PART 2

MINDSHIFT

A Brief History of Mind and Behavior and
The Psychology of Awakening

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Contentment is a quarterly newsletter with news and advertising designed with the general public in mind. It appeals to all those interested in the myriad and complex interrelationships between stress and health because technical jargon is avoided and it is easy to understand. Contentment is archived online at stress.org. Information in this publication is carefully compiled to ensure accuracy.

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Chaired by Dr. Michel Woodbury-Farina, the role of this board is to develop initiatives and communications to serve the stress management needs of all people.

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As promised, we are pleased to bring you part 2 of AIS Fellow Dr. William S. Eidelman’s chapter from his upcoming book Mindshift, discussing what he calls, "The Psychology of Awakening." In science, we recognize that everything about the human operating system is designed to oscillate between periods of stress and recovery. Yet in our constantly connected world we seem to have lost the gaps; those moments in time where we actually get to recover, replenish energy and recharge our own internal battery. Instead of following a natural rhythm, we find ourselves flat-lining through our daily life, struggling to put out fires instead of bringing out our best energy and engagement.

In order to strengthen our resilience to stress, it's critical that we embrace our gap times and learn to become more aware of them so we can utilize them more effectively. As Dr. Eidelman states in his feature article, the more we pay attention to the gaps the more they grow, and as they grow we can focus our mental energy in a way that takes us to a state of meditation in its purest state. According to Dr. Eidelman, this type of meditation is "an effortless state of conscious awareness with no thoughts moving in the mind."

Just like the body, if we're to experience optimal levels of health and fitness we must train our brain to operate more effectively and efficiently, bringing our best mental energy to the present moment and simultaneously decreasing the negative impact of chronic stress.

"Watching yourself, being mindful, is the most important mental exercise."

Over the next few issues of Contentment we will be featuring stories targeted towards making the most of our "gap time" in order to optimize our performance and productivity while also building our resilience to stress. Keep an eye out for upcoming AIS Gap Time Videos, which will help guide you through this basic meditation process. In the meantime, if you'd like to use a simple guided audio to help you recharge your energy, enjoy this quick 90-second Brain Recharge program on the following page.
90 Second Recharge Break

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Consciousness Is More than Mind
Even though the field of psychiatry was founded on Freud's idea of the unconscious, it is an extremely difficult idea to grasp. Part of the difficulty lies in confusion about what it means to be conscious. Usually, we believe that when we are conscious, we are thinking. If we are not thinking, we are not conscious. Thus, to many people, consciousness is the mind. However, this definition of consciousness is wrong. Thinking itself is not necessarily conscious. We already saw that distorted thinking derives from the unconscious. Further, in sleep research laboratories, when subjects were awakened from non-dream sleep, they report that thoughts are moving in the mind. When awakened from REM sleep, they reported dreams. This discovery of thoughts during normal sleep was a surprise to many scientists. But it proved that we don’t have to be conscious to create a train of thoughts.

Consciousness is more than mind. Consciousness is awareness. Mind produces thoughts. Consciousness is awareness of thoughts and of patterns of thoughts. Unfortunately, we are usually not aware of patterns of thoughts, and this unawareness is part of unconsciousness. But, unconsciousness is part of consciousness.

Consciousness concerns more than just the mind. Being conscious means being aware. We can be aware of many things at once, without ever having actual thoughts about them. The most obvious example that many adults experience daily is driving a car. When you are driving, your consciousness is aware of traffic, pedestrians, lights, passengers, radio and more without registering comments about all the elements. The verbal mind does not play a role in the majority of activities of consciousness.

Sometimes it happens that the inner commentary (or a discussion with a passenger, or the radio) pulls your conscious awareness so much that you arrive at your destination without remembering anything about the drive. You may even think, “Oh my God, how did I even get here?” Obviously, you were aware of the road and traffic, or you couldn’t have arrived safely. But, you must have been unconsciously aware.
Living In Automatic Pilot
This example of driving a car can be applied to many aspects of our lives. When we learn to drive a car, we must be taught many things -- the rules of the road, both written and unwritten, basics about the car itself, etc. After we've been driving for a short time, we simply know how to do it, and it happens automatically, even when our conscious attention is totally occupied elsewhere. Of course, many accidents happen because drivers are not aware of what is happening on the road. In most cases, however, if something unexpected occurs, the unconscious will react reflexively. For example, sometimes an urgent need to swerve occurs, and lo, we've made the swerve before the mind can think, "I need to swerve."

The unconscious operates in much the same way in everyday life. We learn patterns of thinking and patterns of behavior, and these go into the unconscious just as did the ability to drive. In fact, we live most of our lives in automatic pilot, saying and doing the same things, reacting the same way, over and over. Many of these automatic, unconscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors cause pain to ourselves and to others.

Identification: Who We Believe We Are
Automatic pilots require some kind of programming in order to function automatically. It is easy to see how we are "programmed" to drive a car. It's not always so easy to see how our minds are programmed. Most of our deepest unconscious programs come from childhood.

One of the primary mechanisms for this is "identification." Initially described (in the West) by Freud, identification occurs when a child takes on qualities of a parent. A boy identifies with his father, and in so doing, consciously takes on some pattern of the father. The pattern quickly becomes unconscious. Of course, children can identify with either parent, with grandparents and other close relatives, and later on with peers, role models, cartoon characters, and almost anything they see on television. However, because of the paramount importance of the early years, parents are the most im-
important objects with which children identify.

Beliefs, emotions, tones of voice, postures, movements, and behaviors are among the patterns with which a child can identify. Any time a child takes on a pattern, the same process of identification happens. Now, the child believes he is the pattern, and it will run on "automatic pilot." If someone attacks the pattern, he will defend it, because he believes that he is being attacked.

**Types Of Identification**

There are several types of identification. The first type is similar to a monkey-see-monkey-do paradigm. The child sees a parent use certain gestures or behaviors, and the child imitates. The mind is not involved, and nobody may ever talk about the gesture or behavior. The child may never think about from where the behavior came, although if asked, may be able to report it. Or, in a family reunion, a spouse or other outsider may point out similarities among the family members.

The second type of identification is with attitudes and beliefs. The mind is involved. Many attitudes and beliefs are social and religious standards of society. Thus, when we are taught that we were born in original sin, that we are essentially sinners, bad people, requiring social and moral control, this repetition goes deep inside our unconscious minds.

The second type of identification is emotional. Of course, there are thoughts tied to the emotions, but the primary identification is emotional. The mental part is secondary, a rationalization for the emotional patterning.

When the second and third types happen together, the identification is strongest.

Another type of identification is possible. This is totally nonverbal, in which the child falls into the resonance of a parent's unconscious pattern. One example of this is when a parent has been severely traumatized, perhaps in war or through sexual abuse. It has been noted by Alice Miller and others that a child can exhibit all of the symptoms of having gone through such stress, when in fact the parent was the one to suffer the severe stress. The exact mechanism by which this identification occurs is unknown, although perhaps it is a type of bio-energy imprinting.

**Lives of Repression**

The mind is further programmed through social interaction. Others tell us who we are, either literally or metaphorically, and we believe them. The manner in which a person is treated in his or her primary childhood environment affects that impact of social interaction through life. If a child is well loved, he or she will feel primarily worthy and lovable.
Treated badly or abused, he or she will feel unworthy and unlovable.

Children learn repression, because they are taught early that certain ideas, feelings, and behaviors are unacceptable. Freud emphasized the repression of natural instincts, particularly sexual drives. However, we also repress desire, fear anger, sadness, and love. The repressed item does not disappear. Rather, it literally resonates inside the brain and through the entire bio-energy field, affecting all our thoughts, feelings, words, and behaviors. This is happening unconsciously, yet this process is central in the creation of what we know as our conscious life. Our subjective experience is created each moment, and the repressions resonating unconsciously are part of the background mood.

Too often, major portions of our life energies are tied up in repressed feelings, resonating in the unconscious mind, when our energies could be flowing through us as radiance. These repressions exist as distortions and disturbances in the energy field. They exist as what Aaron Beck called distorted thinking. Besides causing a decreased quality of life and interfering with relationships, these repressions can also lead to illness. It is well known, for example, that repressed anger can create heart disease.

Sometimes (too often, in fact) it happens that people get stuck in one negative subjective state for extended periods of time, in which they are unconsciously following a pattern of negative programming and conditioning.

Rarely do people dwell in unconditional love.

When the repressed energy is released from the energy field, our subjective experience of life changes. We can awaken from these negative subjective states. When we clear out enough of these negative unconscious repressions, the natural quality of unconditional love is found to dwell inside us.

The Repression of Intelligence

As it happens, nearly everyone is taught to feel unworthy and unacceptable -- more or less (mostly more). Part of this seems to be the inevitable result of socialization. For example, if a child is too loud in the process of having fun, rebukes from parents will make the child feel that his or her natural joyous energy is unacceptable. Positive expressions of natural energy will be repressed into the unconscious.

Children's natural intelligence is repressed at an early age. Because they are so intelligent, children frequently make statements that reveal matters that the parents want to keep hidden. When a child observes a pattern from the unconscious of the parent, the parent is likely to deny it. The more sensitive a matter is, the more likely the parent is to become upset. If this happens too often, with too much intensity, the child learns to repress his or her intelligence, so as not to disturb the source of love and security.

We repress a tremendous amount of intelligence. It is unbelievable how much intelligence we repress. Compared to the intelligence we repress, the amount of fear, anger, and self-hatred we repress is small. And most of the fear, anger, and self-hatred we have is because we have repressed intelligence! This was part of the genius of Fritz Perls' Gestalt Therapy. Perls was able to facilitate the spontaneous intelligence of the unconscious.
When you start becoming aware, you will become aware of the natural intelligence you were taught to repress. When this intelligence is released, the experience is one of great joy. Why wouldn't there be celebration with a series of quantum leaps in consciousness?

**Are We Like Rats?**

The behaviorist school of psychology, which prides itself on being scientifically oriented, would have us believe that humanity is under the same laws of classical and operant conditioning developed in laboratories with rats and pigeons. In classical conditioning, or signal learning, a subject who is given food at the sound of a bell will soon salivate at the sound of the bell alone. The laws of operant conditioning, described by B. F. Skinner, are based on principles of reward and punishment. The "operator"—be it animal or person—learns behaviors which are rewarded and avoids behaviors which are punished. (This particular law of psychology was proposed in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra's 5,000 years ago).

One graphic example of how this can occur in humans took place in a pediatrics clinic. As a medical student, I was in the examining room with a mother and her two-year-old daughter, who was naked for the examination. She was sitting idly, and began unconsciously playing with her genitals. Her mother suddenly jumped at her from across the room, and screamed "Don’t touch there! I keep telling you not to touch there!" The child froze, stopped breathing, and undoubtedly was intensely frightened.

This powerful message, as the mother indicated, was repeated again and again, probably with the same intensity. This must have set up a powerful conditioned reaction in this poor girl. Today, as an adult, she must be deeply conditioned to believe that her sexuality is wrong. Undoubtedly, she has "reasons" to justify the conditioning, so that it will seem in some way rational. "Sex is sin," or "Sex is dirty," or "Men are only interested in sex," "I'm wrong to have sexual feelings and desires," or some other system of beliefs probably covers her memory of her mother's vehement insistences. The true origin of her feelings remains unconscious.

This example shows how conditioning is tied to both mental belief systems and to emotional patterning. Although conditioned reactions can occur separately from thought patterns and belief systems, they are usually intimately connected.

**The Structure of the Ego**

Julian Jaynes describes thoughts as metaphors of reality. He says that all of our metaphors about reality create an actual structure, and this structure is our consciousness. Although this is too narrow a view of consciousness, as we’ve seen, it does fit as a description of the ego.

The ego is a structure created by metaphors and symbols which are actual resonant fields of thought and emotional patterns, resonating in the liquid crystal structures of the brain. The structures of metaphor and symbol, tied to conditioned reactions from early childhood, are the base structures of the ego, which then resonate with all the metaphors which come later. It is all one resonant structure within the brain.

Individual thoughts and feelings are parts of the structure. However, when a thought passes through the
mind, we normally see it only as the thought itself. We normally don't see it in the context of the structure. Thus, we can go through the same circular patterns for years, never realizing that we are doing so, because we are only seeing the isolated thoughts as they flash by, and we are unaware of the repeating patterns. This is unconsciousness.

**Automatically Generated Associations**

Freud used the process of free association to gain insights into the structure. This worked because of the way the ego is constructed, via harmonic resonance of thought forms, stored in association with emotions and other feelings.

The unconscious mind *automatically* produces thoughts, one after another, twenty four hours a day. These thoughts are associations which occur unconsciously. You can easily see the process in yourself. If I ask you to report the first word that pops into your mind when I say "kitchen," the word will simply appear to your conscious mind. There is no thinking about it. The word may be some obvious association, like table or sink. These are words commonly used with the word kitchen. You may come up with a word like "mother," or "breakfast." This is another level of association, based on the emotional link. The stronger the emotional charge of a memory, the stronger the associations will be.

The process is the same if you are given instructions for a certain type of association. For example, if I say to associate an animal with a human quality, and I say "lion," you might say "courage" or "fear." If I say "horse," you say "...." If you watch the process of your association, you will again see that the word simply appears in your mind. Even when you consciously give direction to the mind, you are not consciously making the association happen.

It happens automatically, unconsciously, based on the structure of your thought patterns, of your ego.

This same process of automatically
generated associations from the unconscious happens all the time. In fact, we have very little control over it.

**The Running Commentary**
The unconscious mind is a thought-producing machine. You can see it in yourself at almost any time. As you read these words, your mind is almost certainly producing either a running commentary on what you are reading or following some other train of thought, which itself might be totally unrelated.

This "running commentary" created by the unconscious mind goes on all the time. If you are absorbed in some activity, you might not notice it, but the commentary goes on and on, whether you are awake or asleep. Sometimes in light stages of sleep, one can be consciously aware of the thoughts, and believe oneself to be awake—but brain wave tracings demonstrate the light stage of sleep. It is possible to sleep through the night, but believe one has been awake all night!

We can learn a lot about ourselves by watching the running commentary. Normally, we don't want to watch it and so we stay absorbed in some outside activity. All the while it goes on behind the activity, much in the same way it goes on along during sleep.

Some people will argue that while one is awake, the running commentary is conscious. However, if we observe our own running commentary in detail, we will see that we are not consciously creating it. Rather, it simply creates itself. Just as our mind creates associations to words, it creates associations to our thoughts and perceptions. It just goes on and on and on. Usually it repeats itself, over and over, year after year, following the resonant pattern structure of the ego.

Try this exercise. For fifteen minutes, write down every thought you have. You will see how conscious the running commentary is.

**Attention And Awareness**
What does it mean to be con-
conscious? There seems to be two elements to being conscious--attention and awareness. You are conscious of reading: you have your attention on the words and you are aware of them. It can happen that you read a page, but if the running commentary was distracting your mind, you don't remember what you've read. Even though the physical eyes and brain read the page, attention and awareness was focused on the running commentary.

This meaning of consciousness, of being conscious, implies an object. We are always conscious of something, of some object. We have our attention on the object--a thought, a feeling, or a perception. We are aware of some aspect of it. Consciousness attaches to a familiar aspect, and then through memory patterns resonating in the unconscious, we create our version of that object.

Many people will be surprised to realize that our conscious attention and awareness is not really under our conscious control. Here is another test. Look at a clock or watch with a second hand. Watch the second hand while you remember that you are watching the second hand. See how long you can remember.

This is what happens to most people: Sooner or later the running commentary of the mind will pull them away from the clock and from remembering. The average person will be pulled away before twenty seconds pass!

You can do a similar test with your breathing. While looking at a clock, see how long you can remember that you are breathing. Again, the average person cannot remember for more than twenty seconds. The unconscious mind pulls the conscious attention and awareness into whatever associations are resonating at the time. Within twenty seconds, consciousness can be pulled towards something else, a process which continues most of the time.

**The Here-Now Passes Unnoticed**

If you imagine that conscious awareness is like a flashlight, the unconscious mind continually is moving the light. The light itself does not know how it is being moved, it merely knows what it is illuminating in the moment. Often, the conscious mind is illuminating a thought pattern related to the past or future, and unrelated to the present moment. Meanwhile, the present moment, the here-now, passes unnoticed or barely noticed. What we have said or done in that moment is done unconsciously, automatically. This is how we live much of our lives. This is why the world is such a mess!

**Love Is the Greatest Therapy**

Over the years, many forms of psychotherapy have emerged. However, none could claim great success in alleviating mental illness or mental suffering. Research showed that no matter what therapy was used, about one third of the patients improved, one third stayed the same, and one third deteriorated. In one classic study, a control group which was waiting to see a therapist improved more than the group who did receive therapy.

Jerome Frank, M.D., conducted a research study in which he concluded that the primary factor in successful therapy was the quality of the relationship between therapist and patient. With a good relationship, the type of therapy was almost irrelevant, as long as both patient and therapist believed in it.

This research supports the hy-
hypothesis that most mental illness is due to lack of love. The loving supportive relationship is the primary healing im-
perative. It almost doesn't matter what form of therapy is used, because the true therapeutic agent is love. Love is the template for moving back into the natural resonance.

Mental Health:
A Positive State of Aliveness
Mental health has been considered to be the absence of mental illness. This has meant that if you were able to keep together a job and a family, you were not mentally ill.

Mental health, however, is a positive state of aliveness, lovingness, joyfulness, and humor. A mentally healthy person will still experience pain, but it will not overwhelm his or her peace and bliss.

Western psychologists and psychiatrists can't conceive of a positive state of mental health, and so they remain focused on mental illness. They can't conceive of enlightenment. And they can't conceive of even the soul.

The Psychology of Awakening is a meeting of East and West. It understands illness, and it understands mental health. And it understands enlightenment. The basic therapeutic device is meditation, given in the atmosphere of love and acceptance. This device can move one through mental illness, into mental health, and beyond. However, without love, meditation has difficulty flourishing.

The Purity of Meditation
Meditation has a number of different meanings. The purest meaning of meditation is: an effortless state of conscious awareness with no thoughts moving in the mind.

Meditation can also mean a state of conscious awareness of thoughts, feelings, or actions. Any time we focus our awareness on the body and/or the mind, we can say we are meditating.

There are many meditation techniques. If the techniques are done mechanically, automatically, then they are not meditation. A robot cannot meditate.

If a robot does meditate, then he/she stops being a robot at that time.

Any activity, work or play, can become meditation if we bring awareness of body and mind to it.

However, no matter what type of meditation we do, it is good to remember that meditation in its purity is silence. Meditation that is not silence is not really meditation. Perhaps it should be given another name.

Watching is a good name for it.

Watching Ourselves From the Inside
Watching is meditation. If you can watch television, you can meditate. In meditation, we watch ourselves from the inside out. We are very used to watching outside of ourselves. Besides television, which many people watch for five hours a day or more, we watch other people. Then, we react unconsciously, and watch the other people's reactions to us.

We very rarely watch ourselves. When we look outside, actual bio-energy flows from us to the object we are observing. This is part of our life energy, which is wasted. It is dissipated. It goes nowhere. When we watch ourselves, this energy is recycled. When we watch the body, this energy
It is this energy of meditation which provides the boost needed for quantum leaps in consciousness. It is simple bio-physics.

**Rest In the Gaps**

When we watch the mind closely, we will see that there is a gap between each word, between each sentence, between each thought. In our unconsciousness, we are lucky to see the thought at all! We completely miss the gaps in between. Meditation involves awareness of the gaps. The more you watch, the more you become aware of the gaps.

With this awareness of the gaps, the gaps grow. With this awareness, a change happens in the bio-energy field. An inner peace, an inner harmony develops. A natural, spontaneous lovingness arises. The bio-energy field becomes more coherent and more radiant.

As our watching grows, the gaps grow. When finally we can sit in the gap as long as we like, we are in meditation at its purest.

The whole process is actually simple and natural. Watching our own being as totally as possible, consciousness infuses us. Our watching the gaps creates new energy in our consciousness.

Meditation seems to induce more consciousness directly from the zero point field, in quantum leaps and bounds.

**The First Awareness**

Humanity is unconscious, but is becoming more conscious all the time. Because we are so unconscious, when we become more conscious, the first thing we become aware of is how unconscious we have been. This happens within each individual, and it happens within the large society, in our global body.

On an individual level, people don't want to become conscious of what they had repressed. Repressed items were put away because they were either unacceptable or painful. Why open up old cans of worms? This is what most
people think.
The reason to open them up is to let the worms out! Of course, they are gooey and icky -- if you choose to look at them that way. They are also alive and moving.

Once the worms are out, they are gone, and you are worm-free. When we collect new ones, we know how to release them.

Furthermore, what we repressed seemed like worms at the time because of our parents or the society. In fact, some of them were caterpillars, ready now to turn into butterflies.

By the way, when we are watching ourselves, we are much better able to watch outside of ourselves.

We are better able to see the outside world, because we are not filtering it through so many layers of unconscious conditioning. We see with a new clarity of vision.

Further, because we are watching ourselves as well as watching the other, a different kind of connection is made with what or who we are watching. The energy returns to us, it is again recycled. We are nourished and strengthened by it.

The Most Important Exercise
In the beginning, when we attempt to watch ourselves, it is extremely difficult. When most people try to watch for the first time, they are shocked by their inability to be aware, to stay present in the here-now.

If, during the consciousness test, you could remember for more than a minute, then you have great potential for meditation. Indeed, whether you know it or not, you have been meditating! If you lasted twenty seconds or less, then this means you have to apply more effort in the beginning. However, don't be discouraged, for by exercising, you can build up the strength of your inner awareness.

Watching yourself, being mindful, is the most important mental exercise.

An Hour a Day...
Because it is so difficult to watch ourselves, all teachers of meditation have insisted that the beginning meditator set aside between one half hour and one hour per day to be devoted only to meditation.

Without distractions, beginning meditation is difficult enough. With distractions, it is practically impossible.

However, an hour a day set aside does not mean you don't meditate at other times. The more we watch, the stronger our watching becomes. It is similar to physical exercising. We begin with small exercises, and move our way to larger ones.

We can watch at any time. As we read, we can feel the body in the chair. We can be aware of our breath. The more aware we are each moment, the more consciousness we induce from the zero point field.

We can watch the body as we eat, as we walk, as we watch television. There is never any barrier to watching and meditating, except for the pull of unconscious habits, which seem to have a gravitational force of their own.

The Natural Process of Deconditioning
According to the Psychology of Awakening, we can be deconditioned through the application of mindfulness, moment to moment awareness, moment
to moment watching. *Awareness Deconditioning* is a simple process which has five basic stages.

The first stage is an intellectual understanding of an unconscious behavior pattern. We can acknowledge that we have an unconscious, automatic pattern which we don't want to have any more.

The second stage is to be aware when we have just engaged in the pattern.

The third stage is to be aware when we are in the middle of engaging in the pattern.

The fourth stage is to be aware that the stimulus for the pattern has taken place. At that moment, we can see ourselves slide into the pattern. By now, the pattern has little energy.

**Better Living Without Programs**

The fifth stage is a silent one. The stimulus is there, but the pattern has disappeared under the growing light of our consciousness.

With no programs in the bio-computer, you can respond to the stimulus spontaneously, with your natural intelligence, and with your innate love.

The idea of living without programs, without conditionings, is extremely difficult for many people to conceive.

Normally, we believe that it is our programming and conditioning that make us civilized. Without these restraints, we would have madness and chaos. Many believe that without conditioning, we would revert back to a more primitive state.

Actually, programs and conditionings do teach people how to live. But the reason we have needed conditioning in the first place is that our inner awareness was not strong enough.

According to all the awakened teachers, when we are aware, we know through our intelligent feeling consciousness what is right and what is wrong. No book or teacher or tradition can ever tell it, because each moment is unique. No formulas will apply to each moment, because the nature of existence is paradox and change.

**The Art of Inner Knowing**

Moment to moment awareness is enough to tell what is right and wrong. We can know it in our own feeling consciousness. There is a sense of natural inner knowing which becomes activated if we watch. For example, we can know which thoughts were programmed into the mind from mother, which from father, which from priests, teachers, etc. We will automatically, naturally, know which thoughts arise spontaneously from our own natural intelligence. We simply need to watch our
own mind.

But we have been taught not to trust our own feeling consciousness. Many times it happens, probably to everyone at some time and to some people frequently: We feel and believe something which is important to us, and which no one else we know agrees with or understands.

It is not a particularly pleasant situation. Usually, people will repress their original perceptions and feelings, and will agree with the crowd. When they do that, they are repressing their own life energy, their own intelligence.

If people have to give up too many of their perceptions to match with the crowd, the natural result is neurosis -- depression and anxiety. Depression because we are blocking our own life energy, and anxiety, because we are always worried about whether we are acceptable.

Worse, almost everyone learns very young that they are not acceptable as they are. Thus, everyone is worried about how to be acceptable. We are regularly critical of ourselves. This criticism is usually rationalized to be a necessary part of living and making ourselves better. Don't be fooled. Neurosis by any other name is still neurosis.

**Love Yourself And Watch**

Because of deeply ingrained programs that say we are full of sin and unacceptable as we are, when one watches his or her mind, at first many judgments and self-criticisms will be found.

This is why Buddha, in the Dhammapada, one of his earliest teachings, said, "Love yourself and watch, today, tomorrow, always."

If we watch without loving ourselves, then all the old programmed judgments will automatically enter. Because we have not yet broken the identification with these judgments, we will believe them, and we may even be thrown into despair.

If we love ourselves while we watch, we will see that all our habitual, automatic self-condemnations are the result of something we learned from someone else. The Psychology of Awakening hypothesizes that most or all habitual negativity in man is the result of unconsciousness, and that by bringing in moment to moment awareness of body, mind, and feelings, the negativity will melt. The body then resumes the natural harmonic of nature -- loving blissfulness.
Assess your stress with the biofeedback square. Then turn the card over to stop your stress reaction using steps 1, 2, and 3. For best results practice each night for 5 minutes when you go to sleep and again in the morning. Apply this technique every time you become stressed. With consistent practice the technique assimilates with your body, giving you the control to melt away stress in minutes. Keep one card in your wallet and one near the bed. Share your cards with friends and loved ones.

“This card provides a simple yet scientifically based way to bring awareness and take the first steps to reducing stress by offering the three main components we look at in validating a stress reduction program:

1. Bring awareness to your stress level
2. Take physical measures to reduce the stress, in this case focus on the tension and breathe deeply
3. Reinforce the actions with positive imagery

We like the simplicity of this card. At AIS, our goal is to lead people to mindfulness and teach simple, yet science-based techniques to manage stress. This card checks all the boxes!”

Daniel L. Kirsch, PhD, DAAPM, FAIS President of The American Institute of Stress
Look for The Seal.

ONLY THE AIS SEAL OF CERTIFICATION assures you that a stress management products or services have been fully tested and verified to be effective by AIS.

What is AIS Certification?
Products and services that have been certified by AIS make truly significant strides toward providing the public with tools, training and techniques that reduce stress levels and improve the health and quality of life for consumers. The AIS seal indicates that this entity delivers on its claims as a stress management tool or training source.

Why Trust AIS?
The American Institute of Stress (AIS) is a non-profit organization that for over 35 years has set quality standards for stress research, and more recently stress management products and services. AIS Standards are recognized across the world as scientifically rigorous and are representative of excellence in the field.

Click below to view the gallery of AIS Certified Products:
http://www.stress.org/about/whos-who/products/
Both Sides of the Issue

By Elizabeth Scott, MS, DAIS

At AIS we know that many of the issues you face in your daily life have two sides. Here we explore both sides of an issue that impacts your Daily Life balance.

Alter Habitual Thought Patterns, or Shed Them Altogether?

As we all know, our thoughts are pivotal in our experience of stress. One of the most pervasive sources of stress is the human tendency to perceive life through a distorted lens. It is well-documented, for example, that the simple difference between perceiving something as a “threat” or a “challenge” can lead us to respond in either a more stressed or more proactive way. And, of course, these responses lead to different sets of circumstances that lead to either greater or lesser levels of stress and, ultimately, different life paths.

There are several reasons we may have this tendency to perceive and react to circumstances in stress-inducing ways. Virtually everyone has fallen victim to naturally inborn cognitive distortions such as filtering, jumping to conclusions, or catastrophizing, which can affect our stress levels and cause stress for those around us, particularly if we are not aware of the distortion of our thinking. We also contend with the powerful influences of thinking patterns we learned in childhood from our parents and siblings, teachers and friends, the media, and various other sources. Our past hurts can leave emotional scars that cause us to overreact to sensitive emotional triggers that may remind us of these painful experiences, even if what we experience in the present may require a different response.

Many branches of therapy have aimed toward helping people alter their habitual thinking patterns, first by becoming aware of them—making the unconscious, conscious—and then by examining and altering them. There have been several different approaches to completing this task, from psychoanalysis to behavioral therapy, and everything in between. Some approaches focus on understanding where our patterns come from, some focus on learning to recognize common cognitive distortions, some on healing old emotional wounds so the resulting emotional triggers are less intense and the resulting responses less powerful and automatic. Changing automatic thoughts by altering ingrained behavior habits has also been effective for many. Traditionally, we have worked toward identifying and altering our habitual thought patterns so they better serve us today.

A related but slightly different approach from awakening psychology makes a new recommendation. This strategy also involves becoming aware of the power of automatic thought patterns. However, the
focus is on overriding these habitual and ingrained thought patterns altogether and generating unbiased responses in the moment, rather than creating new, healthier thought patterns on which to rely. Through the tool of meditation, we may simply disengage from these automatic thought patterns, wherever they originated, and key into our inner wisdom to find new responses that fit whatever present challenge we face, without these distorting influences. These fresh responses can incorporate the intelligence that comes from our healthiest place, without the muddling influences of past hurts, “old tapes”, or natural defense mechanisms that may not even enter our conscious awareness.

To some, this option presents a simple and highly effective route to inner peace. Others may doubt the heavy reliance on trusting one’s instincts, feeling that this ‘wisdom’ may be biased by past experiences and other distortions as well, and choose an approach that feels more objective and structured, such as that of creating new patterns of thought on which to rely.

Where do you stand on this issue? Are you more comfortable with altering thought patterns to become more positive and adaptive, or with shedding habitual thinking altogether through mindfulness and meditation? We’ve opened up the discussion, and here are some responses we’ve had so far:

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“I’ve found that when I trust my gut, I always “know” what to do. It’s been difficult for me to learn to ignore my fears, my rationalizations, and what I know others would recommend, but when I trust myself enough to ‘just go with it’, I’ve been much happier with my choices.”

“I’ve seen too many people override their common sense and act on their emotions to trust my ‘inner wisdom’ to the exclusion of all reason. That said, I do find that when I meditate and get all the ‘noise’ out of my head, I find access to better ideas.”

“Learning to think like an optimist has had a profound effect on my life. I don’t know if I would have been able to get to such a positive place through meditation alone. I needed to know how to think differently, even if it didn’t feel right at first.”

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We asked this question via Facebook and Twitter, and would love to hear from you!

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