

Some Thoughts About the Mind

Part One

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So what is this business about the mind? Many sages throughout history have said it is the secret to success, happiness, and spiritual awareness. Since I have been trying to meditate for over thirty years I have had plenty of experience with this animal. Chasing a bear, while fully naked would have been far easier and less scary. Unfortunately the animal we call the mind lives inside of me and has mauled, stampeded, and thoroughly

singed me more times than I care to recount. The problem with the mind is that it is not a solitary beast but a herd or even a group of herds if there is such a thing, roaming the Serengeti of our inner awareness.



Thoughts travel in groups dominated by alpha males. Depending upon the circumstances this herd could be grazing quietly or sipping from its favourite watering hole. At other times it is on a full rampage of dust and hormones, thundering loudly through the skull and quaking the body until you down a few stiff drinks, try to light a cigarette with a shaky hand or drive your car straight into a tree. In my own explorations, I have discovered that the alpha males are the key to understanding the rampages. Somewhere there is a dominant thought that has created multiple offspring, ready to spring at a moments notice. This big daddy of the herd showed up long before you had any conscious awareness of it . He was created from a fundamental experience or influence during your childhood that shaped your personality. In my healing and counselling practice I have found that most alpha thoughts were created before we became verbal beings and the key to identifying and partially neutralizing this beast is to reach into it through nonverbal means. This is where meditation and therapies that bypass words can help. I have spent over thirty years researching and identifying my alpha thoughts. I don't have a full count mostly because I don't keep meticulous records. But I know my alpha thoughts are close to what we describe as feelings: Loneliness, rejection, inadequacy, guilt, regret, remorse, enmity, hatred, greed, hate, avariciousness...

They are all there mixed in with my ordinary thoughts like time to get a haircut or should I buy a new jacket. The simple reason these types of thoughts are so difficult to deal with is that they come as a Molotov cocktail of hormones and a stir stick that makes the cocktail more volatile with each stir. I call it the loop. When I explained it to my former partner she asked me three times within the next week to explain it again. Within a couple of months, her near hysterical rendering of certain issues in our relationship became matter of fact statements. Our difficult discussions became calmer and more productive. She had tamed some of the alpha males in her thought herd. The loop is a simple mechanism and works like this. Say your partner is out for the evening at a yoga class and hasn't returned at the time they specified. You cannot contact them and start worrying. Depending on your collection of alpha thoughts your first course of worry might be; what if she met some guy and is so enthralled that she forgot the time or forgot to call. With that simple thought a hormone is triggered in the brain of signalling a threat to your relationship. Within a microsecond the adrenal system is alerted and another hormone pump starts working. The alpha male of the 'rejection' herd is now on alert, its ears pricked and looking in your direction. Then the next thought comes— 'I bet he is really good looking, smart and bends like a slinky toy'. The 'inadequacy' herd is now on alert and that alpha male is fully tensed, powered by the first shot of adrenaline.

'Can't trust women can you? I should have pulled the plug before this could happen!' Now the herds are on the move with the 'mistrust' herd joining in and the call to drastic action bull is getting ready to charge. On it goes as each thought fuels another hormone rush and each hormone discharge gives more power to the next thought, creating a powerful cycle that brings drastic changes to your physiology and destroys any capacity for clear thinking in the present moment. Twenty minutes later your partner walks in and you unload your fully lit Molotov cocktail straight at her. Later you find out that she drove the yoga teacher home because her car would not start neither had a cell phone with them. No cute slinky guy anywhere in sight. Sound familiar? Millions of these scenarios unfold everyday in every country of this planet. And we spend much of our time cleaning up the debris and burying the dead.

When the loop concept was explained to me by a therapist I was sure that I understood it fully or so I thought until the wolf pack of jealousy visited my little campfire. Ah jealousy, the greatest teacher roaming my inner planes or plains – take your pick. All the years of therapy and meditation practice did not prepare me for this one event that I knowingly dreaded. I thought I had made it through with a stable marriage and little interest in straying from it. But life had other ideas as usual. The details of the lead up to my experience are unimportant but to this day I am deeply grateful it all happened the way it did.



Some Thoughts About the Mind Part Two

Change your thoughts
to change your life



I clearly remember the moment I found out that my partner was sleeping with someone else, and the flaming loop of unimaginable fury it unleashed upon me. For three straight days I was in full flight or fight mode with tidal waves of adrenaline crashing into my skull with each heartbeat. Every attempt to calm my mind failed as did beating pillows and yelling inside my car. This was the biggest en masse stampede I had ever

experienced. Every thought seemed to be super charged with anger, angst, worry, and remorse. On the second day I couldn't be sure if I was angrier about the act of betrayal or the fact this person had put me in a situation where I felt so out of control, so shitty about myself and had to walk around with the entire flaming sun camped in my belly. I demolished the wood pile, chopping everything I could get my hands on. I contemplated murder as I am sure some people do—wouldn't that be better than this—all I would have to do is spend the rest of my life in prison. Or maybe Canada would reinstate the death penalty or make an exception for me to put me out of this miserable state. And on it went. To this day I cannot imagine where this mechanism came from—is it built in to us from day one? Do we inherit it? Is it genetic? Is it because we are territorial animals?

The third day I mercifully had to report to work as a carpenter trimming out a large mansion. I enjoyed this type of work, making fine cuts through fragrant oak-wood and fitting the pieces around columns in a very large house. The jealousy came in waves through out the day. Each time I was able to focus my mind intensely on my work but not after wondering if my saw would slice my neck cleanly enough to stop these rampaging thoughts. As the day progressed I noticed that there were times when I felt no jealousy at all.

In fact there were moments where I was at ease, feeling a sense of equanimity, then suddenly I was swirling in jealous madness once more. As the day progressed my attacks seemed almost well timed, similar to an enemy watching me, waiting for a moment when I was off guard. I decided to time these events. This was the breakthrough I had been seeking. I noticed that jealousy waves came about forty-five minutes apart. After confirming two incidents of forty-three then forty-five minutes I lay in wait for the next one, becoming highly vigilante after forty-minutes. I noticed

my boss watching me watching the time so closely but this was too important to worry about what he was thinking.

At forty three minutes and thirty odd seconds later the beast sprang out at me. It was a solitary image of my partner in bed with the other man. 'Aha! Caught you!' I nearly screamed, stopping this alpha lion in mid leap. The confused creature stumbled to the ground and the herds of attending thoughts that were ready to stampede, hesitated, waiting for the leader to recover. But I stared the beast down until it slunk away. I had chased the king of the jungle away.

From that moment on I just had to pay attention, waiting for this thought/image to arise, until its power eventually diffused. The forty five minute rule became very useful for me when something was upsetting my peace of mind. Now I became the hunter, stealthily moving through my mind to brand my alpha thoughts with pink spray cans. It seemed a more sensible approach than the one Tarzan might have taken, running down each beast, wrestling it to the ground and telling it whose boss on this grassy plain. Identifying my alpha thoughts gave me the ability to work through distressing situations quickly. All I do now is take some time to sort through the herd of attending thoughts on the issue and figure out the core one. Usually it is connected to fear, loss of face, anger, sense of betrayal or another clever way of putting my self down—my very central ultra alpha thought—'I will never be good enough'. Some events like the crippling loss of my life partner through cancer could not be sorted through this way but this awareness helped to keep out of the overwhelming herds of unworthiness, guilt, why me?, blame and unnecessary remorse.

Extending this process into the spiritual realm it is easier to see the structure of the ego—it is just layered thought tied into hormonal pumps in a complex jumble that seems unfathomable and uncontrollable for most of us. But we can overcome this if we culture a deeper sense of self, a small anchor that we can depend upon to give us perspective. In the Buddhist tradition this is sometimes called the witness state. We all have this place with a separate awareness, akin to what the Christians call the conscience. In simple terms we often know what we are up to—sometimes we don't want to admit it.

The ego exists as a clever Trojan horse acting as our friend and companion but ultimately is the biggest of control freaks and will stop at nothing to maintain its rule. When you see it just as a group of recurring thoughts in the mind, you can begin to regain some sense of personal power through identity with your true self; your real nature which has been craftily hidden from you. Thoughts are creatures of habit. We in essence are not. That is

why the forty five minute rule worked so effectively in my dealings with the mind.

When you see the varied gears and wheels of the ego mind, you will then notice how we are habitual in our behaviours doing the same things at the same times, on a day to day basis. How easy it is to acquiesce to the drudgery of factory or office work, after commuting for hours.

Then you will see how we become chemical junkies of measured time.

Then you will see how we are conditioned to be automatons leveraged into a system that seeks to control every aspect of our lives with religion, education, taxation, police and prisons; a clever form of chemical engineering of our brains with the help of mass media and crappy food.

Then you will see how most civilizations were created as pyramid schemes to serve the elite at the top, dangling enough carrots to keep us enslaved to our appetites and desires which cannot bring true happiness, but not enough to make us unproductive.

Then you will see the power of the media, that scares the shit out of us with headlines of death and destruction then soothes us with a bevy of products promoted by ever-smiling happy people that you never see on the streets.

Then you may wonder how ego developed in the first place and was it cultivated deliberately.

When you become a master of the mind-ego domain you become master of your own life. You create room for your true nature to emerge. This you was created from an unimaginable explosion of joy. You become immune to outside influences save those that nourish you and bring you challenges to promote your soul's growth. All the noble qualities of humanity become apparent, deep within you and you will not accept a sense of morality enforced from without or the silly notion, that we evolved from apes.

Then you will realize that ALL of creation has been waiting for you to plug into the conscious evolution of humanity on this planet and not into the next chocolate slurpie.

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