,” and let it go. While exerting utmost effort, remain deeply relaxed, physically and mentally. Remain as motionless as you can. A restless body brings a restless mind. Yet a still body is not an end in itself. After all, your ultimate goal is to live as higher consciousness, and to do that you will have to move.

As you sit, the effort is to be aware without **mentalia**, that is, without inner speech, thinking, emotional scenarios, images, fantasies, inner voices or conversations and explanations, the to-do list, plans, figuring something out, memories, relevant associations, and daydreamy drift. Find a light, free, open, receptive, empty, silent mental state, and maintain it. It is like tuning into a radio frequency that at first probably cannot be found.

There are two aspects involved in finding this frequency. In the **first**, the mind stops producing mentalia. That is, it is natural for internal physio-mental activity to work with external sensations, to trigger the mind into interpreting their signals. For example, the mind hears a sound and labels it, something like, “A car passing.” “Water running.” “A voice.” Then, by association, it works out a further response, such as “It’s going fast.” “I’m thirsty.” “Neighbor coming home.” And from there it can develop the chain of thought in countless ways. For example, “Neighbor coming home” reminds you that you want to get in touch with a friend ... and on and on.

At the same time, internal sensations and habitual brain activity trigger images, feelings, impulses, memories, words, plans, fantasies, and so on. A slight pang of hunger leads to thoughts of dinner, other people and situations and so on. Or seemingly from out of nowhere, the recollection of something that has to be done arises, and the mind starts planning. Or a situation or other memory comes to mind from out of the blue, and we are triggered into a lengthy inner conversation or explanation.

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In time, we learn to tune in to different messages. Different kinds of messages. That is the second aspect of the zone game.

In the **second** aspect of tuning in to Radio Free Reality, the mind is open and attentive to itself, to its own activity and experience. It is as if it is held balanced, not falling into thought or pulled toward any sensory stimuli. You are surfing the moment.

So long as you do not allow the mind to get caught by thought and follow after any triggering stimulus, you will be on the path to the zone. In fact, at least at first, the mind can be observing anything and still be on the path: the breath, sounds, body sensations. It is *not involved* in mental activity: thought, inner speech, images, memory and plans – its habitual rut.

That's all there is to the game.

Success in controlling compulsive mental activity depends entirely on

- 1) making a clear, solid, almost tangible connection with the zone of pure perception,
- 2) remembering to return after falling from it, and
- 3) overcoming resistance.

Briefly: Focus on the Spot, to the exclusion of all else. To help locate it, visualize the breath.

Rationale for this method: Having a specific, clearly identified target gives you a specific object on which to exercise the concentration muscle. Having a clear target allows concentration to even occur. For a long time I was held back by uncertainty regarding what, exactly, I should be focusing on. The breath, choiceless awareness, a mantra, the *dan t'ien* (*hara* or solar plexus)? I went back and forth, and wasn't able to make a full effort because I didn't have one clear target to aim at.

The Spot is by no means the only effective focus of concentration for this task. Concentrating on the breath, a mantra, the *dan t'ien*, “single-minded sitting in zazen”, watching the mind as if it is a stream, “choiceless awareness”, and mindfulness are some of the other possibilities. Focusing on a candle flame or point of a pencil. Attention to each of these objects contains its own unique energy. Focusing on the Spot brings a particularly strong energy because of its connection with pure awareness, and also because when you are focusing on the breath, the exhaled breath connects naturally with this Spot.

This means a lot, because the breath is a fundamental center of life. I first became aware of the Spot through focusing on the breath: shortly after beginning this method of “zoning” I felt how natural it was to visualize the exhaled breath, and then let it go and focus on the spot just in front of the face where the breath seemed to gather. To be exact, my focus naturally went to eye level a bit higher than where the breath goes. It is as if, when you exhale through the nose, energy is also going out from the face, to a spot about ten centimeters in front of the nose and eyes. It wasn't until after four years of this practice a remark from a friend helped me make the connection between the spot I'd been using and traditional energy centers, such as the sixth chakra. Once that happened, a significant advance in my ability to concentrate occurred quickly.

Knowing its effectiveness from my own experience led me to use this particular focus in developing self-control of the mind. You should use a focus that is natural to you. It took me about 5,000 hours practice to figure this out. (And before that, thirty-six years of off and on meditating, until I realized that if I were ever to become skillful at it before dying, I needed to find a way to meditate that worked for me, even if no-one had ever done it that way.) There is no reason it should take you this long. What *is* important is to settle on a single object of focus at a time. You may use the breath. It is excellent. Or the *hara*. That was recommended by my zen teacher Reverend Kando Nakajima almost fifty years ago, although it never worked well for me. Experiment, but use one method at a time. You might want to use one focus most of the time, and try others for a couple sessions during the week.

To experience the world directly, the silence within which thinking arises, remove the filter of mentalia blocking it.

Self-Control of the Mind

There is a saying that, “In the space between thoughts lies reality.” It may be hard to find that space at first. When you do, you know yourself, all beings, and the divine, insofar as is possible for a human, without labels or wishful thinking. There is an end to doubt. You know how you are in union with the whole and the energy which cares for life. You are free of the reflex creations of the body-mind. Better still: you have found your true self. Centering in this matrix brings birth to a new life. It is only the beginning.

If you want it, you can succeed. This is natural human development. You can free the mind to attend to things other than thought and daily affairs.

The challenge is to stop the transformation of experience into concepts and representations of any sort. Or to stop ourselves from turning off attentiveness altogether as we become wrapped up in activity. To be able to keep the attentive mind still enough for long enough to perceive and “make sense” of the world without any of the distortions caused by assuming that the data of the external senses is complete or that our enculturated explanations present reality accurately and precisely.

Thought becomes less and less a part of the mind. Increasingly, simple perception occupies attention. A vast gulf opens up between silence in the mind and the noise of the mind. The silence becomes a tangible, almost material thing, an enclosure quite separate from thought. This enclosure is actually a new dimension of awareness far larger than the world of thought. It is the realm from which the world of thought arises. In the silence of an attentive mind, your true and complete self awakens, beyond the labels that limit you to a fraction of your true self.

This ability is simple, but not easy to achieve. With practice you get good at it, and you may be surprised at how enjoyable it is to take charge of your own mind and perceive the world intentionally, without interpretations, judgments, and credulousness regarding the representations produced by the lower mind. Becoming an expert player of the zone game requires only developing a particular kind of concentration: focus on awareness itself. In this way you cease making up stories about the world, and instead are one with it. Once you do it you will see how natural and easy it is.

Most important is to attain a clear feeling of this Spot. It is an easy place to focus on, and it arouses energy that you can release by concentration. In turn, this released energy will help you complete the task of perfecting concentration so that 1) attention does not helplessly wander, and 2) this mode of awareness, unfiltered by compulsive thought and assumptions that the senses and enculturation present to us, becomes the default mode of perception. This mode of perception is known as *jñāna* in Sanskrit and in Western philosophy as nondiscursive thought (*νοῦς* or *nous*, and in Latin *intellectus*), but the technical terms with their connotations will be avoided here. The emphasis is learning and doing this skill – those interested in learning more *about* the skill can find plenty of good information.

On the goal

Automatic, uninvited, compulsive thoughts – that is memories and plans, explanations, figuring things out, repeating emotional situations, as well as idle drifting, and the images associated with them – that commandeering attention and trigger emotional reactions, must be outgrown. The commandeering and triggering are the problem; but the thoughts in themselves block perception of more profound and sublime messages. The goal is to outgrow compulsive, uninvited, automatic thought; and in the silence that results, connect with direct, unmediated awareness of the world. In this direct awareness you are not aware of different aspects of the material world: it is a different pattern, as different from the Modern worldview as was the worldview of ancient people. “The fundamental difference between the attitudes of modern and ancient man as regards the surrounding world is this: for modern, scientific man the phenomenal world is primarily an ‘It’; for ancient – and also for primitive – man it is a ‘Thou’.”³

³ Frankfort, H. & H. A. 1946. “Introduction: Myth and Reality”. Pp. 3-27 in Frankfort, H. (ed.). *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p. 12.

Self-Control of the Mind

Nothing else but the Spot must enter attention. Don't be concerned about results, simply stay attentive to what is. All that is necessary is to hold on to the focus. Get back to the time when the mind was whole, not divided into many directions by thoughts and fantasies. This is *not* the mind of the infant, quite the contrary, but the fully-developed, attentive mind unattached to any material associations.

Uninvited, intrusive thinking calls you back to the world of lower consciousness. Humans really have no idea what the world of higher consciousness is like. You are the pioneer. We will only discover it by staying in that thought-free mode and finding out what happens.

Extinguishing compulsive thought is a process. Every step you take along the way, keep in mind that what you can't do today, you will do eventually. The results are cumulative.

How this method differs from typical meditation

In this method you have a goal (outgrowing compulsive production of thoughts), receive feedback from your efforts (in Tier 1, by keeping a thought count and a record of your sessions), and, take notes while sitting to record your insights.

It may seem that note-taking – interrupting attempts to concentrate – is precisely what you do not want to do. However, although developing this ability is natural human development, like learning to walk or talk, it is quite uncharted territory for humans, and there are few places where you can get good information. Having a record of your own journey will provide a record of your path to this exciting new level of humanity. It will enable you to be clearer and more explicit in your own progress and in teaching others. It provides reinforcement when reinforcement from society is lacking. Interrupting your sitting to make note of insights will not delay the process of developing this focus – in fact, it may hasten it. By making note of unusual insights important for this mode of awareness (such as improved strategies), you assure that they will not be lost and have to be learned anew – if by good fortune they happen to occur again. In addition, by recording these insights you have a portrait of your journey; it is the journal of your soul.

If you create the conditions, attentiveness beyond compulsive thinking will happen naturally, because it is natural human development. All you have to do is take adequate time to declutter the mind, and develop the concentration to keep attention fixed on it as it becomes less cluttered and more quiet, and more profound contents are able to come forth.

If you want to make higher consciousness your default mode of consciousness it must be more important to you than anything in the material world.

For a long time, you will not focus perfectly: there will be intrusions of thoughts, emotional stories, etc. There will be **undertalk**, a sort of background conversation in the mind. All that matters is *this* breath—you may have been focusing poorly until now, but all that matters is *this* breath.

It might help to keep only this awareness in mind when you sit:

I am on the Unseen Path.
To pass to the transcendent
let go of all thought of the material realm.

Advantages of the Spot as Target

Following the breath can perhaps be portrayed as an oscillation of attention: in-out-in-out. Attention is correspondingly always moving. If you are interested in developing continuous attentiveness, a better focus is the Spot. But when ability to hold attention stable is weak, focusing on the breath may be the best way to keep it from wandering further. It provides an anchor. Oscillate as it will.

You can build up the energy that focus on the Spot arouses. This is not like focusing on a pencil point or candle flame. It is the entrance to the transcendent dimension. The transcendent is more real than the material world, which is only the form that external human senses perceive. The Spot has an objective transcendent reality.

Self-Control of the Mind

Locate the Spot first; the feeling will follow.

As you sit, even when attending to sensory stimuli you are not concentrating mainly on what you are perceiving, but on the silence, on keeping the mind still, balanced. Keeping it from falling into thought (mental images, etc.). Everything else is as if contained within the bowl of that silence. Sensory percepts of the outer and inner world are irrelevant. To focus on ambient sensory stimuli is to use them as another anchor, no different than focusing on the breath or a candle flame. You are learning to hold the mind still and pay attention to the mind itself. In that stillness you enter a different dimension of being: free of interpretation, free of time, without form or matter. It is altogether beyond. In Sanskrit, *pārasaṃgate*.

This is the realm from which the world of form and matter arises. The world we perceive with the senses is an interpretation of this realm. Enough of the interpretations. Go to the source. You can do it once you have the mental strength to stay focused. Strengthening the mind is what is meant by being fully human. It isn't that difficult once you know what you are aiming for.

Higher consciousness involves a much slower mode than that of humans' usual busy-ness. Accustom yourself to lengthening stillness with no contents. In the midst of deep prolonged mental silence a message will come from deep within. Or not.

You will find that putting periods of stillness into active daily life – for even a single breath, to stop for a second the continuous from-one-thing-to-another – is helpful. Minimizing activities will prove golden.

A few more words on preparing for a game

If you can tell that the upcoming game is one for which the mind is unable to be focused, spend some extra time beforehand with inspiring reading. Going over the notes of insights during past games may help. Sometimes it only takes one inspiring idea to change your mental mode in a major way. Some insights have remarkable energy.

Give the mind support by providing anchors. Visualize the breath. Visualize the breath accompanied by a mantra (in ... home; this...breath; deeper).

If you are completely unable to still the mind, do something different during the game altogether. Try counting breaths, to see how many you take in an hour. Counting every fourth breath, count up to ten, then start over. That might not be the zone, but you are improving concentration and the ability to sit still. Or you can observe the mind as a mechanic, a doctor, or a coach would, to diagnose and understand what is going on.

Check the fundamentals: sit up straight, breathe deep and naturally, mindfully. Keep stopping the mind that is being carried away by thought. No sweat, no condemnation, just keep stopping it over and over. By the time you finish the journey you will have stopped about half a million thoughts. That's just the way it happens.

Find something to meditate on. Your happiest moment. What you really love. That might not be the zone, but you're probably in your zone of proximal development (ZPD), the level of effort just beyond your current ability, which is what you need.⁴ Give yourself a gold star for hanging in there, recognize that any good effort is useful for strengthening the mind. Think: I'll be back. You haven't seen the last of me. Despite any momentary setbacks and disturbances, I am going to reach a quiet, focused mind.

No matter what the difficulty, it is possible to be at peace with yourself. It is the ultimate response. Remember, it will never be harder than it is today. The gains are cumulative.

So much for a general outline of the game. Now we will discuss the key aspects in detail. Since forming a clear sense of the Spot and learning to hold attention on it indefinitely is the essential ability for this awareness, the subject of the next chapter is the Spot and how to get it. Following discussion of the Spot, and higher consciousness, we will return to the details of the game.

– December 16, 2020

⁴ A concept introduced by Lev Vygotsky. Google him for details.