

## Tuning in to Higher Consciousness



“The unhappiness and suffering that we experience arise through our inability to control our own minds, and the happiness that we wish to achieve will only be achieved by learning to control our minds.”

The Dalai Lama and Robert A. F. Thurman. 1991. “Buddhist Inner Science: An Overview”, in Barbara McNeill and C. Guion, Eds. *Noetic Sciences Collection 1980-1990*, Sausalito, CA: Institute of Noetic Sciences, pp. 25-27 at p. 27.

### Radio Free Reality

In a dark night and still – a gleam,  
An extraterrestrial message clear:  
All names and forms can only seem,  
All *are* reflections of the Above,  
Made by love, in love, for love.  
Awake from the material dream.  
Now you are home, now we are here.

Higher consciousness is direct perception of reality, without imposing a filter of concepts and labels, desires and fears. In this way we perceive that everything affects everything else. There is no separate individual, autonomous and uninfluenced by its context. In addition, higher consciousness is awareness of a realm of values and experiences imperceptible to the five external senses, and not captured by the laws of physics or mathematical formulas. These values, such as love, justice, and beauty; and these experiences, such as awareness, direct intuitive knowing, and union with the divine, follow different laws.

Higher consciousness perceives a force attracting all things toward harmonious integration amid ever-increasing differentiation. It is a sixth, internal sense, called *intellectus* in Latin, *nous* (νοῦς) in Greek. It is a potential in humans and must be developed. If it isn't, we won't know it exists, and any signs of it will not be recognized for what they are. Higher consciousness is developed by quieting the lower, less mature consciousness with its incessant commentary, labeling of experience, and slips into

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mental sleep. In the space between thoughts that results, a different pattern than that provided by lower consciousness appears.

Lower consciousness is interpretation of the world through words, concepts, images, and so on. In this way we perceive separateness created by the artificial divisions of the mind, identifying with a fragment of the context. In addition, lower consciousness lacks awareness of the senses that transcend physical senses.

Lower consciousness is partial: differentiation without integration. It is the contents of the mind detached from awareness of their source, lacking the insight that they are only interpretations. Lower consciousness is ego, the sense of being separate.

Restriction to lower consciousness is mental bondage; higher consciousness is mental freedom. If you cannot control your thoughts, you will be controlled by them. For thousands of years, humans have been hypnotized by the constructs of the mind, assuming that they are reality. But they are only particular ways of perceiving reality, which has no labels.

It may be that the global crises such as climate change, destruction of the natural world, the sixth major extinction event, and loss of a sense of meaning, have resulted from the Modern worldview—the way of perceiving reality that has dominated since the seventeenth century. The authors of *Habits of the Heart* identify modernity as “the culture of separation” (1986, p. 277). David Ray Griffin, repeating a generally accepted assessment, writes that dualism and materialism are the paradigms that have guided the modern world. In this perspective, material reality, separate from human consciousness (itself reducible to physical forces), consists of “totally inert bits of matter moved only by being moved by other things” (1988, p. 143). In regard to the worldview that has dominated since Copernicus, A. N. Whitehead wrote that “There persists... throughout the whole period the fixed scientific cosmology which presupposes the ultimate fact of an irreducible brute matter, or material, spread throughout space in a flux of configurations. In itself such a material is senseless, valueless, purposeless” (1925, p. 25). This scientific cosmology remains the worldview of most scientists in 2020. Hence, owing to the status of science as the arbiter of reality, it has permeated all parts of world culture: economics, politics, law, education, medicine, and the attitudes, beliefs and values of the general population.

The toxic effects of this view result, not from the empiric scientific approach in itself, but from the claim that only this approach yields valid knowledge. Such things as values, and direct, intuitive knowing are not “scientific” and so have not been very important for the past couple centuries. Knowledge is restricted to that which the five external senses perceive, expressed in the language of mathematics.

In recent years, many analysts have identified the errors in the modern worldview (some references are given at the end of this section). Here we will skip the details and proceed directly to the proposed cure. The reason for doing so is not only because the critics have done a good job, but because they have not quite identified the remedy; and that remedy, higher consciousness, is worth pursuing even if it weren't the salvation for our condition.

So I will put aside for the moment the hypotheses that a) any laws, international agreements, and sustainable practices will be inadequate responses to the crises unless humans come to see themselves as intricately entwined with their context, and that b) reality is beyond concepts, words, and mathematics.

The rest of this booklet will consider 1) What higher consciousness is, 2) How to develop higher consciousness and make it the default mental mode, and 3) Living in this mental mode throughout the day.

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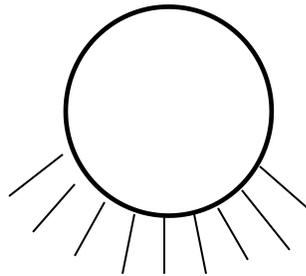
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John White (*The Highest State of Consciousness*, 1972, p. vii) described the highest state of consciousness as "a self-transforming perception of one's total union with the infinite. It is beyond time and space. It is an experience of the timelessness which is eternity, of unlimited unity with all creation." This perception is beyond concepts and language. We can add to White's model, the perception of modes of communication beyond those of the exterior senses.

Higher consciousness is developed by emptying the mind of descriptions and interpretations, and directly experiencing reality. In both Hindu and Buddhist teaching this is *jñāna*, or knowledge in an intuitive sense, direct knowing of things as they really are. In Western philosophy and spiritual teaching, the sources for unmediated, intuitive knowledge of reality (*nous, intellectus*) include Plato, e.g., Book VI of the *Republic*; Aristotle, particularly *De Anima (On the Soul)* Book III; Plotinus, *Enneades* V, VI, and treatise III.8 "On Nature, Contemplation, and the One." Throughout the Middle Ages the topic was of central concern: in Dionysius the Areopagite, John Scotus Erigena, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Charles de Bovelles, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and many others. This way of knowing figures in Sufi teaching, the Kabbala and Hasidism. It is gained through *contemplatio (theoria* in Greek): a direct mental gaze, or nondiscursive thinking. Sara Rappe (pp. 20-21 abridged) says

Non-discursive thinking does not involve thinking about anything. Instead, non-discursive thinking involves a kind of objectless knowing, an activity that is self-directed, involving turning the attention toward the pure act of awareness as such, and a detachment from all other objects of awareness. Non-discursive thinking involves concentration, a setting aside of the entire panoply of objects, both perceptual and conceptual, and an identification with the object of contemplation.

With this introduction, we can now outline a way to recognize the sixth sense and develop it. Having gained this inclusive perception of reality, we can use lower consciousness for its proper purpose: as a tool of higher consciousness for flourishing in harmony with the entire context which is your true, complete Self.



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### **Z1, the game of higher consciousness.**

As you take your next breath, visualize the air entering the nostrils, traveling down to the lungs, and back up into the world. This provides an anchor for unsteady attention. Eyes may be closed or open. Sit (or even lie) any way that is comfortable. You may find that keeping the back straight helps you sit attentively for the longest time. The goal is to enter the Garden, the realm of higher consciousness. This is done through unwavering attentiveness free of mental constructs. The Garden opens to us when we allow the pieces to arrange themselves in their proper place, by keeping the discursive mind quiet.

When thoughts, images, emotions, and drift appear, put them aside without pursuing and prolonging them. Attention thus steadied, the embryonic complete self takes form and comes into being. When you have quieted the mind to an extent that is 'good enough', for a single breath, tell yourself "All I have to do is continue what I am now doing." When mental content appears, including painful memories, you can think, "Content" and let it go. It gets easier with practice.

Do this for as long as you can, as often as you can. At first you may be able to keep the mind content-free for only 2 or 3 seconds. There seems to be nothing to hold on to. With practice, this "void" – which contains all things – becomes clearer and you can stay with it. In this process, having something else to focus on will be of help. For example:

Visualizing the breath, or counting breaths (to 10 and starting over). Envisioning higher consciousness as a radio signal, and adjusting attention to get clearer reception. Visualizing the desired awareness as a garden, and the busy mind as a lobby: move awareness to the garden every time you notice it has returned to the lobby. Or visualize a line and hold attention thought-free above it in higher consciousness. Repeat a (quasi-) mantra while visualizing (e.g., In...home; Stay). It may help to count the number of thoughts, etc. using a string of beads. This forces you to pay attention and provides feedback that strengthens motivation.

Combine different supports, and experiment. It is essential to have a clear feeling or picture of the zone of higher consciousness. Once you clearly perceive this 6th sense, it becomes much easier to keep the mind quiet and serene. You will find that it is your natural mental mode, your true home – more than the material world is. Our sense of the material world is created by this realm.

Having uncluttered the mind enough to make a space between thoughts, focus on awareness itself. Return focus to the breath, or to some other aid, as a handhold for focusing, whenever necessary in order to keep the mind from wandering – or use other aids to do so. The mind will learn to register sensory stimuli and not elaborate on them, not become caught by them. Z1 is a simple game of being attentive while weeding out unnecessary mental activity and contents.

A game can be of any length from five minutes. Or even one minute. Exerting utmost will-power, relax body and mind, and stay as motionless as possible. A restless body brings a restless mind. Keep a notebook at hand, to write down insights that occur.

Though it may seem impossible to find, the zone is always present: it is awareness that goes away. The path will at first seem bland and dull, whereas mental productions offer so much that is interesting and important! Persist on the path. Keep attention here, now, and you will experience insights, messages, feelings, and a sense of union that go beyond the material.

Success in controlling mental activity depends entirely on

- 1) knowing where the zone is and how to get there,
- 2) remembering to return after digressing, and
- 3) developing the strength to stay.

If you want it enough, you will achieve it.

In addition to keeping notes, having a goal and receiving feedback set this practice apart from most forms of meditation. Criteria for procuring feedback follow.

### **Criteria for levels of proficiency**

Advancing from the point of never having observed the mind or its constant production of thoughts, to having broken the habit of inattentive mental wandering and thinking, may be divided into six steps:

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### 0. Preparatory

No idea of preventing mental constructs. No idea that you can attend to the world without mental commentary. Overwhelmed by thoughts or drift. Unable to control thought, emotional scenarios, and inattentive mental drifting. One may not have any experience or sense of a quiet mind – or even be aware that she or he is filled with ceaseless inner speech and daydream.

In the two beginning levels (1 & 2) you are learning to unclutter the mind, pay attention to consciousness, and discover a quiet mind.

### 1. Beginner

Shallow connection; frequent extended and uncontrollable mental activities. Few results – you are learning how to play. You know the rules, but are unable to find the zone, or unsure you have found it. Overwhelmed by ceaseless thoughts, mainly images, planning, explaining, drifting, and emotional scenarios. And simply daydreaming. Yet you are also more aware of the stream of thought than before, aware that thought can be and should be brought under control and fed by pure perception, the font and source of thought.

### 2. Advanced beginner

A busy mind. The zone is not absent, but periods in it are too brief to learn much from the experience. You can't always find the zone. It is difficult to maintain energy throughout the game. This is the stage of uncluttering the mind. Many falls, often extended excursions down familiar thought-ruts. All sorts of contents grab the attention; it is hard to discern what is unnecessary or intrusive. Even when thought-free, the feeling is shallow, not clear, and often you cannot disengage the mind from distractions. Focus is mainly on mental contents. At the same time you are becoming familiar with the mind's patterns.

In the two mid-levels (3 & 4), you learn to sense the zone.

### 3. Intermediate

Brief periods of freedom from production of mental contents; but mental quiet may be followed or even accompanied by undertalk, a sort of background conversation in the mind. Extended mental scenarios when you completely forget to pay attention are common. You still do not have a clear sense of the zone: interrupting the production of mental contents is not the same as higher consciousness. Freedom comes and goes, a breath-by-breath effort; grasp of it is not always firm. You touch the zone, if at all, briefly or at rare intervals. However, you *are* able to stop mental contents when you remember – usually, not always. Being able to do so is a hallmark of the Intermediate level. It is usually easy to disengage the mind from constructs and drift; the difficulty is to maintain focus for more than a few seconds. This difficulty will persist up to level 6.

Thoughts, images and drift are most often passing clouds filtering awareness, rather than capturing it. The amount of time they possess attention is one indication of your position within this level (3-, 3, 3+), with 3+ the least captured by lengthy thoughts. Thoughts of daily situations are less prominent than in previous levels. You are increasingly engaging with the activity itself rather than with the obstacles. In distinction to the Competent level, you are not playing well enough to be firmly in the zone and enjoy the game. It is as if you are still on the beginner's half of a major divide.

You may visualize attention held on a point in the distance as you sit with eyes closed, connected with it by the thread of attention. Do not break the thread.

Once you can locate the zone of silence, the task is to maintain that focus, holding concentration unwavering.

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### 4. Competent

Feeling of the zone is clear, even if brief and frequently disturbed by thought and undertalk. As you gain ability to control mental activity, you progressively learn to focus on *limina*, or mental images on the threshold of consciousness. This is becoming your new zone of proximal development.

Connection *sometimes* lasts to the extent that one feels settled in it and is not fleeting. Scenarios are rarely so out of control that you lose the thread of awareness. Here the intent is as much on extending periods in the zone as it is on quieting thoughts. You are beginning to “ride the bicycle” even if on the verge of losing balance every moment. You drop thought/drift and refocus instantly after straying, with unreduced energy throughout the game, although focus dims. At the Competent level you are a knowledgeable player; in the Intermediate you are still learning how. In both mid-levels, emphasis is on becoming familiar with the zone, while in the advanced levels it is on the zone itself.

What happens when you maintain concentration throughout the game? This is what you discover in the advanced levels (5 & 6).

### 5. Proficient

Focus is clear throughout the game, which can last 2 hours or more. Though undertalk remains, moments of completely forgetting your purpose do not. You experience uninterpreted reality. Activity is serene and alert, without strain: you are learning to let go while holding focus, allowing higher consciousness to saturate your being, without faltering. This is calm from which, eventually, you cannot be dislodged. Because thoughts and feelings no longer capture attention, those that do arise are sensitively observed, as reflections of their initial energy. You notice *limina* passing through the mind, too fast to be clearly perceived.

You attend more to awareness itself, less to the breath. At this level, the richness of the experience draws you on to completion. With higher consciousness you commune with higher powers. Now is the time: let all else go, re-form. You have found a mind-hold, and entrance to the zone. Keep putting attention back there each time it strays. With practice you will easily find the zone.

### 6. Default shift

*The following is a general, much-abridged description, and my own limits will be apparent. The full transition and fuller description appears in Living in the Zone.*

You are in the Garden by default now, no longer in the Lobby trying to get a foothold. Rather, you are in the Antechamber, realizing that the Lobby does not connect directly with the Garden. You will not be in the Garden until you have begun to explore it and become familiar with the territory. The Antechamber is quiet and empty, and your task here is to stabilize attention, allowing the gateless gate, as it were, to dissolve. By exercising will-power, you can remain with unfaltering attention for the entire game, with brief intrusions of thought. These thoughts are less irrelevant than at lower levels, and you rarely forget your intent all together. The Lobby becomes less and less a place you visit, and so for the first time you know truly extended periods of silence.

The default shift of Step 6 begins Tier 2, which is a transition period. How can a material being live on this planet as a being whose primary mental mode is direct, unmediated, unconceptualized and unmaterialized, when humans are still so deeply sunk in matter?

Keep a training log to record brief observations for every game. Record the date and results: for example, length of the game, strength of concentration, types and amount of mental contents that appeared, whether there were extended periods in the zone, and how often you forgot what you were doing. Difficulties and things learned. Rate the game according to the Criteria. You will probably be in more than one level in a single game. Indicate the one that predominates.

Keeping a record of results gives accountability and motivation to improve; you discover conditions that help and hinder progress, and see how you are advancing from week to week, month to month. Over the years, there have been long periods when I kept count of the number of thoughts in a game daily; and long periods when I did not. I find that counting the number of thoughts gives me

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accountability, when otherwise I might not pay close attention to whether a thought is sneaking in. It provides motivation to improve.

### **Re-forming perception.**

Flashes of thought, insights and images are not a problem. Dwelling on them is the problem, and the compulsive production of mental contents. You're on the path when observing thoughts as they pass through the mind; you're off it when they capture attention.

Most humans live and die without untangling the knot of the mind's creations. Once one has a clear idea of what to do, and why, it can be accomplished. Basically, you stop reinforcing the images of thought, by 1) limiting exposure to mental constructs (e.g., from media), 2) minimizing involvements in the everyday, practical world, which is constructed through the veil of thought, 3) noticing and controlling your own production of mental constructs, and 4) experiencing pure perception for longer periods. It is like learning to walk. Or to fly.

Recognizing thought as it arises, and interrupting the formerly unconscious process of thought formation, you slow the mind down enough to catch embryonic mental energy in the instant between its appearance, and its formation as mental content. A vast space appears as you tune in to uninterpreted awareness and are aware of more. And not simply of more. Things that were insignificant and invisible, are perceived to be parts of a new pattern of meaning.

Gaining self-control of the mind is natural development, but it requires effort. It is a 3-part process of

- 1) uncluttering the mind,
- 2) extending the quiet space, and
- 3) Becoming familiar with what appears in a quiet mind.

At first the mind is crowded with plans and explanations, with current and emotionally-charged situations, repetitive and relatively trivial thoughts, and drifting. As these are quieted, you begin to escape the ego and tune in to messages from the larger self. Ultimately, you drop off body and mind, let go of thought entirely, and are simply aware.

At a practical level, this letting go mostly strikingly affects desires and fears, hostility and emotional needs. What is there to desire or fear when you realize that all constructions of the mind, the entire material realm, the body's urges and the separate ego-identity are crude representations of your true being, which is pure awareness? There only remains the desire, perhaps, to go beyond one's own very limited understanding, and to help others escape the trap of appearances and open their eyes to the beauty and the harmony of existence.

Exercises such as imposing will-power on the feeble attention, or holding attention in the Garden above a mental high wire without letting it fall into thought, are very like a muscular-aerobic activity. This strenuous effort ripens into the ability to let go. Stay mindful – that is, vigilant regarding what the mind is doing, not allowing thoughts to take over. It is hard work to keep the mind from compulsively producing thoughts. It takes energy not to be enticed into comfortable ruts. Will-power is one of your first-row tools. Develop self-discipline in all areas of life, particularly in regard to what the mind is doing.

Despite the commitment of thousands of hours that mental training demands, higher consciousness brings a more leisurely life. Being less occupied with mental contents, you can pay more attention to the world. The mind is at last free, and at peace. Escaping the small self, you are less inclined to expend time and energy on activities that formerly were enticing and now are perceived to be dull. You discover a vast network of relations, and energies toward both individuation and wholeness. You realize that everything is communicating. A miraculous world reveals itself, infinitely deep, beyond all price. Little things open up to reveal worlds within. Insight follows insight as the world that at first seemed self-evident and humdrum reveals itself as a flower endlessly opening to reveal new vistas. We see that the true self does not deteriorate, suffer, or die. We are not only a body, but all that influences us and that we influence. The body is a tool for channeling wholeness into the world.

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To be a bit more specific. You are the energies you emit, negative and positive. One skilled in perceiving energies can get very subtle and specific messages from them. You are the messages you emit, and most of these are nonverbal.

Both material and spiritual are integrated into this whole. The primary errors are to imagine that things are unconnected and that the material is the only reality. Separateness exists within a larger system of interconnections, and the material world arises from the matrix beyond form. The world the mind created was never meant to do more than facilitate survival and desire gratification. It is much less than what is possible for us.

### **Tips for living in the zone.**

When you get out of the groove, and are carried away by thoughts, return by visualizing the breath. When able to hold a clear focus, move attention to the space beyond the breath. You are making a habit: unmediated consciousness becomes the default perspective. Thought is used for the thought-created world.

Never feel discouraged. This moment is what matters. No matter how many times or for how long you forget or fall into thought, encourage yourself gently. No matter what the challenge, you cannot be separated from your core, which is oneness with the cosmos beyond all separations the mind has made. Guide the higher mind as it comes forth. You can do it. This is natural human development. A door will open.

While improving concentration in the game, practice this awareness in daily life as well. Begin with easy situations: when alone and engaged in personal or household maintenance, preparing and eating food, walking, during transitions and waiting time. Notice the appearance of involuntary mental contents and stop them. Make a habit of “Centering before entering” a building or situation. That is, when entering a place or situation, take a breath, drop thought, and be aware. Take “A breath of h.c.” hundreds of times during the day: breathe, relax body and mind, stop thought and notice attentively the world around and within.

Detach from unnecessary involvements. Live with less, be mindful about the activities you engage in, and the energies you admit into the mind. Saying yes to one thing means saying no to something else.

Stop hurrying.

Get rid of tv and radio, and use electronic devices minimally. They train the mind to attend to its contents and neglect its context. When clutter is gone, the truly important things stand out. Simplicity is of the essence.

Have a strategy for staying mindful while active in the world. For example, set a timer to sound every 20 minutes to remind you.

Make a habit of centering in all encounters, activities, and transitions.

Remind yourself before you start that all you have to do is to be loving and be here now.

<u>What to go beyond</u>	<u>What to cultivate</u>
Inattentive, automatic living	Attentiveness
Haste	Empathy
Negative energy	Compassion
Not emotionally accepting things as they are	Acceptance
Ego	Connections
Unnecessary stuff & its demands	Listening to the messages from all things

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Perhaps the most important tips are to

1. move attention from the contents of the mind to direct perception. Visualizing the breath is an excellent first step, and is a next-best activity to centering in higher consciousness; and
2. set up a schedule for daily practice and stick to it. If you miss a day, do not miss two in a row. Be persistent. Having a regular time and place for practicing may help.

To be completely human it is as necessary to attain higher consciousness as it is to be able to walk upright, make tools, and use symbolic language. If you doubt this, consider the current level of mindfulness, critical thinking, serenity, self-knowledge, love, wisdom and joy that is found in societies and individuals. The key to remedying this condition is higher consciousness: self-control of the mind, perception unmediated by compulsively produced mental constructs assumed to present reality.

The Flourishing Earth will only be brought about by higher consciousness. That is, fully-awakened presence, beyond thought and the separation of ego, experiencing union with all beings as well as with the Supertranscendent immanence in which the galaxies are but a speck, yet in which every creature is worth as much as love can give.



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