

## Transforming Subconscious Tendencies



The path of meditation, though seemingly focused on the inner self, cannot be separated from the process of psychological and emotional transformation. The human and the soul are interdependent, like the roots and leaves of a plant or the two wings of a bird.

In both an unconscious and awakened person, arising thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are expressions of the subconscious mind; the subconscious mind controls and determines the expression of consciousness on the human level. Our subconscious mind has been programmed and forged from a combination of countless past experiences, how we responded to them at the time, and the memories we retain of them. The subconscious mind is also linked to the collective unconscious, and each one of us is influenced by impulses and tendencies accumulated over hundreds of thousands' of years in the collective mind. Many of these are shared among all humanity as well as with other species with whom we share a common ancestry.

The mind is composed of innumerable layers of information which is combined into an unimaginably complex neurological network that science has not even come close to understanding. And yet, underlying this extraordinary complexity, we have the precious ability and gift of being able to experience the most simple, subtle, and amazing sense of self – our me, who is the true subject behind each thought and experience.

Our me is the flowering of the evolution of intelligence, and its very purpose is to realize itself as a conscious being which is capable of integrating all of the astonishing complexity of the subconscious into one complete and coherent consciousness. Prior to the awakening of me, our subjective sense of self is fully identified with mental formations, emotions, and external perceptions, and is unable to separate itself from the subconscious mind.

Considering its phenomenal complexity, the subconscious mind is remarkably efficient. However, it is far from perfect. It has accumulated layer upon layer of negative tendencies, many of which are neurotic. It does have a degree of subconscious intelligence with which it is constantly reprogramming itself in order to function more efficiently, but this lower level of intelligence is too limited to bring true harmony to our mental dimension. Subconsciousness has served us very well and has evolved over time into the subconscious me, but, unless it is supported by our conscious intelligence and clear subjectivity beyond the mind, it cannot be transformed and integrated with our spiritual self.

The subconscious mind can be likened to the roots of a tree. The roots support the tree physically and nourish it from the earth. We cannot eliminate our subconscious dimension, for our conscious mind would not be able to exist without it. If we look carefully at our life, at how our mind functions and the choices we make, most of our instinctive reactions, and even many of what we consider to be our more 'conscious' responses, are all generated by our subconscious mind. It is only on the very surface that the conscious mind brings its extremely limited amount of control and free will into our decision-making processes.

Although the subconscious mind is our starting point and foundation, we have an enormous challenge integrating it with our evolution into our higher consciousness and intelligence because so many of its tendencies are not aligned with the purpose of our soul. The roots of the tree of our conscious existence must be transformed through the maturation of the crown of the tree which bears the fruits of the self-actualized me.

There are many misconceptions about the subconscious mind, of which one of the most prominent is that it is automatically purified on our awakening. Enlightenment is not a singular event, but a process comprising many levels of awakening. Once awakened, each of these levels also requires a further and deeper alignment and integration of the subconscious mind. Although it seems a paradox that awakening precedes the alignment of the subconscious mind, this is the way it usually happens and, unless such alignment of the subconscious follows, our internal evolution cannot be complete and will stagnate. Our subconscious can be seen as the root of human consciousness in the external world and it must support our internal evolution. If the soul fails to align and integrate the human level, her spiritual strength will be handicapped and limited. The human must support the soul's awakening as much as the soul is required to support the transformation of the human.

## **Establishing the Foundation of our Pure Nature**

To transform our subconscious, we must embody our true individuality, the light of pure subjectivity. This embodiment should include the constant recognition of bare attention through the three centers of fundamental consciousness: conscious me, pure conscious me

and pure consciousness. The proper recognition of each of these centers is a combination of stabilizing of intrinsic recognition (natural recognition of bare attention) and directed recognition, which occurs from intentionally activating the flow of pure attention into bare attention. In others words our identity has to shift fully into the soul, or else we will keep being vulnerable to the habitual leaking of energy into the subconscious.

In addition to this basis of our pure nature being embodied, we must establish the correct relationship with the subconscious mind. As long as the subconscious is experienced as something external to whom we are, it cannot really be changed. To link it with our pure subjectivity, we must establish the chain of identity, from pure consciousness to conscious me, then to the observer, and finally to subconscious me and the subconscious mind. As the chain of identity becomes integrated in our consciousness, we begin to see that the subconscious mind is not really 'outside' of us, but is rather an extension of our true nature.

## The Chain of Identity in Consciousness

There is no such a thing as just mind, there is *someone* thinking. There is no mind without me. It is because the vast majority of seekers and teachers are not in touch with their me that the concept of mind as just being a movement of thoughts was created. There is not a single tradition or teaching that acknowledges in even a basic way the subjective dimension of the mind. For instance in Buddhism, a distinction is made between the mind (thinking) and the nature of the mind (emptiness). In more advanced Buddhist teachings it is said that thinking is emptiness and emptiness is thinking (the unity of form and emptiness in the 'Heart Sutra'). The meaning of this is not that a thought dissolves into emptiness when you look at it, but that, when thinking is experienced from emptiness, it is seen to be made of the same substance as our pure nature. While these discoveries are profound, they miss what is the most obvious: our very me, that which links emptiness with thinking and thinking with emptiness. It is truly surprising that so many spiritual adepts still cling to the conventional idea that thinking is something just 'arising' with no subject behind it.

One of the reasons for this remarkable omission is the lopsided work with consciousness in the traditions of enlightenment, which usually prioritize one center and fail to develop the chain of identity between our pure nature and the mind. What most seekers translate as awakened consciousness is usually a state of awareness or, in rarer cases, pure consciousness. There are some who even confuse the mindful observer with awakened consciousness. They do not know who is experiencing awareness or pure consciousness, and they do not know who is being mindful. And, even if they are lucky enough to embody pure consciousness intuitively, they do not establish a bridge to integrate it with their mind. So they keep watching the mind, or letting go of thoughts, in the feeble attempt to disidentify with them. More than anything else, this deficiency in the knowledge and understanding of me is to blame for the widespread ignorance concerning the subject of consciousness.

The bridge between pure consciousness (the unity of pure me and the I am of consciousness, or the soul's consciousness) and our relative consciousness is conscious me, and the bridge between conscious me and the mind is the observer. So there are two bridges linking in sequence that allow us to realize true unity between our pure nature and thinking. But, although it is relatively easy to integrate conscious thinking with our pure nature, it is much more challenging to align our subconscious mind with our higher subjectivity, because the subconscious mind is a function of the subconscious sense of me, which is separate from both conscious me and the observer.

If a meditator has not awakened their conscious me, they have not established the basic subjectivity behind the mind. Without this base, all they can do is keep activating the observer to try to control the mind, which is not only ineffective but hard work and can easily over-concentrate the mental self, which in itself is a main cause of various discomforts and tensions in the headspace. When the subconscious is running by itself, it appears to be so detached from who we are that we feel we have no control over, it. This is the reason why many teachings feel there is no need for integration with the mind, which they consequently ignore with the rationalization: 'I am not the mind'. But in reality, even though it is an external process and expression, the mind is part of who we are and, in order to be aligned with our pure nature, it has to be connected through the chain of identity to our subjective me.

## **The Art of Conscious Thinking**

Before consciousness can be linked to subconsciousness, we must understand and learn the art of conscious thinking. Every human occasionally has the sense that they thinking consciously, but this would be better termed 'semi-conscious thinking'. In semi-conscious thinking, it is the observer that is present. This observer is semi-conscious and links our thinking process to a relative sense of presence, even if this presence being fragmented and fluctuating. With this semi-conscious observer, one can have something of an inner dialog with oneself and contemplate various issues, such as making plans or working with scientific, mathematical, or philosophical matters. However, for genuine conscious thinking, one must awaken conscious me and clearly identify with essence-me behind the function of the observer.

It is only when thinking from conscious me that our mind can be linked to subjectivity and intelligence. It is through this that we gain real identity within the thinking process for the first time. For anyone who is in touch with conscious me, the sentence 'I am not the mind' does not make any sense, because one clearly experiences the mind as an extension of one's identity. When we think from conscious me, we become creators of our thoughts, illuminating the mind with the quality of consciousness and the capacity for contemplation.

## From Subconscious Me to Conscious Subconscious Me

How can we link subconscious thinking to consciousness if, by definition, it is subconscious? An essential aspect of our evolution in consciousness is the integration and unification of various layers of the mind into one coherent organism. Most meditators, when they start their practice, have a hard time linking even conscious thinking to their sense of me. The fact is, we humans are still surprisingly unevolved in some respects and, in spite of having a very sophisticated mind, we largely continue to live in the subconscious, no different than most creatures in the animal kingdom. The almost universal absence of an awareness of the sense of me in humans is truly puzzling. How can an otherwise intelligent person use his or her mind without being aware of the subject to all of those thoughts? It beggars belief.

After conscious me is awakened, the next step is for it to get in touch with subconscious me. However, we must first become more sensitive to some of the manifestations of the subconscious mind, in order to help locate subconscious me. The one who is looking at the subconscious is still the observer, but now he is not just watching or letting go of subconscious thoughts on his own, he is feeling them from conscious me. He is not seeing the subconscious as something external to, or happening independently of, consciousness, but rather as a subtle dimension of relative consciousness.

When people are unconscious, or living in the subconscious, their mind is so crowded and busy that it is in a constant state of chaos. They can neither sense the origin of the thoughts that 'come to them' nor feel any ownership or control of them, because their personal reality is just too unstable. It is only from our fundamental consciousness, the beginning taste of which is conscious me, can we truly feel what is referred to as the subconscious mind.

Unlike the conscious mind, there is a general sense that the subconscious mind and its thoughts are arising from the unconscious, and that we can therefore have little, if any, control over them. However, as we become more in touch with the subconscious from conscious me, we begin to realize that subconscious thoughts are not merely arising, but also that *someone* is thinking them. Each subconscious thought is connected to its own subconscious sense of me. This is a wonderful revelation, because we can now appreciate that subconscious thinking is part of who we are, and not something foreign entering our space.

Gurdjieff described the 'man-machine' as being composed of many 'I's, but what he actually meant was two things: firstly, that such a person does not have sense of pure subjectivity (conscious me) and, secondly, that none of these arising 'I's is experienced as a coherent and continuous me. This means that the subconscious me of an ordinary human is actually unconscious. To experience our subconscious correctly as true subconscious we must link it to consciousness and experience it from our pure nature through our chain of identity.

It is usually challenging to get in touch with subconscious me, and even after conscious me has been awakened, there is still a big gap between conscious me and subconscious me. To begin to bridge this, one must first fully embody fundamental consciousness and establish a continuity of recognition of it. In each instant of losing continuity of recognition our consciousness leaks, and part of it is lost in the subconscious. After our base of fundamental consciousness is pretty much continuous and solid, our consciousness naturally expands out to encompass all of its relative expressions. However, for that process to succeed fully, we must also actively cooperate by integrating subconscious me. Subconscious me also has to be embodied, even though this is done differently than with conscious me, due to its more elusive nature and the lower degree of duality between its identity and function (thoughts).

When subconscious me is linked to conscious me and pure me of consciousness, it can be referred to as 'conscious subconscious me', meaning it is the subject to conscious subconscious thinking. Conscious subconscious thinking is not supposed to be fully conscious (which would be conscious thinking), because a certain amount subconscious spontaneity must be retained to have a healthy mind. Too much presence can be detrimental to the delicate equilibrium which is required between the conscious and subconscious dimensions of intelligence. The subconscious mind is still very much involved in our instinctive reactions and also plays a part in the body's autonomic functions, and it is best not to try to control or interfere with the workings of these.

## **Transformation of the Subconscious Mind**

The more we are rooted in our pure nature, the more power we have to transform our subconscious mind. The most important part of this is to stabilize fundamental consciousness as the unity of conscious me, pure conscious me and pure me of consciousness, because, in order to be transformed, the subconscious has to be embraced by the light of consciousness. The presence of pure consciousness alone is not enough, because it needs conscious me and pure conscious me to form a bridge to the mind. Similarly, conscious me alone is also not enough for the simple reason that it needs the connection to pure me and I am in order to realize its pure subjectivity in a complete way. Conscious me alone is too present, too crystallized, and too close to the observer to be able to approach the subconscious from the necessary depth of the soul with her unconditional absorption in the inner realm.

In addition to the properly awakened fundamental consciousness, one must realize the transparent observer, which serves as the entryway for consciousness into the subconscious mind. The role of the transparent observer is, firstly, to link external attention with pure subjectivity and, secondly, to link and integrate subconscious attention with consciousness. It is through the most subtle expansion of the transparent observer (and later, the pure observer) that unconscious me of the subconscious mind is

transformed into a subconscious me properly linked to the identity chain. Here it becomes the 'conscious subconscious me'.

## **Activating our Higher Intention to Purify the Mind**

In addition to awakening the chain of identity in consciousness, we can work directly to transform negative subconscious tendencies. This work is significantly empowered when our consciousness is integrated and we have awakened the conscious subconscious me. In the direct work with negative tendencies, we activate our higher intention from the soul to purify our mind. This intention is not motivated by self-judgment, guilt or shame, but by self-love and the natural desire to be well and free. The problem with subconscious tendencies is that they have already been imprinted on and programmed into our neurological network. This means they have largely become automatic, so re-programming the subconscious mind requires some time. Some of it needs to be reformed, and the rest is best dissolved completely as subconscious junk not worth keeping.

Often, in order to reform subconscious tendencies, we need to neutralize and counterbalance them with the qualities that are their opposites. For instance, if one lives in fear and anxiety, one must activate courage and trust. If one feels jealousy and envy, one must activate self-love, self-reliance, and generosity. If one experiences doubt, one must develop confidence. Where one has a tendency for self-judgment, one must become self-forgiving and more self-nurturing. If one is arrogant, one must begin to appreciate one's limitations and activate humility. If one lacks confidence and is stuck in a pattern of self-negation, one must learn to develop self-worth and to appreciate oneself more.

Before we activate the intention to change, we have to be honest with ourselves. Unless we acknowledge that some of our tendencies are negative and unnecessary, we will keep indulging in them. The problem with dishonesty and insincerity is that they are usually very deeply rooted and feed on living in denial. To break through our inner dishonesty and hypocrisy we have to muster the strength to face our shadow and choose to surrender to our higher intention. A shadow is a negative aspect of the subconscious self that has taken possession of the psyche. Often it is so deep that one is terrified even to look in its direction. Facing one's shadow may make one feel like one is falling into a bottomless abyss. But, after one summons the courage to face that shadow, it may turn out not be such a big deal after all. It was our own fear of confronting it that made it appear so terrifying to the mind.

What truly empowers our ability to face the subconscious is the clear identification with our deeper self, our soul. When we are stuck in identifying solely with the human sense of self, we are at the mercy of all the demons of the subconscious mind, where we do not have the psychological space to see or know what is going on. The moment we start working with the subconscious from our soul, we are no longer as invested in it as we previously were, because we are now experiencing our human consciousness as just a

secondary and subsidiary identity. And since we are not so invested in it, we can do this work with much more relaxation and ease. We are not trying for perfection, but seeking increasing alignment and balance. In fact, to accept and embrace a certain degree of imperfection of the subconscious is one of the keystones of its transformation, because being able to do this means we have succeeded in bringing fundamental change and illumination to our relationship with our human self.

## **The Energetic Dimension of the Subconscious Mind**

The subconscious is not only constituted by emotional and mental tendencies: it is also an energy dimension. It is very important to distinguish between the subconscious experienced as subconscious thinking and as an energy state. Most beginners struggle to stop their chattering minds because their subconscious is completely out of control. But as they grow in consciousness and establish the chain of identity, that thinking gradually decreases until the subconscious mind reaches a point of balance, in which it is finally freed of its compulsive and invasive tendencies. Then, the meditator is faced with a more challenging problem, which is the mental energy states which have over time established their own energetic continuity and stability.

What are these energy states? An average human being experiences a great diversity of negative subconscious states such as depression, melancholy, lethargy and fogginess. Most subconscious energy states are a mixture of the mental and emotional subconsciousness. As an example, sadness felt in the heart can also be experienced mentally as depression. An emotional sense of giving up can trigger states of lethargy and fogginess in the mind, and so forth.

Who is experiencing these subconscious energy states? It is our subconscious me. However, when we awaken fundamental consciousness, our subconscious me begins to be experienced from our pure nature. Subconscious energy states are hard to dissolve, even when they are experienced from pure subjectivity; simply renouncing them does not dissolve them. This is why one can have awakened pure consciousness and yet still experience a deep depression (or other similarly powerful subconscious energy states) at the same time. This seeming paradox is something that traditions of enlightenment have failed to properly understand or address.

Unless they are transformed by the soul, mental states are always negative, but people who are not sensitive are not aware of this fact. Some may even enjoy these mental states, as if they stimulate the brain in some mystical way. Some of them can be activated through artificial energy stimulation, such as by kundalini practices. Due to their established degree of stability in the subconscious mind, mental-energy states can be mistaken for real consciousness. What are often described as mystical states are, in fact, energetic subconscious states that do have some mystical qualities about them. Some of them can have an excitement which is like being on drugs, while others offer a more spaced out sense of me, giving an illusory feeling of freedom. It is important to recognize



their unrealness for what it is and dissolve them through embodying the light of me and I am. Who is experiencing such 'mystical states'? It is, indeed, the same subconscious me.

## **How Negative Subconscious Energy States are Created**

A thought is not just a unit of information in our mind – it is a combination of information and energy. As we indulge in negative thinking, we accumulate negative energy, because each thought leaves an energy trace behind. As the days, months, and years go by, where does all that negative energy go? It stays with us and infuses itself into our being. This takes place both on a psychological level, resulting in a negative personality, and on an energetic level, causing our gradual imprisonment in negative and painful energy states. Such negative energy states become a living hell for the psyche, effectively locking her in a dark prison separated from light. When we understand this process and what we have been doing to ourselves, we realize how important it is to become responsible for our thoughts and emotions. We must be as watchful and as careful as possible on the path of our psychological and emotional existence, or else we will continue creating suffering for ourselves and for others.

Each seeker on the path must not only embody his light but also guard himself from creating further negative energy states. Just being in fundamental consciousness does not guarantee that we are free from mental negativity. For instance, when you return home after a retreat, back to your busy work life and are again re-entangled in various human relationships, it is easy to forget to guard yourself against subconscious negativity. Sometimes the negativity may even come from opening your mind or heart to other people who are confused, disturbed, or insincere and have themselves accumulated such energies. As time passes, the subconscious energies accumulate in you, and you gradually or suddenly realize that something is very wrong. Not only do you find your human consciousness is in a state of suffering, but your access to your pure nature is also disturbed.

In order to guard yourself against creating negative subconscious energy states, two things are required: you must embody your light at all times, and you must cultivate the mental discipline of preventing the creation of any new negativity in your thoughts and emotions. Although it is impossible to avoid the experience of psychological negativity entirely, it is important to reduce it to a bare minimum and let it go as soon as possible.

In Zen, this is called 'leaving no traces'. When a negative thought or emotion is experienced from your pure nature and you let it go without creating the chain of negativity, it is automatically dissolved. As long as it is not supported by another negative thought, it will not leave any energetic residue in the purity of your consciousness.

## Transparent Subconscious Energy States

The subconscious energy states are not meant to be eliminated totally, because they are inseparable from how the human dimension of consciousness is experienced. What needs to be dissolved is the negative energy that we have accumulated over the course of our life, whether it was long ago or recently. Some mental states are deeply rooted, and we have carried them from as far back as we can remember, and some may have been created just yesterday. The purification and healing of mental states is an important part of the alignment of our human consciousness with our pure nature, though it is one which has largely been ignored by virtually all traditions. As long as our subconscious is contaminated, it will pull us away from our soul and prevent our human dimension from becoming whole.

In order to dissolve subconscious states, we must clearly recognize and embody our higher self and empower our light. It is the natural function of light to dissolve darkness. As long as our light is weak we will not have enough power to transform the energetic dimensions of the subconscious mind. If our consciousness has not been awakened, we will automatically continue to identify with the subconscious states as being our me. This means, for example, that when we are depressed, we are not merely experiencing depression – we become that depression; we are possessed by the subconscious state to the extent of identifying with being it. A subconscious state is like a creature that has a life of its own based on the subconscious rudimentary sense of me that it has.

Through a combination of embodying our light and the gentle disidentification with the mental state, we create the environment most suitable for dissolving it. Many of the subconscious states resist dissolution because our brain has been energetically conditioned to experience them. They have become psychological or emotional habits. Even if our light is strong, such subconscious states can keep co-existing simultaneously with our pure nature. When one becomes aware of this happening, one has to be patient and, by stopping any identification with these states, one gradually weakens the hold they have over one's consciousness. With persistence, sooner or later, they will naturally dissolve. Sitting meditation and attending at longer retreats are powerful aids in supporting this process.

When the negative sides of the subconscious energy states are dissolved, the states become transparent. They are no longer in conflict with our pure nature. This allows us to experience our human consciousness in a positive and translucent way. At times, we may still experience mental or emotional fluctuations that will result in further relatively negative energy states, but these are felt in a gentler way and soon disappear. For instance, feeling sad, melancholic, or grieving with mourning at times are parts of the natural fluctuations experienced in human consciousness. These are not negative when felt from the soul in a balanced way. Such feelings can arise from human interactions, from the natural fluctuations of hormones, or even from a change in weather conditions.

But now, from samadhi in our pure nature, we can experience the gentle oscillation of subconscious states in a transparent way.

One of the most dangerous and misleading spiritual myths is the idea that a self-realized being does not experience any negativity. It is dangerous because it entices seekers to pursue a dehumanized ideal of enlightenment they can never reach, and it paints the path of enlightenment in a false light.

Getting in touch with and embracing our subconscious mind are important elements in becoming truly conscious. It is not enough to 'hide' in pure consciousness and pretend that our subconscious self does not exist. We must develop a conscious and loving relationship with our subconscious self so that it can be infused into the whole body of the soul. Transforming, aligning and integrating our subconscious is an essential component of our journey to wholeness. In wholeness, no chamber in the home of the soul is left unlit and all is illuminated with her light of me.