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CHAPTER 1

LEARNING IS DISCOVERING THAT SOMETHING IS POSSIBLE

...and you know how to look and learn, then the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you either that key or the door to open, except yourself.

—J. Krishnamurti

To be educated is not so much to be taught as it is to be awakened to who you really are. This chapter invites you to open to the journey.

From My Heart to Yours

The ancient Greeks believed the location of the human mind was

in the heart. They reasoned that since the mind was essential, it must inhabit the most vital of all organs. Wounds to the head were not always deadly, but wounds to the heart were. They assumed, therefore, the mind must live in the heart.

If my heart could do my thinking would my brain begin to feel?

—Van Morrison

A friend of mine who is Chinese points to the center of her chest whenever she says, “my mind.” She tells me this gesture is common in her culture.

Although we know new blood is constantly flowing through the chambers of our heart, renewing our entire system, once we are adults we assume the capacities of our minds are fixed. We close ourselves off to a myriad of possibilities: “I’m just not an articulate person.” Or, “I’m a left-brained kind of a guy.” But what if we could open our minds to an inflow of new ideas about what we are capable of doing, knowing and being?

I want to bring you into a comfortable kinship with the open mind of your heart. Hopefully, as a result of reading this book, you will begin to trust yourself and to know the world in new ways. I’d like to think that your curiosity will rekindle into an alive, available resource, and that the barriers you have created—the hard, solid crust that keeps the rest of the world out and you isolated within—will soften into boundaries that define your own space and allow a fundamental intimacy with others.

People Learn in Different Ways

This book invites you to learn how you learn. It will not tell you how smart you are, but it will help you discover HOW you are smart. It is written as an operator's manual for adults who are attempting to grow up as they grow older, for adolescents who are about to get their license to drive their minds on their own, for teachers, care givers, and lovers. It is written for anyone who defines himself or herself as a learner, or who has difficulties with recall, organization, or absorption of information and experience. It is for those of us who keep getting stuck in communication gaps when what we are attempting to create is a means of getting through, a meeting place where minds can touch. It is for eagles who are tired of living in cages as if they were chickens.

What is included here is what was excluded from school. The immense educational system in this country teaches people how to do quantum physics (well, some people anyway!), speak German, analyze the syntax of a sentence, and use fancy laboratory equipment and expensive computers, but it never teaches them how to operate their own minds.

The self is learned. What is learned can be taught

—Virginia Satir;
Peoplemaking

We live in an age when we are being forced to deal with rapidly increasing rates of social and political change. The organization of information and the development of human resources is our new

frontier. Of necessity, we must learn to facilitate the **process** of learning. Rather than merely accumulating new theories and more information that will be outmoded in a few years, our focus must shift to learning **how** to learn.

You will not find ultimate answers or solutions here, but I hope this book will lead you to a sense of the divine, a respect for the mystery that is involved in being human. It will not tell you where to go or what to do, but it will help you find the path with a gait that is your own. It will not make your life easy, but it will help you understand how you can think, learn, and communicate more effectively.

My intent is to create conditions where you can make discoveries about yourself and others, but there will be no real surprises. The principles are new perspectives of old landscapes, a useful vocabulary which enables you to talk about and grasp what talented communicators, teachers, and therapists have known intuitively all along—that people learn in different ways.

This book will help you understand which of six particular patterns of natural intelligence your mind uses to concentrate, create, and mentate, and to understand its traits, gifts, and idiosyncrasies. This is not a two-dimensional mental technology that you do **to** other people. It is a **guide** for communicating with others at work and home as they are, rather than as you think they should be.

This is not the only model for studying mental syntax, the order in which people think. There are systems that utilize similar

processes to some you will find in this book, but their more technical emphasis on categorizing the workings of the human mind takes them in a very different direction.

The coming to consciousness is not a new thing; it is a long and painful return to that which has always been.

—Helen Luke,
The Inner Story

I wrote *The Open Mind* so you could learn to trust your own mind with all of its wild detours and unrelenting obsessions. I designed it so you could rediscover the natural impulses lost from your childhood. I conceived it to help you create confidence in your own capacities.

My hope is that this book will provide you with a frame over which you can stretch the canvas of your own experience. It is meant to give direction and shape, to bring to light the art that lies dormant in your life.

As a heart pumps, it opens and closes. As I've put out these ideas over the last thirty years, there has been a tremendous inflow of feedback from others about how to teach and use them effectively. Consequently, this system itself has continually been transformed.

In rereading the first book I wrote about this approach, *The Art of the Possible*, I realized it did not come near to expressing the collective current thinking about how people's minds work, so I decided to write a new version. What you now hold in your hands

is a paper replica of what has been shared with me, a collection of flexing mirrors held up to the light.

The Spring from Which This Book Flows

This approach to understanding how your mind works is based upon a matrix woven together from the wisdom of my grandmother and the most important practitioner and teacher of medical hypnotherapy in this century, Milton Erickson, M.D., as well as research in clinical and educational psychology, perceptual modalities, learning theory, hypnotherapy, expressive arts therapy, and the martial arts. Strands have been added from 30 years of teaching in classrooms, and a private practice in psychotherapy, as well as hundreds of consultations with a broad spectrum of people from business, health care, education and social service organizations.

My grandmother taught me that it is possible to see, to hear, to feel through your heart, and that if you really want to understand someone, it's necessary to open your mind. Milton cherished the uniqueness of every human being he came in contact with. Through him, I developed a passionate curiosity about finding each person's unique natural intelligence, and what condition would most help him or her manifest it in the world.

I do not much believe in education. Each man ought to be his own model.
however frightful that may be.

—Albert Einstein

I have been inspired by the excellent and extensive research that Marie Carbo and Kenneth Dunn and others at St. John's University in New York have done into the effects of teaching children to read using their “unique learning style,” a combination of perceptual, environmental, and organizational preference.

When I was in graduate school, training in psychological and educational assessment, my professors taught me that we all think in the same way and that some of us have more intelligence than others. But when I was student teaching in the “inner city,” the children helped me discover that we are all naturally “abled” in different ways. The ones I was drawn to working with were the “odd ones,” those that everyone else had given up on. They were a motley assortment of “unteachables,” classified as unsocialized, retarded, learning disabled, autistic, emotionally disturbed, dyslexic, hyperactive—the wounded and broken ones. I was supposed to figure out what was wrong with them, put the diagnosis in black ink on a white form, and keep them out of everyone's way.

I spent three weeks trying to be a “teacher.” Control was theirs and my jaws resembled a pair of rusty vise grips. I was thinking seriously of other careers—driving a fork lift truck in Utah, for example. Since there was no way to be Right with these kids, I was terrified. So I did the only thing I knew how to do when terrified: I read a book. Fortunately I stumbled upon one entitled *Beyond Culture*, by an anthropologist named Edward Hall. Although it was neither psychology nor education, the kids I was working with were certainly beyond any culture I had ever known in my

sheltered suburban upbringing! While riding the subway from 125th Street to Grand Central Station, the following words by Hall illuminated my desperation:

“All of my experience and research in how people perceive, life experiences teaching various professional groups, clients, students, who image differently in their brains, created sufficient impact to jolt me out of the restraining perceptual and conceptual bonds of my own culture. *I began to ask all students how they remembered things and how their senses were involved in the process of thinking.* Most of them, of course, hadn't the remotest notion of how they thought or remembered and had to go through a long process of self-observation. When they finally did begin to discover something about how their senses were ordered, they invariably jumped to the conclusion that everyone else was just like them, a notion they tenaciously held...This common projection of one's sensory capacities or lack of them may explain why teachers are frequently impatient with or unsympathetic to students who do not have the same sensory capacities as the teacher.”

People are different from one another. A leader must be aware of these differences, and use them for optimization of everybody's abilities and inclinations. Management of industry, education, and government operate today under the supposition that all people are alike. People learn in different ways, and at different speeds. Some learn best by reading. some by listening. some by watching pictures, still or moving. some by watching someone do it... One is born with a natural inclination to learn and be innovative.

—W. Edwards Deming. Ph.D.,
“A System Of Profound Knowledge”

Not only had I found the information that had been missing in every learning theory I had been taught, but Mr. Hall's words also pointed a finger right to the children. Ask the kids! Why didn't anyone ask the kids how they learned?

I couldn't wait to get to school the next morning, too excited even to do the *New York Times* crossword puzzle on the subway. I burst into the classroom, and before the kids were out of the coat room, I was besieging them with questions about how they learned. Needless to say, my approach was a bit overwhelming. Samantha, who was all pigtails and wide brown eyes, looked at me quizzically and exclaimed, "I don't understand what you are askin' me, Miz Dawna, but you sure got a burnin' in you!"

I humbly spent the rest of the day being dumb, something I had not given myself permission to do since I was five. It became immediately obvious that there were many things these children had already learned how to accomplish. They may have been lost in a world of paper, but there were worlds in which their various intelligences could be found. The standardized IQ tests told me how unsmart they were, but when I was willing to get "dumb," it became obvious **how** they were smart.

Samantha was right. Something in me was burning, and has continued to for the last 30 years. It takes a lot of hard work to make a young child **not** learn. A lot of control, a lot of de-skilling. When you were young, you learned the incredibly complicated tasks of walking and talking, naturally. You did not have to be motivated or formally instructed. Each of us learns in his or her own time, in his or her own way. An oak already exists inside an

acorn; the possibilities of our lives already live within us, waiting for enough warmth and light to unfurl.

It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry.

—Albert Einstein

It would not be at all accurate to say I discovered the approach that is outlined in this book. Children taught it to me. The Odd Ones. The kids who couldn't, wouldn't, and shouldn't fit into neat little standardized diagnostic compartments. The kids I taught in the slums of Harlem, the migrant labor camp in Coconut Creek, the suburbs of Larchmont, and the back woods of Orfordville. The kids who helped me know that it was **my** responsibility to uncover the specific approach for each of them. It was **my** responsibility to find the needed resource, the ability, the health already there and to foster it. I name them as my teachers, the Joes and Jeromes, the Janes and Samanthas, for they truly have been the muses of this work.

My dream is that one day this book will be passed into some of their hands, whether they are in prison now in Florida, driving a freight train through the corn fields of Iowa, or performing appendectomies in an emergency room in Nairobi. I delight in imagining them reading these words and standing a little straighter as they discover how deep a fingerprint they have left in the wet clay of my mind.

Using This Book

The Open Mind teaches you to use the instrument of your mind to learn more easily and communicate more effectively. There is conceptual information presented for logical, organized understanding; there are narrative descriptions of people applying this approach to their lives, as well as practices for experiential, empirical understanding; there are stories, dreams, and anecdotes to support intuitive comprehension.

When I am teaching, I find myself continually slipping into stories. To know through metaphor is to uncover the design, the pattern of possibilities, the whole of a thing. To know through a story is to know through your heart.

In acquiring any new global skill, the initial learning is often a struggle, first with each component skill, then with the smooth integration of components... Later, one almost forgets about having learned to read, learned to drive, learned to draw.

—Betty Edwards,
Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain

Many of the stories in this book are anecdotes drawn from the lives of people who have studied with me. They are actual, honest-to-goodness people whose stories, statements, and questions are included because their individual journeys seem to transcend personality, and speak in a common voice. Unless labeled so, they are not composites, reasonable facsimiles, or fabrications of my fertile imagination. However, I've disguised names and certain identifying details to protect their privacy, and sometimes

presented condensed versions for clarity's sake.

Chapter 2 helps you to identify and understand the functioning of the three different status of consciousness—beta, alpha and theta—that your mind uses to think. Chapter 3 describes the symbolic languages your mind uses to process information in order to organize, sort, and make new patterns from your experience.

Chapter 4 gives you an overview of the thinking patterns as well as some tools to help you discover your own. Chapters 6–10 give you an in-depth understanding of each personal thinking pattern, as well as guidelines for getting along with people whose minds use this form of natural intelligence.

Chapter 11 is concerned with using this skill to meet your personal needs and get unstuck in your thinking, while Chapter 12 concentrates on the application of this skill to relating and communicating compassionately with others. Chapter 13 is an open inquiry, containing the most frequently asked questions about this approach. And Chapter 14 discusses the ethics of using this information and its larger implications.

After making such a fuss over the fact that all minds learn differently, it would be an absurd contradiction to share this model with you in only one way. Therefore, the information of this book is presented using several different processes.

One will ask you to learn through your body, kinesthetically; another will show the information visually, using charts, diagrams, and photographs; still another will present the information

through verbal descriptions, dialogues, and interviews. In addition, there are stories and anecdotes to illustrate the specific ways this information can be used in daily situations.

Each will affect you differently. You may find one electrifying, while another may make you yawn so many times your jaw will ache. Please take note of which ones work for you and how you are affected by each. That information is a part of discovering what your mind needs to operate comfortably and effectively.

Telling ain't teaching and listening ain't learning.

—Bob Barkley

The data for many of the charts and descriptions was drawn from hundreds of workshops that have been taught all over the country in the past fifteen years. They include traits that have been found to be true in **most** of the people whose minds function in a similar way. In Japan they say a finger pointing to the moon is not the moon. Not every person exhibits every characteristic, and some of us can find characteristics in common with many patterns. These charts are meant as guides; please use them lightly, lovingly, loosely, and of course, with curiosity and compassion.

The Practices

This book invites you to embody your learning through a series of what I call practices. Not exercises. The word exercise is from the Latin word that means “to keep busy.” It makes me think of endlessly writing, “I will not throw spitballs at Johnny Marcus” 300

times on a blackboard. It makes me think of doing 125 reps on a Universal machine to strengthen my abdominals. Exercises take us around the same old intersection in the same old way, which is not what is involved in opening your mind.

I decided to use the word “practice” after watching Richard Kuboyama, my Ki-Aikido *sensei* (martial arts teacher), perform an exquisite rolling movement across the padded floor of a gymnasium. I had been attempting to do the same movement for a half hour, but all I had accomplished was a reasonable imitation of a gooney bird trying to get out of its own way. I asked the Sensei how long it had taken him to learn that movement. He replied quietly, “Learned? Oh I have not learned it yet. I have only been practicing it for 18 years.”

My mind began to untwist itself, as it usually did when he spoke, and I asked him how much longer he thought it would be until he learned how to do it. He put one gentle hand on my right shoulder and blinked his brown eyes several times, before replying, “Dawna, I will never **learn** it. I will always just **practice** it. That's all there really is in life, you know. Just practice.”

A real story touches not only the mind, but also the imagination and the unconscious depths in a person, and it may remain with him or her acquiring any new global skill, the initial learning is often a struggle, first with each component skill, then with the smooth integration of components...Later, one almost forgets about having through many years, coming to the surface of consciousness now and then to yield new insights.

—Helen Luke,
The Inner Story

This book contains many practices. They are designed to help you inhabit what you are learning, to make you an active participant in this process instead of a passive receptacle to whom teaching is done. Doing is part of knowing. The practices included here will become a bridge between your intellect and your intuition.

Most of them are designed so that you can read each step and then go inside and do the work in your mind. A few will necessitate having someone else read them to you as you do them or reading them to yourself on a tape recorder and listening to your own voice guide you. Most of them contain seed questions that will germinate as you reflect on your own experience.

Many of them have been originated by me. Others have been learned during workshops and seminar experiences in which I have participated as a student. Trying to give credit to their originator would go something like this: “I learned this in a workshop with Jean who learned it from Ilana who got it from Fritz, who...” I've attempted to attribute as accurately as I could, but I'm sure I've omitted many sources. This is not in any way due to any lack of respect or appreciation for my teachers.

Fostering a Beginner's Mind

In using this book, please feel free to find which form of learning works for you and follow that. You may want only linear information, and find everything else “beside the fact.” It is. Follow your inclination. Perhaps that will give your mind the

safety it needs to go back later and adventure through the empirical learnings or even meander in the metaphors.

What is essential is that you take responsibility for your own learning. Trust your way. Befriend your mind, give it what it needs. It takes all your courage to be the person that you are, to fulfill your odd and unique possibilities. **How** you use this book will teach you more about the workings of your mind than its contents ever could. Start by making a mistake on purpose, flagrantly. Any mistake will do. Drop the book on your foot. Squeeze the toothpaste from the middle of the tube. Spell a word the wrong way on purpose.

That so few dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time.

—John Stuart Mill

Schools teach us to groove in our mistakes. We are caught they are the equivalent of being “wrong.” How many did you get “wrong” on your spelling test? By the time we are adults, our conscious minds follow suit, proving our schools are right, even if what they are right about is how wrong we are.

If left untutored, the human brain will **discard** mistakes and groove in successes. A baby learning to suck its thumb does not keep putting that thumb in its ear. One time in the ear, another in the nose, maybe even a third in the eye. But once that thumb reaches that mouth, within minutes you have a lovely, natural, neurological groove.

Unfortunately, we are too often caught to act sophisticated, co

stay the same, while pretending to be wise. We hang on to our habitual, known ways of being at least as hard as they hang on to us. That's because one of the worst things to be in this culture is a beginner. The word conjures up feelings of awkwardness, sweaty palms, a throat that needs to be cleared again and again. Yet in the Orient, a beginner is honored for her curiosity, respected for his vitality, welcomed for the freshness he or she may bring. Beginners make sure that ideas maintain flexibility rather than “rigidify” into dangerous dogma.

I remember reading an interview with Wanda Landowska, the world's greatest harpsichordist. Everyone was shocked to learn that at age 75, she had begun to take classes again as a beginner! When asked why, she was reported to have rolled her eyes back in her head, as she declared, “Oh my yes, the delights and joys of being a beginner again! The freshness, the vitality of experiencing it all for the first time...”

I am inviting you to risk chinking like Wanda. Become a beginner again in knowing the instrument of your mind. Roam around in the untrampled grass for a while rather than trudging through the known pathways you have been using for years. You may get lost, you may stir up a swarm of mosquitoes, you may not recognize where you are going, but you may also find yourself touching a very clear space, a self that you knew quite well long, long ago.

There should be less talk. A preaching point is not a meeting point

—Mother Theresa

Practice: Honoring Your Wisdom, Finding Your Intent

1. Think of a time in your life when you learned something well **and** enjoyed yourself in the process. Do a slow motion instant replay in your mind as many times as you need to until you become aware of specifically how you learned to do it. (For example, “I felt my body begin to do it, then I saw a Technicolor movie in my mind, filling up my whole head, and then I told myself to begin.”)
2. Think of a time in your life when something was very difficult for you to learn and very frustrating. Review it as you did above to discover specifically how the process was different.
3. How do you know when you learn something? Again, please be as specific as you can. (For example, “I know because I can tell someone else,” or “I can feel it in my solar plexus,” or...)
4. Please make your intent explicit: that is, write down, or put on a tape recorder, or tell someone, or go for a walk and feel *what it is that you want to learn as a result of reading this book.*

You Are Not Unique in the Same Way as Everyone Else

Education is meant to help you realize your individuality. It should bring to maturity the talent that already waits dormant within you, invisible, inaudible, untouched.

The question is not whether we will die, but how we will live.

—Joan Borysenko, Ph.D,
Guilt Is the Teacher, Love is the Lesson

You and I are now responsible for our own education—it is never too late to learn. Coming to know your personal thinking pattern and how to use it is like coming to discover how to use a bow to play a violin. Please remember, however, as you find your pattern in the pages that follow, that these are not concrete compartments or definitions of who you are. There are cultural and gender variations within each one. All people with red hair do not really have the same hair color. Any two violins have variations in the sound that is produced by them. It is my hope that the material you find here will support your thinking of your mind as a door, no, a thousand doors opening past the limitations of your previous history, so you become more and more like who you really are, closer and closer to your true natural intelligence.

CHAPTER 2

BECOMING INTELLIGENT ABOUT YOUR INTELLIGENCE

An open mind is all very well, but it ought not to be so open that there is no keeping anything in or out of it. It should be capable of shutting its doors sometimes or it may be found a little drafty.

—Samuel Butler

There are many different kinds of intelligence, many natural aptitude;; that combine in unique ways to characterize the thinking pattern of each mind. What we will uncover in this chapter—the various states of thinking, the way thought is metabolized in the brain to organize, sort, and generate new ideas from your experience—is the first step to becoming intelligent about your different intelligences.

This morning, while waiting behind a red van at the local gas station, no matter what else I tried to pay attention to, all I could hear was a conversation between the woman passenger, who was leaning out of the window, and her husband, a hunched-over man who was filling the tank. The metallic tone of her voice vibrated in my skull. “How could you think like that? What's wrong with you? Are you crazy or lazy or what? Talk to me, Herman! Don't give me one of those silent treatments again, Herman, talk to me!”

95% of what we know about how we think. that is virtually all of the current information about the chemical, physiological and psychological functions of the brain, has emerged in the last 10-15 years.

—Henriette Ann Klauser;
Writing on Both Sides of the Brain

As annoying as she was at 7 A.M., this woman was operating from one of the most common misconceptions of our culture—the assumption that her husband's mind should work just like hers and that, as a matter of fact, all minds should work in the same way. When the evidence is otherwise, as it was with Herman, we make “other” wrong—stupid, slow, crazy, incompetent, disorganized, disabled, stubborn, shy, or plain old weird.

The assumption that all of us use our brains in the same way to think has led to mis-appraisal of our core competencies, as well as to ruptured relationships. When some of us learn easily and others don't, we've been told that the reason is some people are smart and others not, some are creative, articulate, logical and others not. Too many of us have been exiled from our native truth

because we have not been taught to listen or speak in its tongue.

In truth, our minds are like the instruments of an orchestra. Imagine what it would be like if we assumed that music could only be played on one instrument. In reality, there are many different instruments that can each play music differently. This approach to the different patterns of natural intelligence separates out the stringed instruments from the woodwinds, the harmonicas from the kettledrums. One does not play them in the same way. Knowing the kind of instrument you have helps you know whether to put it to your lips or use a bow. Remember, though, that each violin, each kettledrum, each flute has its own sound. The six personal thinking patterns offered in this book are meant to help you discover the type of instrument your mind uses, so you can play the music you want with it in the way it was designed to be played.

The specific gifts of each instrument are revealed, the harmonics that are possible between us become apparent once we understand and honor the unique ways our minds function. Each of us has a particular pattern—a natural intelligence—our own way of taking information in, storing it, generating and expressing it. To know how to access the specific pattern your mind utilizes can be as useful as knowing your PIN number for the automatic bank teller or having the key to your safe deposit box. How can you spend all of the resources you really have if you don't know how to retrieve them?

Our mind creates categories—space and time, above and below, inside and outside, myself and others, cause and effect, birth and death. one and many—

and puts all physical and psychological phenomena into categories like these before examining them and trying to find their true nature. It is like filling many different shapes and sizes of bottles with water in order to find out the shape and size of water.

—Thich Nhat Hanh.

The Sun My Heart

The woman in the red van is not alone. I've come to realize that many misunderstandings, fights, and learning and communication problems are caused by not knowing the pattern a particular mind uses to think. When something works properly, we assume it was due to some magical external force, like luck. When it fails, it never occurs to us that we might simply be using the wrong technique: trying to blow on a violin or pluck a flute. We just think we have to blow faster, to pluck harder.

I'd like to introduce you to some people who came to me with common problems that were a result of just such misunderstandings and lack of information.

Sally is beside herself with frustration. She crosses and re-crosses her white-stockinged legs, then fluffs her newly permed brown hair. She touches an immaculate handkerchief to her nose. Her seven-year-old son, Richard, is running haphazardly around the room, throwing a Nerf basketball into a plastic hoop mounted on the door. Her eyes dart to follow him, wary, waiting. Her voice is nasal, almost whining, and the rhythm of her words is as rapid as that of Richard's red high-top sneakers.

“I have to tell you, he's been tested and the school psychologist

insists he is hyperactive and oppositional. They demand I put him on medication. He just will not behave. I am so frustrated I don't know what else to do. I've read some studies in my nursing journal that say there are possible side-effects to the drug, but the school wouldn't recommend anything that would hurt him, would they?

“He has to learn to pay attention. When I try to talk to him, engage him in almost any conversation, he just goes deaf and dumb. I give up! Last week I took him for a walk in the woods and he was actually violent. He picked up a stick and started hitting a beautiful poplar tree.

“His father and I have joint custody, but I don't talk to his father. He drives a trailer truck. I believe that unless we attend to this immediately, Richard will grow up to be...just like him!”

• • •

We live in a time of Great Social Crisis. Our children rank at the bottom of nineteen industrial nations in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

—John Gatto, New York City Teacher of the Year

Jim and Susan have been working with several different therapists for the past two years. They have each been married before and live with three children. People describe them as an ideal couple, but they have begun to discuss divorce. He is a computer genius, who dresses for comfort only, and has lines of despair etched into his face. Susan, though fashionably attired, drags herself around like a creature who has gnawed of f its own legs. Her eyes reflect

the sad, broken kind of beauty that one reads about in gothic novels.

“She's frigid. I know that's not the kind of thing I'm supposed to just lay out, but it's true. Obviously she doesn't feel any passion for me anymore. She's an ice cube. She never wants to **do** anything. We used to go camping together a lot. But now she's too tired. Every night when I come home from work, she's got a list of things for me to do. No hugs, no affection. I'd give anything for her just to grab me or rub my feet. It doesn't have to be sex all the time, but that wouldn't be bad once in a while too, ya know? I just need some warmth.”

“**He's** the one who's not attracted to me. Look at him—it's written all over his face. He falls asleep in front of the every night. The, romance is over. I guess we're incompatible or something. I've tried to give him a massage, but he just gets sexual immediately. Maybe I don't feel anything for him anymore. I don't know what I feel. I just don't see any way out. It's the same blind alley no matter where I look!

• • •

Matt is a high-school baseball coach as well as the shop teacher. Most of the kids who are in some kind of trouble come to him to get advice or just talk things over. He is a tall and attractive man who moves as if he has ball bearings built into the soles of his feet. He's been talking for years about going to graduate school to become a guidance counselor, but that's all it's ever been—talk.

“People have been telling me for so long to take the entrance exams and go back to school, but they don't understand...I can't take the written tests, I freeze up somehow and my mind goes blank. Then I panic. How could I go to graduate school, if I can't take a test or write a paper? Ask me what I know and I'll talk your ear of f, but when I have to write it down I just space it out. It's like I steal things with my eyes, and then lose what I've just stolen. I'm bored with teaching shop, but it's probably what I'll be doing for the rest of my life, because I can't make it in a paper world.”

In the coming world, they will not ask me, “Why were you not Moses?” They will ask me, “Why were you not Zusya?”

—Zusya



Joyce is a first-year medical student who earned a Ph.D. with honors in biology. Raised by a desperately poor farm family in South Carolina, she carries all of their hopes for the future on her shoulders. She is a wiry woman, connected to her body in the same way a city is connected to its electrical energy supply. She hesitates, stammers intermittently, stumbles with her words, eyes searching the corners of the room as if looking for a spider to examine.

“I don't get it. I worked hard, but college and grad school were a snap for me. I've always loved lab sciences, always done real well too. I decided to become a doctor so I could make my parents proud of me. I'm the only person in the family to even make it

through high school. I want to give something back to my people. I feel like I'm **meant** to be a doctor. Maybe I'm a little too sensitive now and then, but I care a lot, deep down in me. I feel for people in pain and I want to help them. I never expected to have trouble in medical school. I don't know what's wrong with me. I sit in those big lecture classes and just space out. I get numb or something. We have small discussion seminars afterwards and I freeze up, I can't say a word. Nothing comes out. I want to die, I mean really. I'm gonna flunk out if this goes on much longer. The dean called me in and said he isn't sure I have what it takes. I'm not sure I do either. I feel like killing myself a lot lately. It's not easy being a black woman in medical school you know, and I just can't seem to hack it.”



Each of these people thought there was something wrong with them. Each of them came to me expecting to have what was wrong with them treated, fixed, changed. Sometimes I think it is fortunate that medical science can't yet do brain transplants, since in this age of Disposable Everything, most of these people would have traded in their original equipment for new left frontal lobes!

Never try to teach a pig how to sing. It wastes your time and annoys the pig.

—Source unknown

Instead I taught them how to use the equipment they had in the way it was designed to work. Each of their brains took experience

in, and translated it into a unique pattern; the difficulties they were recounting were mainly the result of not understanding how to use their minds effectively. We'll return to these people shortly, but first let's turn to you and the way thought is digested in your brain.

Mental Metabolism

Contrary to what Mrs. Chalkdust may have tried her best to get it to do, your mind, any human mind for that matter, does not stay still; instead it flows in and out of different states of consciousness, following its own tides and rhythms. If you've ever tried to “pay attention” to any one thing for an extended period of time (doing your income taxes, for instance, or driving late at night on a highway), you've already noticed that your thoughts will not always march in step to your command.

As I begin writing this page, for example, my attention fades in and out like a short-wave radio. Drifting, I become aware of my left ankle rubbing against my right heel. I smell the cedar chips newly spread in the garden. Then I feel clouds in my mind and I lose awareness of the moment. I'm thinking about...I'm not sure what I'm thinking about or even if I'm thinking. Now I am hearing the keys of my computer clicking and the telephone ringing in the kitchen downstairs. The small black letters come into focus as they spill across the screen. My thoughts are clear, alert, attentive again.

My mind has evidently decided to begin teaching you about this

system by demonstrating the different states of consciousness as my fingers dance across the gray plastic keys to write about them. If I had been hooked up to an electroencephalogram (EEG machine), it would probably have shown my brain waves changing from mostly beta waves to a preponderance of alpha waves to primarily theta waves and then back again as I changed ways of thinking from focused to receptive to entranced to focused again. Most people just refer to these three as paying attention, mind wandering, and “spacing out.”

As a number of scientists have noted, research on the human brain is complicated by the fact that the brain is struggling to understand itself.... The existence in every brain of two different cognitive modes is no longer controversial since the work of Roger Sperry.... Studies at Cal Tech indicate that each mode of thinking, each hemisphere, receives reality in a different way.... Scientists are still struggling with where the different modes of thinking actually are located in the human brain and how the organization of these modes vary from individual to individual.

—Betty Edwards,
Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain

As far as we know now, the waking mind operates on three levels, or thinking states: what is commonly called conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. To make the flow of thought through these states visible, we'll follow the logic of a spiral. (See diagram on page 22.)

Starting at the center point, you are conscious of a thought, attentive, focused, concentrating, linear and detail-oriented. Your brain is producing mostly beta waves.

As you relax, as the thought begins to become digested, sorted out, your attention becomes more diffuse; the spiral opens into what we are calling the subconscious level. This is where you might experience yourself as confused or wondering or perplexed. Your brain generates more alpha waves here.

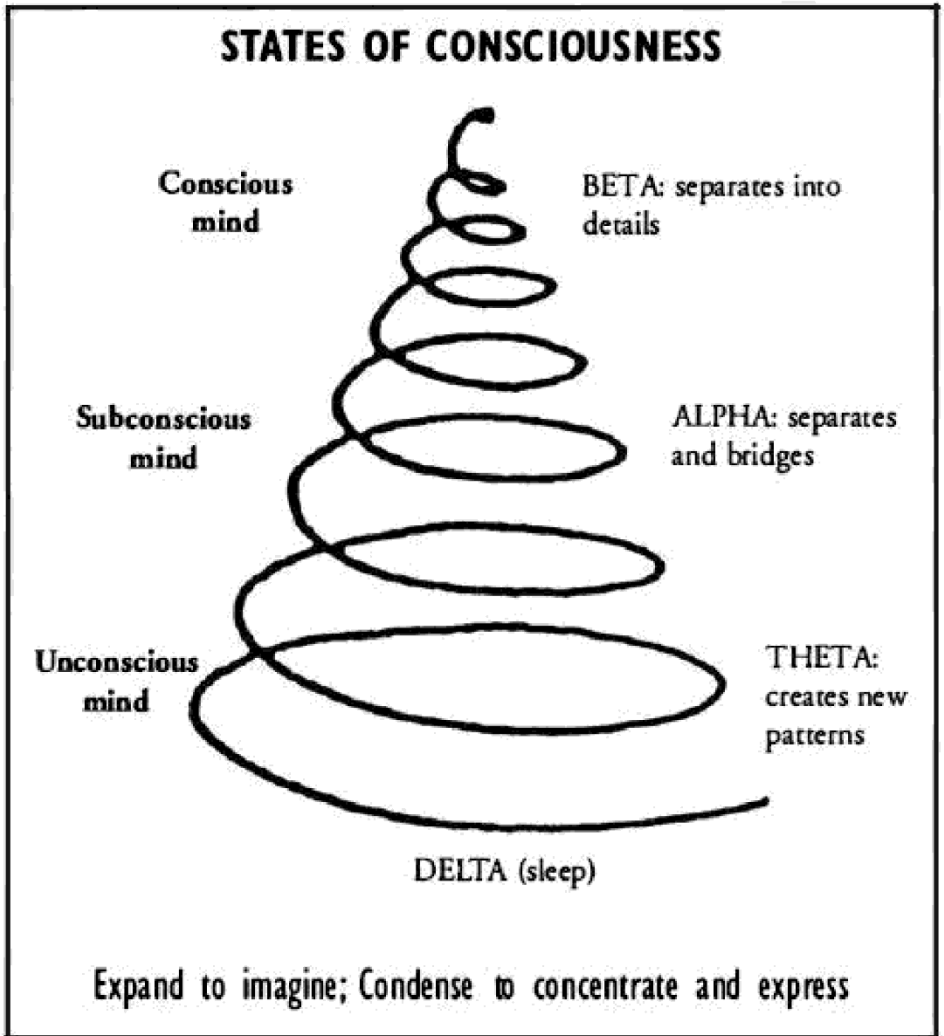
As the thought becomes integrated, filed, stored, made into new patterns in the unconscious level, your attention becomes the most diffuse of all. The spiral is now fully open, wide, expanded, and you are “lost in thought.” In this cradle of your innermost awareness, your brain is generating more theta waves.

Like a beam of a flashlight, your attention covers a wider area of possibilities, becoming more and more diffuse as you open your mind to expand your consciousness. You grow more and more receptive in order to access the most innovative and generative theta aspects of your brainpower.

To summarize, as thought moves wider and wider in the spiral, it becomes more and more symbolic, receptive, intuitive, sensitive, private and intimate. And we are less and less aware of it, less able to concentrate on one thing. If you communicate from the widest place in the spiral, what comes out may be inspired, and rich in imagery, but it may also be confusing to others or seem very circular and abstract, lacking the details that make it coherent.

To transform the world we must begin with ourselves: and what is important in beginning with ourselves is the intention. The intention must be to understand ourselves and not to leave it to others to transform themselves...

—J. Krishnamurti,
The First and Last Freedom



When you wish to attend to linear tasks, to concentrate on one

thing (such as balancing your checkbook) or make a decision, you condense your attention down through the alpha state—the bridge between your inner and outer worlds—to the (beta) laser beam point of greatest focus, the conscious “point,” of your mind. Here it is most easily expressed. Here it can be readily retrieved or recalled. Here, we tend to be more confident, but also more critical and linear.

Expanding, contracting, expanding, contracting, your mind moves like your lungs or heart; widening as it opens to digest and create new patterns in your unconscious mind, contracting as it concentrates to express them through your conscious mind.

Getting Wet

One of Milton Erickson's favorite expressions was, “You can't learn to swim on a piano bench.” As we proceed in this exploration of the different functions of these states of mind, it's now time to get wet—to dip in your toes and experience each one. In this way, you will have a personal reference point and cellular comprehension of the water we'll be swimming in.

There is a time for expansion and a time for contraction; one provokes the other and the other calls for the return of the first

—Swami Vivekananda

The Many Ways of Knowing: The Conscious State

Begin by getting yourself to “pay attention” in the way that is most usual

for you. Notice exactly what you need to do. Some people open their eyes wider looking at every detail, some sit up straighten changing their physical posture, some listen more attentively. You probably have your own set of adjustments that are automatic. Please put the book down and bring your awareness to what is most helpful for you to do so you can pay attention in this way.

You've just experienced the state of mind that most people use to think in a linear, logical, rational, “reasonable” or, as some people refer to it, left-brained way. I call it the “one-way mind,” because in this state, we tend to be certain there is only one way to think about something, and we like to get right to the point. This is where we are most comfortable and competent receiving information and expressing ourselves in public, and where we are the least distractible.

When the brain produces mostly beta waves, we are most alert and least receptive. We say we “remember.” This state of mind is the home of the tried and true, because it loves grooves, routines, rules, details, and orderly things that behave as expected. Its purpose is separation and discrimination. Thus everything becomes partitioned into objectified units.

This is where patterns are memorized; once familiar, these are used to make decisions in unfamiliar situations. If you come upon an unknown object in the road, hear a strange sound in the night, or smell something unrecognizable, your mind will use the conscious mode to identify what it is and why it is there. This is what prevents you from sticking your hand in the fire over and

over and makes it possible not to need to experiment with each new danger before avoiding it.

Education consists mainly in what we have unlearned.

—Mark Twain

Possibilities are eliminated here. The word “decide” comes from the same root as homicide or suicide, and it means to cut off or kill off all possibilities except one. For example, if I hear a sound in the night that is unfamiliar, not the way I think things should sound, I get very alert, and my conscious mind does its job of separating out that sound from every other one in the house until I can identify it: “Ah yes, that's the new refrigerator making ice cubes.” If you couldn't think in this mode, your world would become a chaotic whirlpool.

We have been taught that if we aren't in this state, we aren't learning. In fact, this is only the very first stage in the process. Here we accumulate information for the short term, but don't necessarily “learn” it. I once studied fiercely for a geology exam and got an “A.” The next day, walking through Central Park, a friend asked me whether a particular boulder was igneous or metamorphic and I didn't have the slightest idea. The information had gone in one eye and out the other.

The conscious mind is like the mouth of the mind that takes information in and chews it up, but doesn't swallow or digest it. If you think of your whole mind as a library of information, then the conscious mode would be the card catalog. It can help you find a

book and information about it, but you still have to get it from the stacks and read it in order to be informed by what it has to offer. The beta mind likes and needs order and responds well to structured activities.

It is here that you are most actively engaged with the outside world. You are intentional, goal-oriented, productive. The Eighties were a decade of this state of consciousness, since this kind of precise, quick thinking is what is needed for competition and getting ahead. My father was my primary teacher of this state, pushing me to struggle to “climb the ladder of success. It's a dog-eat-dog world. You've got to fight to get ahead.” This is the marketplace mentality.

There is another side to this way of thinking. For one thing, it does not deal well with change. The conscious mind loves stability and will do whatever is necessary on the surface to achieve it. In a relationship, a person making change from this place would go for the kiss-and-make-up technique, while an organization would go for the quick fix. Because of its obsession with familiar patterns and repetition of the known, and its difficulty rejecting them once established, the conscious mind plays a large part in addiction, which is progressive and repeated familiar behavior.

It is better to give and receive.

—Bernard Gunther

Most of our beliefs and self-concepts reside here and can become rigid, calcified dogma. It is the most difficult part of your

mind to change. Have you ever met someone who is beautiful or brilliant but believes herself to be a mediocre slob? Have you ever tried to change her mind? Like a dictator, the conscious mind wants to control everything. It becomes very involved with the meaning of things, and with proving it is RIGHT! Its favorite vocabulary is, "I think," "I've decided," "I know," "In my opinion," "What I mean is..."

Thus, concentrating in a focused and alert way is very useful for figuring out your income taxes, fixing something that's broken, or for getting raises and promotions. But opening your mind into alpha and theta thinking is most effective when you want to create, or relate, heal, or understand the whole of a system.

The Many Ways of Knowing: The Subconscious State

Let's shift states of mind and go a little wider. Think of a time when you split your awareness. thinking about one side of an issue and then the other, going back and forth between two options. "On the one hand...but on the other..." To do this, you'll have to get confused or perplexed and space out a little. Let your thinking get a little fuzzy, as if you can't make up your mind about something. Perhaps you begin to muse or daydream, and your mind wanders. You may feel as if you are present and yet gone, as if your consciousness is internal and external at the same time.

As you bring that experience to mind, notice what you need to do to think in this state. Some people, for example, need to stare or focus their eyes, some need to begin to hum in their minds or say certain words over and over. Other people need to just notice their breath and let their body

relax. What's your particular way? How do you shift into this way of thinking? Notice what this state of consciousness is like for you.

...in the plant there is a layer—sometimes only one cell wide—between the tissue of the root and the shoot. It is a crossing point between earth and sun... The two realms are an organic breathing continuum.

—M.C. Richards,
The Crossing Point

This too **is** thinking, no matter what Mr. Straightnarrow told you in fifth grade. In fact, when you allow yourself to be comfortably perplexed, you may discover your “confusion” has changed altogether and become curiosity.

In this binary age, the trend is to describe humans as having two modes of thinking: rational (“left brain”) and imaginative (“right brain”). However, my doctoral studies of hypnotherapy, as well as recent research in meditation and the martial arts, indicate there is a third mode. You might think of it as shifting into a neutral gear, to pause and sort out what is self and what is other, what will be kept and what will be discarded.

When the brain is producing the most alpha waves, that is our in-between state, the revolving door of our minds where the vast array of input we receive from the outer world is sorted. It is a transitional (trance-itional) way of thinking, for here the brain is metabolizing information and exploring options. It is a state of mind that is engaged by experimentation and resists too much external structure. It is thinking in dualities, a two-way mode: “Either I do this or that; either his side of the story is wrong or

hers is wrong; either I see it this way or that.”

It is like the stomach of the mind, churning things around, deciding what will be digested and how. In the case of the new refrigerator, I might listen to it for a while and figure out whether I want to go on listening to that noise or get up and close my bedroom door. Because it links the conscious and unconscious mind, this transitional way of thinking can perceive the details of something and the whole of it.

In fact, this way of thinking is vital for decision-making and image making, for it is the bridge between our inner and outer worlds. Without it, we'd swallow everything whole, never thinking about whether something is right for us or not. Knowing this makes it easier to expand when we're “confused,” giving our brains the time they need to cross that bridge comfortably. The subconscious functions as a threshold where our inspiration and wisdom are distilled before being expressed. It is a domain that is **both** public **and** private, receptive and active, between our interior and exterior minds, where we are motivated into action and soothed into relaxation.

The soul should always stand ajar. Ready to welcome the ecstatic experience.

—Emily Dickinson

Here the strange becomes familiar and the familiar becomes strange. Here your system is trying to integrate, take stock, screen, filter, pause, and catch up. It is attempting to help you discover what **you** think, as it balances your needs and those of others. This

is what determines whether you are overwhelmed or in charge.

My mother was my primary teacher of the subconscious mind. She was always weighing both sides of any decision, terrified to act lest she make a mistake: “Well, you could wear the red dress, but it's a little flashy. On the other hand, you could wear the blue one, but it's too casual.” Since most of us are taught in school that this way of thinking means we don't know what we're supposed to, we develop the habit, as my mother did, of contracting ourselves here, getting “up-tight” and uncomfortable when we hang out in this mode for any length of time. When people feel pressured, they are usually stuck here, thinking they need to return to the conscious mind immediately.

Change from this state is actually effected by taking time to step back and reflect, by not deciding until the information is sorted and completely digested, by taking a “wait-and-see” attitude. Giving ourselves time to be here, to wait and not know, is crucial to healing, and often uncomfortable until we get used to it.

Although this way of thinking may not seem to produce the most meaningful ideas or action, a person's whole life revolves around this passageway. Some common vocabulary from this mode is, “Urn...,” “Wait a minute...,” “No thanks,” “I'm not ready to decide that now.” “It seems to me you are both right,” “I pass.” “I need some space.”

The Many Ways of Knowing: The Unconscious State

To explore theta thinking, allow yourself to remember a time you really

*spaced out and were lost in your thoughts. Perhaps driving on a highway at night when you were at exit 15, then suddenly you noticed you are at exit 19? What happened to exits 16, 17 and 18? Who **was** that masked person driving your car?*

This is a time of taking a brief (or extended) mental vacation. Your thoughts go wide and receptive, or for some people very deep. There's no need here to control anything, to be anything, to do anything or know anything. This is a very private and often peaceful way of knowing. Some people describe this as floating. Some close their eyes. Others just listen to the stillness or rock back and forth. What is your unique way of entering this state of mind? Put the book down after reading this paragraph and just allow your mind to wander wherever it wants to go for a few moments, as it does when you're listening to a boring lecture or waiting alone in a movie theater for the show to begin.

After you have rested here for a few moments, notice what you need to do to focus your attention and bring yourself to the present moment again?

We remember wholeness so readily, because we don't have very far to look for it. It is always within us, usually as a vague feeling or memory left over from when we were children. But it is a deeply familiar memory, one you recognize immediately as soon as you feel it again, like coming home after being away a long time. When you are immersed in doing without being centered, it feels like being away from home. And when you re-connect with being, even for a few moments, you know it immediately. You feel like you are at home no matter where you are and what problems you face.

—Jon Kabbat-Zinn, Ph.D.,
Full Catastrophe Living

The state of mind you just experienced, where the brain is producing mostly theta waves, is often referred to as right-brained, spaced out, or meditational. The unconscious mind (which I really think should be re-named something grand, like the Transconscious) is no more apparent in daily life than the growth of a tree in the midst of an opaque winter day. This mode may not seem ordinarily “awake,” but it is very much alive, functioning as source and guide just as the heartwood of that tree is.

Schools strengthen linear, beta thought at the expense of intuition and inspiration. Our culture rewards verbal over non-verbal thinking. Thus we have been taught to distrust, be superstitious about, be afraid of, and consider irrelevant our source and guide, the unconscious mind. In order to reclaim it, we must relinquish our belief that the linear is superior or more worthy. The bark is no more worthy than the heartwood.

This expansive state of mind, where curiosity becomes wonder, awe, or surprise, is often the most difficult for us to access and, for many people, where they feel the most shy, awkward, or vulnerable. That's because we have been taught that to think this way is to waste time. In our culture, we are supposed to be in action or reaction as much as possible. No one gets good grades or promotions for thinking in this way. If someone is busy “doing” something, we are taught not to interrupt. But in the east, where reflection is honored, no one would interrupt someone who was sitting quietly in contemplation!

It doesn't matter who my father was: it matters who I remember he was.

—Riane Eisler,
The Chalice and the Blade

To your unconscious mind, change is of the system, not just to it. When change comes from this place, you become a non-smoker rather than switch brands. You go into therapy to study the process of how you are or are not relating to your spouse. Your business decides to do an overview of how information is moving throughout the company, rather than to fire the computer operator. The government does an in-depth overhaul of its financial system instead of starting a new lottery.

However, this mode of thinking cannot make boundaries, differentiate, or discriminate. It is a wild jungle, mystical and inventive. “What about this way—but maybe if we did it like this...” It is never satisfied, because it has no specific destination. Westward ho to anyplace!

This is where we get lost when we “lose touch with reality.” It is also where we go to experience transcendent phenomena. It is how we, as humans, can take leftover loss and joy and spin them into sonnets and sonatas.

The vocabulary of this state of consciousness is one of wonder and association: “I wonder what would happen if we made sidewalks move...” “This meeting is like leftover chopped liver!” “You're just like my Uncle George, that nasty man!”

Since there is no way for it to be wrong or right, the creative mind can join with any one else's perspective, “Oh, I see what you mean.” “Of course now that you put it that way...” “That sounds

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