



HOW TO COACH FOR QUALITY AWARENESS

Secrets to the Higher Mind

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- If I were to visit the Inner World of your mind—would it be a pleasant place to vacation in?
- Is your consciousness a resource or a pain?
- What is the *quality* of your awareness?
- Would you like to upgrade its quality?

When it comes to *being conscious*, many people experience their consciousness as a problem, a real problem. *Being conscious* of what they are thinking, feeling, intending, trying, wanting, and experiencing creates tremendous pain for them. It puts them in self-conflict and self-contradiction. It causes them to trip and sabotage themselves. It interferes with their activities. They hate it. So they try to be *not* conscious! Of course, that only makes things worse. So they draw the erroneous conclusion that “consciousness” is the problem.

“If only I could turn off my conscious mind!”

“It’s that damn internal dialogue that chatters away inside that’s driving me crazy!”

“I just want some peace and quiet. How can I get away from all this inner judgment?”

Yet the problem here is not *consciousness* per se. The problem is *the kind of consciousness* being experienced. If your mind is full of self-doubt, judgment, rejection, and negative emotions, then no wonder it makes your inner world is unpleasant, painful, and torturous. With that kind of feeling state, no wonder it undermines effectiveness, focus, and a sense of control.

When it comes to both consciousness and unconsciousness, there are many kinds and qualities.¹ As sentient beings, being aware and responsive to, or conscious of, sense impressions is our glory. Self-consciousness makes us uniquely human. It separates us from rocks. Yet, depending on *the content* of our consciousness and *the quality* of its functioning, it can also be a living hell. That’s why managing it, “running our own brain,” and developing the emotional intelligence to handle it is so critical for success and happiness.

- Isn't this why *Coaching for Quality Awareness* is one of the central things that makes for a quality experience of life?
- So, what's the quality of your consciousness?
- Is your inner world of awareness a pleasant place?
- Would it be a comforting and relaxing place for your friends to visit?
- Would you want to do some interior re-decorating before you invited your loved ones or associates in?

Kinds and Levels of Awareness

In terms of mental *awareness*—our first and primary awareness is that of the sensory world. Like animals and small children, we have an awareness of what's "out there." This sensory awareness is our cognitive awareness of the world of things, people, and actions. Yet we humans go further. We have a higher kind of awareness, an *awareness of awareness*. This higher frame of mind or awareness is the key to the inner kingdom of your mind-body system—your Matrix.

In the first awareness of our primary consciousness, we recognize the real world "out there" beyond our skin. Well, we recognize it to the extent that our sense receptors of eyes, ears, skin, etc. allow us to recognize it. Even this *awareness* that we call "perception" is really a map, a neurological map, but it's about as "real," and as close as we can get to the external world. We can get a little closer using extra-neural devices such as microscopes, telescopes, electronic microscopes, and equipment.

Actually, *first awareness is pretty magical*. In fact, for us humans to "lose our minds and come [back] to our senses" (Fritz Perls) is an incredible and awesome experience. Some people spend decades, even a lifetime, attempting to learn this. Their internal dialogue is so strong and noisy that they can hardly experience the world *as it is* without it being seen and heard and filtered through the contamination of higher frames that interject doubt and judgment which create stress and self-conflict.

Yet it is the second awareness, and the infinite progress of layers of awareness, where the real magic occurs. I say, "magic" because every layer of awareness adds to the intrigue and mystic and wonder and hallucination of the mind. It is "magic" in those higher realms because at this level, *saying it makes it so*. It makes it so *to us . . . in our neurology*. Whether it can be translated to the outside world (or should be), well, that's another question.

The first and most powerful meta-state we all create and experience is *awareness of awareness*—self-awareness. We become aware *that* we are aware. We become aware of *what* we are thinking and maybe even *how* we are thinking and feeling and this gives birth to that most mysterious of states, *self-awareness* or *self-consciousness*. Only a few of the most intelligent animals have any sense of self, yet we develop such very, very early. And with us, it never stops. Not long after we experience awareness of our awareness, we become aware of our self-awareness. And so it goes.

The Step Up: Regress or Progress?

We experience what philosophers call “the infinite regress,” but which is really *the infinite progress*. It is an infinite *progress* because each time we *progress* to yet another level, another layer, we *rise up* (so to speak) in our mind and gain an even greater and wider perspective. It’s like being caught in battle between two advancing armies in the valley surrounded by mountains. In our first awareness all we can see is what is immediately in front and to the sides— the threatening swords and knives and fists swinging in our direction.

But if we *step back* just a bit, our perspective becomes broader and wider. And if we step back so that we *step up* one of the mountains a few paces, our perspective expands considerably so that we can see the tactical positions. If we step back and up even further, going higher and higher, our vision may expand to see all of the advancing arming, and if we rise up to the top of the mountain we may see the full panorama of the armies and their strategic positions and plans.

Stepping up in our mind to seeing beyond the first awareness of what’s before us, what’s *on our mind* to the form and structure of our mind, to *how* we are thinking and feeling, and the very frames that we are using to format our perspective—this is a meta-move to a higher place. And with each rise up, we transcend our first and our current perspective to include it inside of a higher frame. With each move we *progress* and set a higher frame that becomes the governing or determining perspective.

Transcending and Including

It is in this way that each meta-awareness *transcends and includes* the former awareness. As it does so, it *categorizes* the former. It becomes *the class* of the former. In this way we create our personal psychology, that is, our *psycho-logical* realities. It’s “logical” only in that each higher awareness modulates the lower as a class modulates and governs the members of that *class*. Yet we have the power to name the classes and pick the members.

We have various ways of describing this upward and forward progressing of awareness. Metaphors as the *height* metaphor (which I’ve used here) predominate. There are also metaphors of pyramids, levels, steps and stairs, and so terms of ascending, rising up, transcending, etc. The technical term that Bateson reclaimed from Greek and popularized in his writings is “*meta*.” This refers to anything that is in a higher (*meta*—“above” and “beyond”) position so that it is now *about* that which is lower.

When we make a meta-move to a higher position, we transcend the lower and yet include it inside of the higher. We *embed* one within the other. In meta-communicating, we talk about our talk. In meta-feelings we experience feeling about our feelings. This meta-function refers to how we reflexively apply something to itself. This was how I created Meta-States as a model to explain and model the *reflexivity* that sends us into downward hellish spirals or upward in spirals of ecstasy. Korzybski didn’t have the word “meta” to use, so he spoke about abstractions of different “orders,” first-order abstractions, second-order abstractions, third-order, etc. Then, as an engineer, he used mathematical language and called it the Structural Differential.

Suppose while you are feeling *angry* at someone and upset by someone’s rudeness, you access the

thoughts-and-feelings of *respect* for people as human beings, and then you look at the one who triggered the anger with eyes of respect. The first awareness (anger) is now embedded inside of a higher frame (respect) and gives rise to a new phenomenon, *respectful anger*. Then if you become simply aware of this structure, you progress to wonder at the value and usefulness of respectful anger as a new possibility. That's meta-stating, that's framing and reframing, that's categorizing and classifying, that's working with your matrix of frames. And it's more transformative than you might ever suspect.

The Magic of Meta-Awareness

Just noticing and witnessing what is describes a very special and wonderful awareness. It's the innocent awareness of a child that every scientist and anthropologist craves. To just notice without evaluation, without judgment, and without an agenda describes a very powerful state and one, which if we can hold and set as a frame of mind, can release all of the natural "genius" within.

This insight has been discovered again and again by psychologists, philosophers, theologians, and even sports coaches. Timothy Gallwey happened upon it in his tennis coaching and called it *non-judgmental awareness*. He discovered the power of higher performance if he could get athletes to *just see the ball* as a ball and to just see it without the higher critical frame being activated. They could then stop seeing it as "a threat," "a win or loss," "their reputation," "a need to prove oneself," etc. Then all of the incessant chatter that goes on in the head would become quiet and the body's natural wisdom would then have a chance to teach us what to do. This led him to invent what he calls "the inner game."

Similarly, the inner game in Meta-States is the commitment to *bring no judgment or negative emotion against ourselves*. To do this very thing creates dragon states: contempt against self, anger at self, fear of one's thoughts or emotions, shame for feeling angry, hatred about a memory, etc. Bringing negative states of thoughts-and-emotions against ourselves and against our states is an *attack on self*. It inevitably leads to and creates self-abuse.²

The opposite is to apply acceptance to ourselves, an acceptance that simply acknowledges what *is* without judgment or evaluation. *This pure awareness is magical*. It creates and sets a frame that lets our ego develop enough strength to simply look at reality for whatever it *is*. This is a magical state that counteracts states of self-fear, self-defensiveness, and self-judgment. Such ego-strength can then begin the process of finding solutions and dealing with whatever one finds. If you're religious, you might say that this is a "miracle."

Quality Awareness

All awareness isn't the same. It depends on the kind and quality of awareness that we bring to ourselves and our states. If we bring an awareness that is critical, judgmental, demanding, pressuring, an awareness that doesn't accept us but finds fault with what we feel and think—it creates an inner world where it isn't safe to *be*, let alone to *be who we are*.

The sad thing is that self-criticism typically governs the "consciousness" and the self-dialogue of most people. If we could listen in to the sound track that plays in the theater of the mind, we would

hear an incessant and non-stop chatter of criticism, “shoulds” and “musts” that demand and pressure. And with every mistake we would hear a barrage of insults. No wonder a person would simply want it to stop—to go away. But, of course, we make it worse by judging and hating and contempting ourselves for having that voice! This begins the vicious cycle.

- What is the quality of awareness that you experience at the higher levels of your mind?
- When you listen to your inner voice and the inner conversation you carry on with yourself in the privacy of your own mind, is it a kind and comforting voice, a critical and insulting voice, is it a voice that coaches you in a pleasant and resource way, or is it a demanding boss of a voice?

Just notice. Use the non-judgmental awareness of just accepting and noticing what *is*. How loud is that voice? What is its pitch and tone? Does the voice sound like your own or someone else’s? If someone else’s, then who? How could you adjust the auditory sound track of that voice to make it nicer, more comforting to listen to, even seductive and playful? At first, just notice it without exercising any attempt to alter it.

This kind of accepting awareness is the prerequisite for transformation because it is an awareness that is in itself curative. All awareness is not curative, but non-judgmental awareness is, loving, accepting awareness is. It puts you in charge of your inner Cinema. It allows you to begin to drive your own bus again.

Summary

May you find the inner world of your mind—the Matrix of all your frames within embedded frames—to be a pleasant and wonderful place. May it become a place of creativity and fun, a place of energy and vitality, a place of love and joy, a place of passion and compassion.

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References:

1. See the article on www.neurosemantics.com entitled, “Which Unconscious Mind Do you Train?”
2. *Dragon Slaying: From Dragons to Princes* (2001).