



SIGNPOST

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An Introduction to Spiritualism

By Harry Jivenmukta

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My dream of meeting a willing proofreader and editor who will take care of all the technical aspects of my writing is not going to come true.

I can either let my creativity run riot, or stop periodically to proofread and edit my stuff. So, I prioritise my creativity. With that in mind, please forgive the mistakes that might appear from time to time in my work.

I like to run at 1,000 miles an hour, and that will mean there are things that don't get done.



Harry Jivenmukta



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PART 1 - SELF WATCHING

Why is grass green?

The fundamental aim of the Signpost Programme is to get you to ask yourself WHY?

We live in a world where we can access information about any subject, from libraries, the Internet and television. We are knowledge junkies. Soon there will be no need to even leave our homes. We will be able to work from home (many people already do), experience distant holiday fantasies on the headsets of our virtual reality computers, and make simulated love to virtual partners. Just think back five years; how did you live then which is different from the way you live now?

We are not happy because we are like the scientist's rat, kept in strange surroundings and being tested in unusual and unnatural ways. Zoo animals are not happy because they are not in their natural surroundings. People are not happy because they are not living properly in their natural environment.

Slowly we have come away from our nature, become unstuck from the real world. Look how far you have come from the small child who asks about the Why? of everything. We no longer ask why because we think we know. When there is no wonder in our life then of course we are going to become bored. When we 'know' everything then there is nothing new to be known. We look at the wave on the surface and claim to know the depths of the ocean. Life has become a throw away junk experience. The signpost programme asks you to stop and ask Why? of everything. If you want to treat this programme like a newspaper article, or as a new trendy thing, then you will not get any benefit from it at all, guaranteed! You must try to make a little space to try out the ideas, try the experiments, and be open. Try to do the things you are asked to do, with the innocence of a child. You can

always rubbish it later, or say it is just a gimmick if you do not like it. But base your decisions on something positive. Try it and then decide. Give it the time it deserves.

The child asks questions like; "Why is the grass green?" Adults never asks questions like this but even then they might not know. The Chlorophyll in the plant makes it green. Try to discuss the greenness of the grass blades with someone who has never seen. You can intellectualise all you want but the person will not know what green is. Try to describe the sweetness of sugar without comparing it to other substances. To know what green is you need eyes; to know what sweetness is you need to taste sugar. Some things can be expressed in words; some can only be experienced. The Signpost programme has to be experienced. Do not just read it and be impressed or amused. It is something to be done, requires activity and experience.

At first it will be difficult because you are surrounded with the barriers and filters of everyday life. Slowly, the programme will show you how to break down the barriers and filters which restrict you, and then you can start to expand and live in a more positive way.

A goat is a goat. It is a goat when it is born and will behave like all other goats all its life until it dies. A person is born as other people are but can choose. One person might become a doctor, or a lawyer, others might be labourers, and some might never develop at all, remaining like children all their lives. In the East a simple example has been used to describe this potentiality; a person confronts a ladder. You can either climb up it and become something more than the seed you are when you were born, or you can go down the ladder and become less. We can develop this example further. Life is like many ladders which you can go up or down. There is one ladder for your career, one for your personal life etc.

The other thing we must consider is what we mean by going up meaning better, and going down the ladder as becoming less than we

already are. Achievement needs to be defined. The ultimate aim of all people is to be happy. We work so that we can live comfortably. We save money in pensions and bank accounts to secure happiness in old age. We try to succeed in order to be happy. But all types of achievement are not the same. The type of achievement we usually think of in order to be happy involves being better than other people. Get the promotion, win the game, earn more money, etc. But this type of achievement does not always make us happy in ourselves. Alexander The Great ruled over nearly all of the known world, and yet when he was dying he asked that his arms be left hanging outside the coffin. This was very unusual but he explained that it was because he wanted to show his subjects that he had come empty handed and was leaving empty handed. He was desperately unhappy at the end of his life and yet today we still measure success in the same terms as Alexander did. Alexander felt that he had achieved nothing of real value.

We need to look at what sort of achievement we want and which will be of real use to us. Material gain is one type of achievement which we all need. But once we have enough to eat and a good home to live in and some spare money, then material achievement should not be so important. We are caught in a trap which says that material achievement is everything. If you have one foreign holiday a year, someone else has two; you have a new television but someone else has a huge cinema screen type set in their home. You have a small second hand car but someone else you know has just bought a brand new Mercedes. We get trapped in a race that leads us on, trying to catch up. One day you will wake up and ask yourself if this is all life is. Yes, that's all it is if you want to play these types of games.

The achievement which is really valuable, which Alexander The Great realised too late, is the achievement of being fulfilled inside without the need for external stimuli. Once you have a good home, food to eat, and the basic necessities of life, stop! Do not fall into the trap of competing for no real reason. Instead define yourself, discover your

real potential, and live your life doing things you really want to do. Live in the real world, go to work, watch the world, but do not get involved in the stupid games of life.

Going up the ladder means achieving personal goals, happiness, and going down the ladder means following the herd of humanity. Do you really want to keep up a fast pace in the race of life, running without arriving, playing without knowing why? The signpost programme is going to change your life. Before we decide to go up the ladder, or down it, let's just stop and consider our options..

Most people who decide to make changes to their life, or who decide to review their present position often undertake some sort of needs assessment or self assessment exercise. In the East there has traditionally been a step before the self assessment exercise which we will consider here.

People who have a busy life often are operating at a fast and relentless speed from the moment they wake up in the morning until they go to sleep at night. Changing an aspect of their life is, for them, like jumping from one galloping horse to another. The East has traditionally taught that you need to slow down before you can really see where you are.

If you are on the galloping horse of life, you need to slow to a canter, then a trot, and then to a walk. Eventually you may even want to come to a complete standstill and dismount. Walk around in the green fields and smell the air, feel the breeze on your face, sit under the shade of a tree and think about your options.

You can see from this simple anecdote what the real difference is between self assessment whilst you are in the rough and tumble of everyday life, and the different sort of assessment you can do by slowing down.

Gautama the Buddha, who lived more than 2,500 years ago, never

started teaching new disciples until they had spent up to three years just slowing down. They used to spend their time by cooking, washing and undertaking other mundane tasks whilst their minds slowly unwound and slowed to a pace where there was a real point in teaching them something new. Only when they were fully receptive would the Buddha start their teaching. Obviously we cannot slow down in those terms ourselves, nor are we trying to unravel the mysteries of life, but we can start to slow down a little bit in order to give ourselves a better opportunity to be able to see ourselves more objectively. The exercise which allows you to slow down is very easy indeed. In the West people often feel that they have to 'do something' in order to change their circumstances. The slowing down process we are using here requires you to be more passive instead. If you have 99 tasks to undertake every day and this programme tells you to do five more in order to slow down, that would be ridiculous because now you are doing even more tasks and must rush even more.

Self-watching is the exercise we are going to use. All you have to do is watch yourself. Do not change any aspect of your life deliberately but allow any slowing down changes which happen of their own accord. From the moment you wake up just watch your own activities throughout the day. How long does it take you to get out of bed in the morning; what do you do next; how long do you spend in the bathroom; where do you have your breakfast; what do you eat; etc.?

The point of self watching is to begin for the first time to look at what you actually do; to become aware of the semi automatic and automatic processes which you have become adapted to over the years. You get up at the same time every morning, or if you sleep in on certain mornings you tend to sleep in for a certain amount of time which is the same every time. So is it really sleeping in at all? You sit in the same chair, eat the same food, greet people with the same words, walk at the same speed, miss the same bus, and get angry at the same things every day.

When you are self watching imagine you are undertaking a scientific experiment. The scientist does not allow his or her emotions to interfere with the experiment and so must you not influence your own actions in any way. Just watch and record what you do. At first you will keep forgetting to watch yourself and will slip into your automatic living style. Do not worry about this at all because it will only hinder your progress. Just start self watching again when you remember. You must be very aware when you self watch, remembering to look at yourself, listen to what you are saying, feeling the things you touch, smelling the environment around you, and tasting the food you eat.

If you find it difficult to self watch properly, just concentrate on certain activities. A simple example is in eating. Prepare the food you usually eat as normal. Before you start eating look at the colours of the food. Become intensely detailed in your observation. The colours start springing out at you. Look at the shapes, the consistency. When you taste the food put all your attention into the taste buds. Bite into the different sizes and thickness. Internally watch the food as it enters your body.

You have been eating for years but have never really observed what you eat. Fill the stomach and get on with the race of life! In the same way you have been living the rest of your life in an automatic functional way. Self watching is designed to make you start realising what you do.

You will find that as you self watch regularly, you will start to slow down. When you listen to what you are saying to other people you will begin to realise that most of your talk is just chit-chat, often based on no or little knowledge; you will begin naturally to resist the urge to talk so much. Try an experiment. Ask someone you know about a topic which you know they do not know much about. Almost all people will give an opinion and some people will suddenly become experts. We all do it, but when you self watch you begin to realise that it is ridiculous.

No one knows something about everything, and the first step to slowing down is to recognise that you don't have to have an opinion about everything.

Self watching often leads to a person dropping certain activities from his or her previously normal behaviour. Remember, do not force yourself to drop anything. Just watch yourself and let those things go which seem ridiculous or no longer necessary.

A woman was walking down the street when a builder on nearby scaffolding wolf whistled in her direction. In a fit of disgust she turned and put two fingers up at him. Suddenly she realised that he was not whistling at her, but to indicate to the truck driver to back up and deposit his load of concrete.

The man, having finished his presentation was being warmly applauded when he heard a voice say "I have never been impressed so much in my life..." Swelling with pride he turned and said loudly "Thank you." The voice continued, "...the meal last night was absolutely splendid."

We often assume many things which are going on around us without thinking them through. This is another sign of our automatic living. If someone insulting you makes you angry, then who is in control of your emotions; you or the other person? If flattery makes you puff out with pride who is controlling your happiness?

In fact we have woven a web which inter-links all aspects of our life with others. The powerful machine of the media determines what people should feel about certain events, and in turn, we look to the media to give us an indication as to what we should be feeling. Just as we can make other people happy or sad, angry or proud, so can they. We depend on other people for our emotions, when it should be that we are in control of ourselves. We mistake the need for the applause of others with the inner confidence which is ours to develop and keep.

EXERCISE 1

This exercise asks you to listen to your own thoughts and shows you how your mind constantly rushes around in an anarchic way. All you have to do is give yourself twenty minutes in which you write down every thought which enters your head. If you prefer you can just mentally record every thought rather than writing it down. However, it is better to write your thoughts down because you can then look back and try to work out the logic involved in the train of thoughts you had.

After you have completed this exercise you should try to explain to yourself how the logic of the thoughts proceeded from one to another. You may find 'clumps' of thoughts which progress from one thought to another in a particular topic area. But there will also be areas of apparently jumbled thoughts.

Just think; every twenty minutes you are thinking this number of thoughts, every twenty minutes, every day, for how many years you have lived. No wonder you need to slow down before you can begin to expect to make useful changes in your life. It is because we live in this jumbled way that we make mistakes, or proceed though life in an unorganised accidental way. The signpost programme shows you how to stop this type of automatic, erratic thinking. For now it is enough that you recognise the process which is going on in your head. Repeat the exercise regularly and observe what happens.

EXERCISE 2

The purpose of this exercise is for you to start evaluating each day so that you can identify where bad and good experiences appear in your life. If you prefer you can imagine that there is a balance, with one side taking the bad experiences and the other good experiences. At the end of the day were the total of your experiences and activities positive or negative? Fill in the hours section yourself, emphasising the busiest

part of your day, (If you work 9am - 5pm then pick those hours.) Be honest and assess your activity in terms of the personal satisfaction you gained rather than the benefit it may have provided for others, (employers, friends, etc.) Give points out of ten for personal satisfaction. At the end of the day add up the points. Are you happy with this level of satisfaction? How can you increase the level of satisfaction and what changes would you have to make?

EXERCISE 3

In the same way as you undertook a daily assessment chart, you should complete a weekly chart. The aim of these exercises is to let you become more aware of the way you live your life, the ups and downs, the good and bad parts of your life as it is at the moment. Complete the weekly chart by adding up the overall experiences of each daily chart. Start to identify the parts of your life which always disappoint you or you find difficult or misery causing. On another sheet of paper write an imaginary 'perfect week' undertaking the same tasks you normally do but in your own timescale and way. What would you change and how would it affect your life? Which things would you have to change to be able to live in this way?

The daily and weekly assessments which you complete should be measured by you in terms of points out of ten and also pictured as scales. For the short term it is enough to simply assess whether your days are good or bad overall and whether you are prepared to accept this level of satisfaction. Later, we will begin to look at topics like satisfaction, happiness and planning in more detail.

PART 2 - HAPPINESS

Part two asks you to look at what happiness is. This section tries to separate real happiness from pleasure. Below are two excerpts of people who are happy. Bear these in mind when you study the rest of part two of the Signpost Programme.

"I am really happy because today is the last day at work before my holiday in Spain. I can't wait to get away from this place because I hate working. Ahh! Two weeks in Spain. I think it should be really great because last time I went I had a great time. This time I'm spending even more money so the holiday should be even better than last time. Well, I am really happy, over the moon. Goodbye work, goodbye cold weather, goodbye bills and debts."

"When I wake up in the morning just looking out of the window at the new day is so refreshing. Often I notice people dragging themselves along the road to work or whatever, but I can't understand why they are so miserable. I think it's a bit of a miracle that every day it's a new day, full of promise. The birds in the trees, the sun shining between the clouds, and all the opportunities open to people. Every day is unique, never having dawned before and when the sun sets this day will be gone never to return. Just think, this day was made for us all, free of charge and full of beauty."

Dictionary definitions of happiness and pleasure are shown below:

HAPPINESS: good fortune: prosperity: a state of well-being and contentment: a pleasurable or satisfying experience: felicity, aptness.

PLEASURE: desire, inclination: a state of gratification: sensual gratification: frivolous amusement: a source of delight or joy.

In many Eastern philosophies and spiritualism happiness and pleasure are defined quite differently. The essential difference between

happiness and pleasure in the East is that pleasure is happiness which is caused as a result of external stimuli, (e.g. a new car, a partner, money, promotion at work etc.). Real happiness is defined as joy or happiness which is experienced without any ownership preconditions, (e.g. a new day, inner contentment, living in harmony with the world, nature, etc.). The biggest difference between pleasure and happiness is that pleasure can only be temporary and lasts only as long as the external stimulus lasts, (e.g. the car gets old, a partner changes, the money runs out, the promotion at work was not all it was expected to be, etc.).

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

It is important to consider basic definitions of words which we tend to take for granted in order to understand what they really mean. Happiness is one of those words which has lost its original meaning, and is often confused with pleasure. Happiness is unconditional. The difference between pleasure and happiness is that to be happy does not require certain conditions to be present. Happiness is when you are filled with joy for no apparent reason, when you can just feel full of yourself, of life, without being able to point at a particular event.

Pleasure, on the other hand, is when you are happy because of something else. Someone tells you that you are beautiful or handsome, or you are good at something or you win something, and that makes you happy. That happiness is fleeting, momentary and disappears before you know it. It is not true happiness but pleasure. If you are happy because of something else you will soon be unhappy again because the thing that made you happy can be taken away or may disappear of its own accord. You are famous one day, and ignored the next; happy one day and unhappy the next. If your happiness is dependent on outside events then you do not know happiness.

We have all fleetingly felt real happiness; when you see a beautiful sunset and something inside wells up, or a new day fills you with wonder. The sunset cannot be bought, it is not exclusively yours, it is not doing anything for you, but it fills you with joy. This is not because of the sunset as much as it is about you being lost in yourself. For a brief moment you are lost to the outside world and its problems, you are oblivious of everything. Everyone has momentary glimpses of real happiness, but it is always very short because you are drawn back into the 'real' world and the problems and stresses and anxieties of the everyday.

We start with the wrong position when we call this life of problems and stress the 'real' world. When people are artistic, poetic, creative, we say to them; "get real!" But let us turn the discussion on its head. It is not real to race around from dawn to dusk and beyond, it is not real to eat junk food, it is not real to be anxious and stressed for long periods of time, it is not real to be stretched all the time in both body and mind. The real world is one where we can be ourselves.

We are not happy because we are like the scientist's rat, kept in strange surroundings and being tested in unusual and unnatural ways. Zoo animals are not happy because they are not in their natural surroundings. People are not happy because they are not living properly in their natural environment.

The basic needs of humans is food shelter and warmth. Beyond that we need intellectual and interactive stimulation which can be provided by living in cooperative groups, families and communities. The twentieth century especially has moved us on apace, and today we are taught from a very early age that we need all manner of things to make us happy: bigger homes, cars, more televisions than people in every home, cable, satellite, gourmet cookware, new wallpaper, 3 piece suites, computers, garden sheds, curling tongs, CD players, bidets, fur hats, skiing holidays, cook books from around the world, twenty pairs of shoes, huge wardrobes of clothes, new trends every

day, a newspaper 7 days a week, 24 hours news coverage, the Internet, campaigns to save something, exercise bikes, jogging outfits, 57 varieties of soup, lots of books we never read, address books of people we do not like much....

The way to happiness is simple. Do not force yourself to drop anything but if anything drops from your life do not look where it falls and do not worry about what might happen because of it. Walk around your home and just look at your possessions without any tint of emotion either for or against the items. Just look at the junk you have accumulated, look at the empire of rubbish you have built up around you. It is for this that you go out to work, for this that you suffer stress and anxiety, for this that you have developed your money worries, for this that you lose sleep worrying how you will make the payments. There is a price to pay for everything. Just look again around your home and think about why you wanted to own the things you have. Think about the appeal of the items, the 'must buy' feeling which wells up inside you, and ask yourself if you really attained the satisfaction out of the things you bought. Did you really need the items after all? Do you use them? Can you do without them?

Do not make sweeping decisions about your life. Just become aware of what feelings have been driving you along. Just look at your life and watch. Consider which things you could let go of, which once dropped would make no appreciable difference to your life, but which if you keep will make you work harder or be more unhappy.

The reason why most people are not happy is mainly to do with two factors: firstly that they mistake pleasure for happiness, and secondly because they carry too much mental junk in their brains. Most people spring clean their homes every year and regularly throw out the rubbish which they seem very capable of accumulating. But have you ever spring cleaned your mind? We are all hoarders who never let anything escape. We hold on to every scrap of knowledge and information as if it were so important that our life would fall apart if

we did not have it. Yet the vast majority of information and knowledge we have accumulated over the years is of little or no use to us, nor will it ever be.

One of the reasons why we cannot live happily now is because we carry the burden of the past with us at all time. Why not drop it, let it slip off and leave it behind? Is the geography you learned when you were 13 really so vital, or the name of every football player on the team 10 years ago, or the recipe for swamp gnats soup? Why carry the world on your shoulders and in your mind? And if that's not enough, you then want also to carry the future in your mind too. You want to have every eventuality planned, for yourself and partner, for your children, for your old age, for the whole neighbourhood, community, town, city, country, world, universe... There is only one certainty about the future: you do not know what the future holds and cannot know. For many people it is the not knowing which makes life so rich and wonderful, whilst for you it is the not knowing that makes you feel anxious.

Teng was walking in the market when he was shocked. As he turned he saw Death standing next to him. Running as fast as he could, Teng went to a friend's house and told him that Death was in the market place and that he feared that he had come to take him away. He borrowed his friend's horse and galloped to the next town of Shangyang. The friend went down to the market and confronted Death. "I was more surprised than he was.." said Death, "...because I was supposed to collect him from Shangyang tonight."

No matter what plans you might make for the future, chances are you will not be able to achieve them. And yet you make plans all the time, dreams which have no right, except in your mind, to come true. You carry the huge burden of past and future. If you drop them both you are almost free! Past is past and will not come back; you cannot change it so why worry? Learn from the past and then drop the burden. Make modest plans for the future and recognise that they

may not happen at all. It is the false expectation which makes you unhappy when it does not come true.

EXPECTATION AND ATTACHMENT

Expectation is like desire, it keeps on increasing. If you expect to achieve something by a certain time, by the time you get there the expectation has already increased so that you can never arrive at the same time to match the level of expectation which you set.

It is like a sprinter running ahead of a jogger. The sprinter races ahead and then stops to get back breath. Meanwhile the jogger, (you), keeps up a steady pace trying to catch up. By the time you see the sprinter in the distance he is already racing on again. The jogger will never catch up.

Look at your own life for examples of this. There will certainly be many examples to choose from. Because you cannot catch up with the expectations you will always be unhappy. Of course you can always recognise that the sprinter is not your friend and that you no longer want to play this silly game at all. You can simply decide to put a ceiling on your expectations and decide to plan better. Make a plan, write it down, clearly outlining what you expect to achieve. Then do not raise your expectations until you arrive at the level you originally set. Once you do meet the expectations, stop, rest, think, and then plan again for the next step. Most people do not realise that they actually do achieve their expected aims. It is because they keep on multiplying their expectations that when they actually arrive at the level of expectation they wanted they have forgotten and moved on to greater things. Try it! Write down your short, medium and long term plans and stick to them. You will find that it is not the expectations that are not met but your own greed. If we become attached to someone or something which we have no control over, then our happiness is bound to suffer because sooner or later the object of our attachment will move away from our expectation of it. Parents are attached to

their children, husbands and wives are attached to each other, girlfriends and boyfriends, grandparents and grandchildren, etc. It is inevitable that in a world of flux that attachment will lead to unhappiness. Yet we are all cling even harder to our attachments when they begin to change. The trauma when eventually we are forced to acknowledge that our view of things will not prevail is even worse than it would have been if we could have let go earlier.

EXERCISE

This exercise asks you to think about the things which make you happy. List the items and then write about the expectations you have of the items and the level of attachment. Be honest! Say why you feel that the items are important to you.

EXAMPLE

My New Car

For the money I am spending it should last for at least five years without serious work being required. It is reliable, sporty, and an eye catcher. The adverts say it is one of the best in its class, highly recommended, and well equipped.

I love these cars because they set me apart from other people. Most people can't afford these types of cars and they represent a status symbol. This car says I am successful. When I pull up in this car heads will turn.

This example is not untypical of the sort of response which can be expected. The person who completed this exercise is certainly going to be unhappy. Let's break the comments up and see where this person is going wrong. For the money I am spending it should last for at least five years. This person has decided that the car should last five years. It is no more than an arbitrary decision. Who says it will last so long? Why should it? We all make such statements in our everyday life, without basing them on anything substantial. If the car does last for

five years the owner will not be happy, just satisfied. This is because he or she has already stated five years as a minimum. How long would it require for it to make its owner happy? without serious work being required. The person does not define serious. Does this include ordinary parts which wear out naturally or not? We always end up dissatisfied because we make big statements and then do not think about what the details are. It is reliable, sporty, Who says it is reliable and sporty? Subjective assessments are OK until you ask someone else. I might think it is not reliable and definitely unsporty. If you think it is reliable and sporty then fine. Don't expect others to share your opinions. Yet we often do and are insulted if others do not agree. and an eye catcher. What does this mean? To me an elephant is eye catching.... The adverts say it is one of the best in its class, highly recommended, and well equipped. The advertisers want to sell the car and might bend the truth about the car in order to secure a sale. If you base your judgement on the advertisers then you are heading for a fall. I love these cars because they set me apart from other people. Most people can't afford these types of cars and they represent a status symbol. This person is attached to a certain car company because he or she feels it is a status symbol. Status symbols tend to change and there is no guarantee that in five years time, or less, this car will still be a status symbol. This car says I am successful. When I pull up in this car heads will turn. This section tells us that the person is vain and has an inferiority complex. Why otherwise is it important to show others your wealth?

LOOK AT YOUR LIST AND ANALYSE IT IN AT LEAST AS MUCH DETAIL AS THE EXAMPLE ABOVE.

SUMMARY OF PART TWO

So far we have touched on several points which affect our happiness: First of all remember the difference between happiness and pleasure. Sometimes you may feel that the rule does not apply and that in fact happiness can be gained from external sources. But if it can be ended

by the removal of the external stimulus then it cannot be real happiness. Use this guide as a measure of whether it is real happiness or pleasure. There is nothing wrong with pleasure as long as you recognise that pleasure is not happiness. We have also considered that the ordinary life we lead and which we call the 'real world' is often misleading. Think yourself what real means to you. Forget the reality which others impose on you. It must be the case that if something is good for you then that is more 'real' and useful than something which causes you anxiety, stress or unhappiness. We have too much mental junk in our heads and this also does not help us. Try an experiment. Sit comfortably and relax by deep regular breathing. Imagine that in your head there is a room full of the useless knowledge and information you have accumulated over the years. This knowledge is packed into hundreds of cardboard boxes, all the same size and plain in appearance. Nearby is a chute. Methodically start picking one box up at a time and drop it into the chute where it disappears. Carry on until you get tired. Return to the exercise regularly. Slowly you will begin to feel the relief of unburdening yourself of the world's worries and weight. We think too much about the future and plan unnecessarily. Learn to let things go. Do not plan as much. Most of the things we plan for never happen, and those which do often do not happen in the way we thought they would. Why can't we be more relaxed and take things as they come? Is it because we do not trust ourselves to be ready when the moment comes? Less planning leads to more confidence as we begin to realise that we have the capacity to handle situations which arise without getting paranoid about it for weeks beforehand. Expectation and attachment lead us down a path which we should avoid. Why can't we just enjoy the moment rather than having to assign a certain expectation to it? Think about the happiest times in your life and see that they were more often than not connected to moments which were unplanned for, where there had previously been little expectation or attachment.

PART 3 - DESIRE

THE NATURE OF DESIRE

The main problems we have in life are based around the failure to achieve our desires. We need to look at what desires are and how we develop and multiply them.

A woman with only five chickens one day looked into the coop and found five big fresh eggs. She was very pleased. She thought to herself; "If I hatch out five chickens, I will have ten chickens altogether." She looked after the eggs and continued to plan. "They will lay more eggs, and then more and more, and soon I will have more chickens than I need. I will sell them to other people." She felt very good indeed as she continued to plan. "I will buy a cow with the money I get from selling the chickens, and then I will have lots of milk to drink. But living on my own, I don't need much milk so I will be able to sell it to others." The woman was getting quite excited about the prospect of having more chickens than she knew what to do with, and having cows and selling milk. "After selling the milk I will have enough money to buy new clothes and even start thinking about a new house." By the evening, she had planned out all of her future and found that she would be very well off indeed. No need to worry about anything ever again. She stood up and went over to look at the five eggs which were to start her off on this great venture. Slipping on the wet floor she stumbled and all the eggs broke.

The story above shows clearly the nature of desires. The woman was very pleased at first to find five eggs, more probably than she had hoped for. But as soon as the woman realised her good fortune her mind began racing ahead of her. The same exactly happens to almost all of us. Our minds are simply not trained to appreciate the moment. Instead we are always looking ahead into the future and like the woman with the eggs we have planned the rest of our lives before we realise that it isn't going to happen as we wished.

With billions of people on the planet it is impossible for everyone's dreams to come true. In any case why should your dreams come true anyway? What is it about your dreams that make them so important? Aren't my dreams as valid as yours or for that matter aren't everyone's dreams as valid? We clutch the lottery ticket of life to us tightly and dream of success. Wake up and realise that dreams are just that, dreams. How realistic is it to live your life in dreams. Even if your first desire comes true, you will not be happy for long because the nature of desire is for more and soon you will have another dream. You look always to tomorrow and miss the NOW of life..

A nobleman who had attained all that he wanted in life still felt unfulfilled. He had palaces, money and all the trappings of wealth. Still an urge within him kept tugging at his peace and demanding more. He didn't need anything but felt that there was still something else to be gained.

The nobleman went to take advice from his wise men and women. They had nothing new to tell him. In the end it was the water bearer who suggested that he might go and find a fakir (holy man). The nobleman thought that this was a bit unnecessary but nevertheless he had to go because there were no other good ideas on offer.

The fakir sat by his little hut in front of a small fire. The nobleman approached and waited for the fakir to pay attention to him. The fakir totally ignored the nobleman and this infuriated him. After a very long silence, the nobleman finally burst out in a hail of abuse. The fakir listened, and then spoke;

"You obviously have everything but also have nothing. For all your wealth and position in life you have let me, a little hopeless man, disturb your peace. Am I not better than you? After all you came to my home, insulted me, but failed to ruffle my feathers." The nobleman thought about this, then apologised. "Don't apologise to me, but to yourself." Suggested the fakir. After a short while sitting silently the

fakir asked the nobleman what he wanted.

"Well, I have everything that I could possibly want; Palaces, wealth, good food... but every day there is something in me which keeps asking for more, that doesn't allow me to be at peace."

The fakir listened and then replied:

"It is your Ego. You see, everyone has an ego inside of them which is like a spoilt child. It keeps on asking for more and releases desires all the time. Get a bigger palace, more food, better parties and so on. It doesn't matter if you have everything or nothing, it keeps on urging you forward from one desire to another. And even if you satisfy the ego it still goes on asking for more."

"I see," began the nobleman, "then what can I do?"

"Well, you must find the ego, and throw it out, like you would throw out an unwanted guest in your palace. Go home and search for the ego inside you. When you find it come back. Tell me where it is and I will pull it out from the roots. Then you will be at peace, happy, like me."

The nobleman went home and thought long and hard about the fakir's advice. He did not have the time to go looking for the ego for quite a while because he was too busy. After a few weeks he decided to go back to the fakir.

"You haven't had the time to look have you?" The fakir already knew. "Don't worry, most people never have the time to find it. They are always too busy trying to fulfil it to look for it. It's a bit like the parents working very hard every day to fulfil all the desires that their child might have. They even plan for the things that the child hasn't asked for in case it does. They go on and on accumulating until one day they realise they are old. Then they think it's too late anyway to start searching."

"Can't you help me to find it?" Asked the nobleman. "Very well, I can help. Come here tonight, two hours before daybreak. Come alone and do not be late."

The nobleman arrived at the fakir's home as he had been asked. The fakir led the way deep into the forest and advised the nobleman to follow close behind. In the snatches of moonlight which shone through the branches of the trees the nobleman could see the flash of a sword in the fakir's hand. He was frightened but also determined..

At last they came to a clearing in the forest.

"Sit down here and close your eyes." The nobleman sat down crossed his legs and closed his eyes.

"Now," began the fakir, "You will do exactly as I say, and if you open your eyes before you have completed the exercise, I will slice your head off your shoulders."

The nobleman was quite frightened by this time.

"I want you to search inside yourself, every nook and cranny, from the top of your head to the end of each toe. Look and find the ego. When you have found it you can open your eyes."

The nobleman started to look inside himself. He looked inside his head but could find nothing that resembled the ego. For that matter he could not even see any desires floating around. In fact it was unusually quiet inside. He wandered around his head and ears, and then went down the neck into his torso. Nothing. He wandered down each arm and then down each leg, to the ends of his toes. Nothing. The nobleman had forgotten all about the fakir and was very content, strangely so. Since he had closed his eyes he had not seen any desires, no ego, not even a flicker of discontent. He was at peace. After five hours of searching around inside the nobleman found himself back

inside his head again. Suddenly he began to giggle, laugh like an idiot. He kept his eyes closed and kept giggling. He didn't want to open his eyes at all. He just wanted to giggle. Finally he remembered the fakir and opened his eyes.

"There was nothing there. I wandered up and down many times but found nothing. Then I finally realised what you were trying to do. I have realised it. The ego is not inside at all. Inside there is nothing, only peace. Then where do the desires come from?"

The fakir began "Well you are right. Inside there is no ego. Ego only exists from outside. It is the influences from outside that cause the desire. Because we can only think in terms of some 'thing' we create an illusion of an ego, a something inside which is driving us. Consider; you are hungry and go to the marketplace. You see apples and think how tasty they are. You want apples. If you had seen oranges you would have thought how sweet the oranges were. You would want oranges. If you had not gone to the market place but to the fish shop you would have thought how tasty the fish is.

"There is also a difference between what you need and what you want. By need I don't mean just the essentials to stay alive. Need can include anything which you require to make you comfortable. But you mix up the two and confuse need with want. Want is the spoilt child which keeps on asking for more. As soon as you can distinguish need from want you can begin to see want for what it is and drop it. You need shoes. Buy one, two, five pairs even. That can be counted as need. You want thirty pairs of shoes; that is the spoilt child in you. You are hungry. Eat until you are full. That is need. Stuffing yourself until you nearly burst is want. It is like the child who eats all the sweets and then spends all night being sick. "Just because you have the money doesn't mean you have to have everything. Money spoils the child in you even more. Like the child spends the last penny on sweets you spend until you are tired of spending just for the sake of it. You gather rubbish around you. When you realise it is rubbish, you go out and buy

again, trying to satisfy the greed, the want, in you. The child might spend all its money on sweets, but that does not stop it wanting to buy even more sweets the next time the opportunity arises. You are a spoilt child. You have never grown up. You are not an adult. Your toys have changed and your sweets are different; your position is very enviable, but you are still a child. You have to grow up until you are big enough to throw out the spoilt child in you. With it will go the ego, desires, want, and unhappiness.."

THE PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE

We almost always live either in the past or in the future. The way our minds work means that we always have a bridge reaching behind us to the past and in front of us to the future with the present ignored. The way our mind works means that we take in information from our five senses and immediately relate the incoming information to past experience in order to give it a context. An example of this can be seen as follows:

Two friends were walking in the park when a large dog came running towards them. One of the friends was frightened of the dog and started to run away. The other, a dog lover approached the dog and stroked it.

In the case of the person who was afraid of the dog it was his past experience which told him that the dog was potentially dangerous, whilst for the dog lover it was past experience that told her that it was potentially a cuddly pet. But the dog is just a dog. It is not a dangerous animal or a lovable pet.

It is the past experience of all of us that makes us give colour and life to the flat information which we are always taking in through our five senses. A person who smells garlic may either drool over the smell of the food or may feel distaste. The quality of our reaction is not in the garlic but in our experience of it.

Our mind is like a pendulum, it swing back to the past, and forward to the future. When it swings to the past it stops momentarily before it starts to swing to the future. When it gets to the end of its swing it again momentarily stops before returning. But it never stops in the present, the bottom of the swing. Our mind looks at the past experience and always relates incoming information from the 5 senses to the past. Then the mind swings into the future and guesses how the future might be affected by this new information:

When Mary opened her first letter she was over the moon. She had won a weekend for two at the seaside. She imagined the look of surprise her boyfriend would have on his face when she told him the good news. They would walk hand in hand on the beach, and go dancing in the evening, eat fresh seafood, and have a romantic weekend alone. Mary reached for the second letter. "Dear Mary," it began, "I'm so sorry but I don't love you any more..." Mary was devastated and cried. The future seemed bleak without him. "it might as well be the end of the world."

The simple story shows us how the mind travels from past to future. Upon reading the news of the free holiday Mary immediately projected into the future. How often do you do the same thing. You have some good news. You do not enjoy the moment but immediately project; how others will react, how happy you will be, what it might be like, etc. How happy you will be, not how happy you are now!

The root of all this swinging to the past and then to the future lies in your ego. The ego does not exist in that you cannot point to it and say here it is. The ego is in fact a mind construct into which you can put various elements of your self: ambition, greed, desire, anger, envy, jealousy, etc. But these elements need a context in which to work. It is impossible to be envious in the present. You are only envious because you compare something to what it was like in the past or relate something to an emotion experienced in the past: Tony was very

jealous of his 'friend's' new BMW car. That no good, so called friend of his had got the promotion. He was always big headed, and pompous. "Well, some day," thought Tony, "I will be better than him". Tony did not notice that as he had walked along thinking of his 'friend's' car that four BMWs had passed along the road, a Mercedes, and two Jaguars.

In the example above, Tony is typical of all of us. Why are we not jealous of the cars and possessions of people we do not know? Why are we only concerned with the possessions of those we know? Why are we jealous of only those we know? Because the types of elements which reside in the ego all need a context of past in order to work. Furthermore, they also need the projection of future, 'how I will get my own back' in order to create a whole context approach..

LIVING IN THE PRESENT

Try an experiment. Can you feel the following emotions in the present: Think of someone you hate or dislike intensely. List why you dislike them. Now, you must ignore anything that you know about the person from past experience. Discount everything from your list which relates to your past experience of the person. Think of the person. Can you hate or intensely dislike the person now?

Many people argue that this experiment is not valid because if we always discount everything from the past we would never be able to progress in life. That is true, but there are times when you can use this type of illustration in a valid way. Can you think of a long standing dislike or hatred of someone or something which is based on experiences many years ago? How valid is it to go on making judgements about that person or thing after so many years without proper consideration since the original event?

I hate Mrs. Jones because twenty years ago she insulted me and called me a lying pig.

I swore I would never eat cheese again after that awful stuff we used to get at school.

I will never talk to that person again. I should have got the promotion five years back.

Often, we live our lives based on the out of date, stale experience of the past. Living in the present means taking each new experience on its own merits. By living in the present we also manage to start living without the ego. Remember, ego comes in when we start using negative emotions like greed, envy, etc. and begin to compare experiences with the past, or project into the future. It is not easy to live in the present because most of us have never lived in the present. But do not worry if you find that you keep slipping into the past or future, or if you keep making value judgements. Go for a walk. Try to look at things for what they are. Look at things you might ordinarily ignore, and try not to judge. The Zen master, Basho, once wrote a Haiku poem about a beautiful flower. Many people in the west could not understand why he should write about a weed type flower which is found everywhere in the East as being particularly beautiful. The point which Basho was trying to make was that at that moment the beauty of the flower was present. Basho did not let past come into the experience. The flower was beautiful because it was beautiful; and not because it was a particular flower.

A famous woman mystic wanted rest for the night and came upon a small village. But the villagers were hostile to her and refused to give her shelter or food. She was exhausted but had to go on. That night she slept under the stars. In the middle of the night she woke up because of the cold and her hunger. She saw a night sky full of stars and they were very beautiful. In the morning she walked back to the village and thanked all the villagers for refusing to let her sleep in their village. Had it not been for them she would not have seen such a beautiful night sky.

The woman mystic did not think about her hunger or the selfish attitude of the villagers. She omitted the past entirely and just enjoyed the night sky. There is time enough to worry about the practicalities of life later. She just enjoyed the moment.

When you start living in the moment you will notice changes occurring in you. Living in the present means you will see the dropping of anxieties and stress, fewer feelings of envy, greed, ambition, etc., and more relaxing moments in your day. People who prefer to live in the present become very balanced and centred because they are not constantly driving themselves like a pendulum from one extreme to another. They are in the middle. They treat every experience as a new one. They react accordingly to every incident in their lives, and do not gather mountains of possessions, emotions, or problems.

EXERCISE

Monitor your feelings and emotions as you try to live in the present.

Record each thought and assign it a value:

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

Also relate it to your ego by listing which emotions are involved in the thought.

PART 4 - AMBITION

Part four of the Signpost Programme is all about Ambition. Ambition means different things to different people and is often seen as something which is crucial in our lives. This part looks at what we mean by ambition and if it possible to be ambitious and happy

The river flowed down from the distant hills. By the time it got to the valley it was slow, meandering and wide, crystal clear and pure. The river was free for anyone to use, whether to wash, bathe, drink or swim. Everyone used it without thinking and because it was free no-one really had anything either good or bad to say about it. One day an ambitious priest took a bucket to the river, and filling it with water, sat it down at the side of the river bank and stated that the water in the bucket was his and no-one else's. No-one was really concerned with this until the priest added that his water was more valuable than the rest because it was now owned. People began thinking about this idea.

A politician was next to start owning the water. She went to the nearby town and bought three buckets. By the time the priest went down to the river the next day, the politician had already set out her three buckets filled to the brim with water. The priest was angry but said nothing. The next day the priest had five buckets filled with water and the competition had begun in earnest. Ordinary people still used the water in the river freely and could not understand why it meant so much to have your own bucketfuls. The politician and the priest had increased their supplies of bucketed water considerably, and sneered both at each other and at the ordinary people who did not have their own bucketfuls.

One day an ordinary person decided that he had enough money from the sale of some chickens to buy his own bucket. In his own innocent way he started a stampede of bucket buying, water filling people who were prepared to eat less and wear old tattered clothing if it meant

they could afford their own bucket. Of course with all this activity going on soon an industry grew up of guards, protection and labourers to fill buckets all day.

One Sunny spring day as the previously happy people now sat huddling jealously over their buckets which by now held water which was stinking, impure and undrinkable, (vintage water indeed), a stranger came along. The stranger was naked and had no possessions except a wooden bowl which he used to fill up with water to drink. He was very confused at the sight of lots of people ignoring millions of gallons of water passing by whilst jealously protecting their puny bucketfuls. The stranger bathed in the river, a little way away from the crowds, and then feeling thirsty filled his bowl. Suddenly, a dog leapt into the river and started drinking. The man started laughing and threw his bowl away: "What a wise dog. He has taught me that there is not even need to have a bowl. Why I carried the burden of that bowl for so long, I'll never understand."

WHAT IS AMBITION?

Ambition is one of those words which can be defined in different ways depending on your subjective understanding of it. Most people define the word in terms of a drive to achieve as much as possible in material terms. Indeed, ambition is 'sold' in the West particularly, as something which relates only to material gain. As with many of the ideas we come across in this programme, we should try to define the word in a much wider way which encompasses a whole life experience. Ambition is often a 'dirty word' in that it shows up all the things which are seen to be bad in society; greed, taking advantage of others, and selfishness. But we do not have to follow this type of definition. It is possible to be ambitious and be caring, cooperative and stress free. The problem comes when a person is forced to behave in a way which is unnatural in order to satisfy another person's definition of what ambition is. The way to be happy is to define words like ambition for yourself.

EXERCISE.

Think carefully what ambition means to you and write a definition. Take into account what you want to achieve, the amount of stress and anxiety you are prepared to put up with, and whether you are defining it for yourself or because of other people's expectation of what you should achieve. Remember, ambition does not have to be antagonistic or aimed very high. Come back to this exercise every month or so and read your definition. You can amend it up and down at any time. Many people have a problem with reviewing and feel that whatever has been defined or written once must be 'written in stone' and is not negotiable later. Get used to going back and changing things if they don't suit you or your circumstances change..

The problem with ambition is that almost everyone plans their ambition to the upper limit. Good ambition is all about setting targets which are achievable and not targets which are impossible. We all have a habit of setting targets according to the achievements of others and not according to our own needs. The new business man or woman looks at similar businesses which might have been established for over 20 years and tries to get to the same level in 3 years. The seeds of our disappointment are in our own hands and we spread them liberally. There is no need for others to compete and destroy our dreams; we are more than capable of doing that ourselves. The other main difficulty is that we look at competitors as enemies and see the process of reaching success as a battle. The whole thinking is bound to cause problems. Why not decide what you want, set achievable targets and then go about trying to get there? Keep an eye on the competition but do not hate others or try to emulate them in any way. It is easy to spot people who are inadequate in some way in their ambition because they bring envy, jealousy and greed into everything. Treat ambition like a game because if you get too serious it will rebound on you eventually.

Mrs. Jones sold more apples in her shop than the next door shopkeeper, Mr. Peel. Mr. Peel was very annoyed because he worked very hard in his shop as well but never seemed to achieve as much interest from shoppers as Mrs. Jones. In terms of his own expectations, Mr. Peel exceeded his targets every week, but had to think of new strategies because he didn't want Mrs. Jones to do so well. He decided to drop his prices, forcing Mrs. Jones to do the same. This ploy continued until both shopkeepers were selling at cost price. Mr. Peel ensured that Mrs. Jones did not outsell him again. When they both went bust Mr. Peel thought "at least she isn't doing better than me!"

The level of backbiting in offices and work places is only an indication of lots of unhappy and inadequate people. You have the choice of joining in this stupid game or remaining above it. People often behave like the crowd they are used to and in many cases they feel that they must follow the consensus. Just look at crowds at sporting events. They are anonymous as individuals because of their uniform behaviour. You too can become anonymous, or you can choose to remain yourself in all situations. Crowd mentality always sinks to the lowest common denominator because the crowd must be united. The unity only comes if the crowd does something that all of them can do. Hence simple chanting, uncomplicated rhythms, and lots of foul language. It is a good way to get rid of excess energy but you should only do it consciously, knowing that it is your choice to be one of the crowd rather than being so because you are just another unthinking person.

AMBITION AND QUALITY

One of the biggest problems with the way we assess is that we tend to think in terms of 'on or off', 'yes or no', 'black and white', etc. People are seen as being either ambitious or lacking ambition. It is a two dimensional view.

In reality life is not so simple and we must also look at the quality of the ambition. For instance, someone might have an ambition to be the biggest bank robber of recent years. How does this ambition differ from someone who wants to be able to run the fastest mile in history? There is a qualitative difference between types of ambition. Yet we tend to see people simply as being either ambitious or lacking ambition. People who like ambition think highly of those who have ambition often without thinking about the quality of the ambition. We can see that life is more three dimensional as the illustration above shows. We should look at everything in this three dimensional way, otherwise we would simply have to support everything that ambition means and leads to. Many people see greed, competition and envy as a necessary part of being ambitious. But if we use a qualitative measure then we can see that there are levels and types of ambition. All this may seem rather simple and basic to you, but just observe how many times we evaluate words like ambition in simple 'this is good and that is bad' terms.

Ambition in itself is not bad or good. It is the emphasis that individuals put on it that gives it a bad or good quality. There are many people who are very ambitious but who also do not equate ambition with walking all over everyone in their path, or greed, envy and competition.

AMBITION PROCESSES

Think about your ambitions: What are they? How did you decide on them? What processes were involved in determining these ambitions?

Why do you have these ambitions? Is it for the benefit of other people or because you want to achieve them?

List the things you need to do. Make a list of your ambitions in a logical order - what needs to be achieved first and then second and so on.

How can you achieve these ambitions? What do you need to do in

terms of personal development, work skills, qualifications etc.

What are the sacrifices you need to make to get there? Is it worth making these sacrifices? Are the ends so good that they justify the means you are using?

When you complete your plan and arrive at your intended goal will that be the end or will new challenges open up?

What if you do not reach your goals? Will your life still be fulfilled or not?

If you do arrive, will it make any difference to anyone else? Does it matter if it does not make any difference to anyone else? Are you doing these things for yourself or to impress others? If you did not have any more ambitions what effect would this have on the outside world in general?

The most important thing to remember with ambition is that it is like the ego; ambition is never fulfilled. So you must plan effectively, determine exactly what you want to achieve and set achievable targets. But most of all you must think about whether it will make you happy. Most people are blind with ambition. They simply do things because other people are also doing them. They must go for the promotion because if they don't they might be seen as having something wrong with them. They must struggle for a bigger house, more money, and more 'things' because otherwise they might be left behind. Ask yourself; left behind in what? Is being left behind a good or bad thing? Another aspect you should consider is how material ambition affects personal happiness or spiritual happiness. Remember, the more you strive in one area of your life the less time and effort you have for other activities. Prioritise your life. Sometimes money and material things are important whilst at other times inner happiness is more important. But you cannot turn things on and off. Once you set out on a path you are deciding to arrive somewhere. If you want to

change direction it can be difficult. So plan first. Refer to Part One of the Signpost Programme and self watch so that you know what is really going on. Stop! Think! Evaluate your position and then make decisions based on what you want to do and not simply what the crowd want you to do.

PART 5 - THE HEART CENTRE

The problems associated with change almost always stem from the fact that most people have very entrenched positions. Even many people who may appear to be very relaxed or easy to get along with are essentially no different from the rest of us. Just scratch the surface and see.

We can all see the entrenched positions and limited vision of others, but when others look at us they see our limitations as well. We can see the speck of dirt in the eye of the other person but not the mountain of dirt in our own eye.

It is easy to start to dismantle the barriers, prejudice, and walls of defence which over the years we have built up. How often have you thought to yourself; "My heart says this but my head is saying do that"? Your head is where all the barriers are, all the limitations, all the hang-ups and paranoia. Why do we not listen to our heart? Because the heart can never lie. Try it!

A girl found a wallet on the pavement as she walked along. Picking it up she saw that there was money in it, but nothing to identify who the wallet belonged to. In her heart she knew that the money was not hers. Thoughts began to fill her head; should I give the wallet in at the Police Station, will they ever find the owner, they might keep it for themselves, if someone else found it they wouldn't hand it in, finders keepers, people should look after their money better, its not my fault, what can I do?

The mind will always think of 1001 possibilities, options and excuses. But ask your heart. It will always give you only one answer, and that is always the right answer. The heart is not subject to the laws of the land, peer pressure, or whims and deceit. It simply tells you the right thing to do. As you read this you know that often your heart has

pointed you in a direction which you have decided not to take because of what other people might think, or because it might cause problems.

The heart centre is not male or female, black or white, old or young. It is your original face. From birth we are told not to give in to the heart but follow the logic and sense of the mind. The mind is very useful indeed but that is no reason for ignoring your other centres. The heart centre has been used so little by you that it is full of cobwebs and dust. Clean it and it will shine like a mirror. Try an experiment. For one day only, each time you have a decision to make stop yourself and ask your heart "what should I do?" You will find it impossible to lie, cheat, deceive, or be sly in any way. The heart centre will lead you often in directions which you had never thought of before.

All mystics follow their heart centre. The only difference between enlightened people and the other 99.9% of people is that enlightened people direct their energy from the mind centre to the heart centre. It is impossible to live as an ordinary person ever again once you decide to make this change but it leads to great happiness. It is the key which you have been looking for. But it requires great courage to do because you know that it will mean that your whole life will be turned on its head. Many people who learn the method of moving energy to their heart centre do not do it because they are not brave enough. But it is also very simple.

Imagine you are standing in a huge field with no cover from above. The rain clouds are heavy as the rain continues to fall. (The rain cannot decide to fall only on one part of the field and not another; of course it just falls.) Lots of people are standing in the field with buckets. Only one person's bucket is being filled with water, yet the rain falls on all equally. Only one out of all can collect as much water as required. The others cannot understand that all they have to do is turn their buckets the right way up and then they can also collect the water..

FINDING THE HEART CENTRE

Sometimes you feel a sort of emptiness around the heart area of your body. It is inside and feels a bit cold and more mentally painful than actually hurting. This is when you start trying to make yourself happy by buying things or adding something new to your life. You start feeling that you have to do something, there is a feeling of something missing. People treat this feeling in many ways but always it involves doing something, buying something, fighting, arguing, making changes.

When you have done whatever you do to alleviate this emptiness; eating, spending money, emotional discharge, you feel much better. After a while, maybe a few weeks, the excitement of the new thing you bought to make you feel better wears off, and you again feel the emptiness. Again and again people go through this cycle of mild depression, a new injection of something, a feeling of being better and then back to the emptiness. It is because you are trying to quench your thirst by writing down the word water, or trying to fill your stomach by drawing pictures of food.

Your heart centre has been ignored by you since you were a little child (because it is ignored in upbringing and education), and it is not until you treat it properly that you will be able to break out of the cycle described above. You keep mistaking the feeling of emptiness with the need for material things. The need can only be filled by looking inside, by something internal. Often people call this need a spiritual need. Call it anything you want, but recognise that you feel like this because you are incomplete.

Use the mind to help you deal with the world outside, it is a very effective tool. But don't just look outside; what about your own internal spiritual needs? To fulfil those needs the mind is entirely useless. The heart centre is your spiritual centre and the emptiness can only be filled from here.

In the mind you have various filters as described in earlier pages. These

filters determine how you see the world and do not let you see it as it is. Remember the simple example of the two people who reacted differently on seeing a dog. Depending on which filters you have and how strong they are you will see more or less of the reality of the world. The heart centre has no such filters and so whenever you look at your life through this centre you see only that which is. You see right as right and wrong as wrong. There is no percentage of truth, no wheeler dealing with the truth. If you find some money in the street you know instantly in your heart it is not yours. You can argue in your mind until you can convince yourself to believe whatever you want. The battle between mind and heart is always won by the mind because you use it all the time and are used to it. The truth that the heart centre tells you is uncomfortable because it is unfamiliar.

Get used to using your heart centre. With time it will begin to develop into a strong facility which you can use to help you sort out the complicated decisions in your life..

We create our own mischief. In the East it is sometimes assigned as Karma. This means that you reap what you sow. If you go down a certain pathway you have already decided to arrive somewhere. If you had chosen another path you would arrive somewhere else. It is very simple. If you lie about something, you have to keep lying to justify your position, and the anxiety is always there that you might be found out at some time.

But just as we create our own mischief we can also create our own oasis of happiness. The problem is in recognising where you will end up if you make a simple decision. We have keyhole vision; when we agree to do something we do not know what all the eventual implications might be. Sometimes we get deeper and deeper into something because of a simple decision which may have seemed innocuous at the time we made it. We can only see a little way ahead and so often end up creating more problems for ourselves. All you have to do is stop looking through the keyhole. At the moment

we are living by hiding behind a locked door and looking through the keyhole at the street outside. We can hear someone coming and see a blur of a passing body and then hear a few footsteps as the blur disappears from view. If we just stopped hiding behind the door of our prejudices, limitations and fears, we could open the door and look up and down the street and get a better picture of what is going on outside.

By making better decisions we can avoid creating any miseries for ourselves. You need to do two things in order to get to this point. Firstly, by self watching you can start to identify the filters which you have been seeing the world through and start dropping them. Secondly, by asking your heart centre you can start making the right decisions for you, and not the decisions which will suit others or the world but which would hurt you.

THE MIND CENTRE

The person who lives in the mind centre is like the wave on the surface of the ocean. The wave thinks it exists in its own right. It thinks it is. The wave rises out of the ocean and is pushed along by the force of the ocean underneath. As it rises it feels strong and like teenagers and young adults thinks that it will rise forever. It has no notion of ending. As the wave rises to the top of its curve it can look around it and see new waves being born behind it. In front it can see other waves falling and disappearing. Suddenly the thought comes that now I am also going to begin to fall, and soon I will be disappearing like those waves in front. The life of the wave is short and in its desperation it starts to struggle and accumulate whatever energy it can from the waves around. In a delusion the wave begins to fall; "I cannot fall and die like the waves in front... it will not happen to me." The delusion continues until the lie spoken many times becomes a truth believed by the wave. The wave falls back into the ocean.

THE HEART CENTRE

The person who lives in the heart centre is like the wave on the surface of the ocean. The wave thinks it exists in its own right. It thinks it is. The wave rises out of the ocean and is pushed along by the force of the ocean underneath. As it rises it feels strong and like teenagers and young adults thinks that it will rise forever. It has no notion of ending. As the wave rises to the top of its curve it can look around it and see new waves being born behind it. In front it can see other waves falling and disappearing. The question arises: from where do the new waves rise? To where do the old waves disappear? The person who lives in the heart centre realises that the wave is not. The wave is not independent of all else. The person living in the heart realises that he or she is not separate from existence but part of it. It is not a question of me and that, here and there, me and the rest of the world. It is rather an understanding that I am part of one great ocean. The negative struggle (to live) ends because at the end the wave merges with the ocean and the end is not an end but a beginning.

We can see a cycle of life by studying trees. The tree sprouts new leaves every Springtime and every Autumn the leaves are shed. The old leaves which die fall and nourish the tree next year and although the leaves which sprout are not the old ones exactly, it is the essence of the old leaves which feed the new growth. There is no end or beginning, just a process which is ongoing. The person who lives in the heart centre begins to see this unity of existence.

Accept for one moment that this is true. When the realisation comes that everything is one, then who can I compete with, who can I struggle with, then does the foolish act of accumulating 'things' matter any more? If everything is one, then who can make me angry, who can steal my happiness, and how can I connive against anyone? Any act against someone is an act against myself.

The person who lives in the mind is like a scientist, and the person who lives in the heart is a poet, an artist.

A scientist is interested in dividing things up into their constituent parts. The scientist will take a flower and cut it up; the stem, the petals, the leaves, all the separate parts. Analysing the parts of the flower, the scientist will tell the world how the flower is made up chemically and structurally. But the scientist cannot find the essence of the flower because there is something about a flower which is more than its constituent parts. If the scientist joins the flower back together it will not be the same flower because it will not have that essence which made it a flower, dancing in the breeze, releasing a fragrance....

The person who lives in the heart does not want to know about the constituent parts of the flower. The fact that the flower is there is enough. It has grown, and where it has grown is the perfect place for that flower to grow. It is perfect wherever it is because it simply is. It is not another flower, it is not growing anywhere else. The person who lives in the heart enjoys the fragrance of the flower, the colours, the movement in the breeze. The person is only interested in the flower for what it is at that moment, without past or future, without comparison to other flowers. The person does not want the flower to be his or hers and does not cry for the flower when it dies after its short and ecstatic life. The song in the heart of the flower is exactly the same as the song in the heart of the person beholding it.

The flower does not have any hang-ups, it doesn't want to live forever, or be famous, or be noticed. It just wants to dance in the breeze, fulfil its purpose whatever that might be. It is not important to know the whys and wherefores. the flower wants to live its life at its most colourful, at its most fragrant, and will leave the stage of existence whenever it is time for it to go.

PART 6 - MEDITATION

The reason why many people misunderstand what meditation is stems from the way words are translated. In the West meditation has been translated to mean contemplation. Contemplation is a process of clearing the mind and concentrating on one particular topic or object. This is not what meditation is about.

Meditation is a process of emptying the mind of all thoughts. It is a no-mind. It is far removed from all types of thinking. When we think, we are. When we meditate we are not. This is a very important point to understand. When we are overcome by the wonder of a beautiful sunset or some such phenomenon, the deep joy we feel happens because we have momentarily dropped the mind and its restrictions. We become the sunset and the sunset becomes us. It is a merging. Whilst the mind is operating it is forming a barrier between us and the natural rhythm of nature, (call it nature, God, another dimension or whatever), but when the mind drops, the barriers also drop with it.

The mind is really just like a series of filters. We look at something and as its experience is sent by our senses to our brain, the experience changes as it passes through the various filters of education, experience, cultural influences, upbringing, sex, colour, social class etc. By the time the experience is registered there is hardly anything left of the original experience and we only see what is left of the experience once it has passed through the machinery of mind. It is like pure white light that is broken into the colours of the spectrum; we cannot imagine that it all came from white light. We might see only the red or the green or the blue. In meditation we let the mind drop and see the real experience without the filters.

Meditation has become just like any other commodity.

There are hundreds of books and techniques written by all sorts of people. There are many positions, usually quite painful for the western trained body, and many quite fanciful claims of what meditation can do for you. For most people meditation is never going to be more than a relaxation technique which itself is not a bad thing. If you expect to touch God, or levitate through meditation then you need to find a Guru and commit the rest of your life to devotion and spirituality. The techniques described here deal with the fundamental processes of meditation, the ABC of meditation.

Understand firstly that you cannot DO meditation. If you do something you are using your mind, and it is precisely the mind that we are trying to drop. You cannot drop the mind by using it. The most you can do is to make yourself available to meditation.

Imagine you are sitting by a lake on a full moon night. The ripples on the water are distorting the reflection of the moon so that all that is visible of the moon are the flashes of white yellow light on the tips of the ripples. If you didn't know the moon was there you would not be able to guess that a round yellow white object was responsible for making the light dance on the lake. As the ripples decrease the shapes reflected on the lake become more standard and occasionally you can see a sort of ellipse/round shape. Until all the ripples cease and the whole surface of the lake is absolutely still you will not be able to see a proper reflection of the moon. When you can see the moon clearly you have reached your goal. Your mind is the lake and the ripples are being caused by the thoughts which go on drip dripping even when you are very quiet. If you can stop the thoughts you will see the reflection of your original face.

Meditation positions depend entirely on you. There is a universally accepted wisdom which says you should keep your spine at right angles to the floor because it assists the energy flow through your body. You may sit in a chair or cross legged on the floor or in the lotus position if you want. Remember it is not the physical position of your

body which matters as much as your internal position. Sitting in the lotus position is of no use if there are 1001 thoughts rushing around in your mind! Just sit comfortably with your back as straight as possible.

It might be useful to select the same part of the house or room for your meditation each time although this is not very important. It is just that it may help you relax more quickly if you associate a particular place with meditation.

Choose a time to meditate which suits you. Traditionally people in the past meditated in the very early morning or late into the night because in largely agricultural societies these are the only times when it was not busy. For people in the West any time when you can be quiet is acceptable. You must not time your meditation. If you put your meditation time in a box, you are already limiting yourself. Either be free to do it or don't do it. People who say meditate for 20 minutes cannot have known meditation. In meditation there is no time. Sometimes three minutes might be all you require, at other times you might not come out of it for 3 hours. Once you put a box around yourself you cannot achieve anything except the space of the box. It is better to meditate once a month when you have no time limits on you at all than meditate for 20 minutes every day. You can enter the first stages of meditation for 20 minutes every day for relaxation purposes, but do not mix up relaxation with meditation..

In meditation we are going to make ourselves available to whatever comes. Drop all assumptions of what should be - that is just your mind coming in again. There are hundreds of relaxation and pre meditation techniques. Below are a few which are popular.

STEP 1

Spend time relaxing. Unwind in your favourite way but do not drink alcohol or take any drugs, (except prescription drugs given by a doctor). Just exist, be around, drift, or whatever for however long it needs. Everyone is different. You may need an hour or a day to unwind. Imagine your mind is like a ball of wool which has been unwound and sometimes wound back too tightly, sometimes too loosely, sometimes not wound at all; just clumped together. Unwind it slowly and watch the thread, feel the stress coming out, the people who you work and live with disappearing as you pass through their bit of winding. Drink and eat lightly.

STEP 2

Lay flat on the floor, on your back. Imagine your body is full of tiny workers, thousands of them who operate every function in your body. Open an imaginary door at the top of your head and tell all the workers to start leaving. From the bottom of your legs they start trooping up, from each toe and finger tip, up each leg and arm, stomach and chest up through the neck into the head and out. It takes quite a long time, especially at the bottleneck as they meet at the top of the chest and filter through the neck. When you think that everyone has left, walk through your body internally, down each arm and finger trying to find any stragglers, back up the arms and down the torso in to the legs and toes. Watch the silence inside as you walk, the emptiness, the calm. When you are sure everyone is out go back up to your head and close the door.

STEP 3

As you finish closing the door you notice a light on in a distant room in your head. The room is full of plain brown boxes with labels on them. These boxes are full of the rubbish of your life and are quite heavy. There is a disposal chute. You have to empty this room. One by one start dropping the boxes down the chute into oblivion. There are hundreds of boxes but with the disposal of each one there is a feeling of lightness. You are unburdening yourself of all the rubbish. Keep on and on. You are feeling better as each box disappears. It might take hours. Take a break if you want and come back to it.

STEP 4

Sit upright. Close your eyes. Look into the darkness in front . Slowly see that you are sat by the lake on a full moon night. The moonlight is dancing on the lake as the ripples spread across the dark water. If thoughts come along let them come. Acknowledge them but do not get involved with them. Watch them come and watch them go again into the darkness. If they hang around let them but do not entertain them. Slowly the ripples on the lake become fewer, and occasionally you can see the liquid ellipse shapes of a yellow white moon. Follow your sight into the shape of the moon and become one with the moon.

ACTIVE MEDITATION

There are two types of meditation. The one which everyone recognises is the traditional meditation which requires the person to sit and slowly empty the mind of thoughts. The person becomes available by being empty. It is like a glass of water. If the glass is full you can pour as much water into the glass as you want but because it is already full the extra water will just overflow and pour out. If you empty the glass first then you can refill it with new fresh water without difficulty.

Traditional meditation is about emptying the mind so that you can be filled with the essence of existence, God, or whatever you want to call it.

Active meditation is about remaining available to anything that comes your way in the rough and tumble of everyday life. If you go out into the world in the morning with all your barriers up you will only be available to the very few things which can get through the filters of your education, social class, prejudices, personal feelings, experience, religious upbringing, etc. In other words you will be just like the people you see walking in the street, hard faced, miserable, and walking through life as if it were a huge burden.

In active meditation you need to first of all recognise that meditation is not separate from ordinary day to day life. Get away from the idea that there is a time to meditate, a time to play, a time to work, etc. The more you compartmentalise your life the less you will achieve. Instead look at life as a unity; your work is also a part of your play, your meditation is also a part of your normal life. And especially, understand that meditation is not a 'big deal'. Do not think you are better or more advanced because you meditate. Meditation should be as much a part of your life as going to the toilet is. It is a function and a means to an end and not an end in itself. Meditation leads you somewhere. It is the somewhere that it leads you that is important and not the meditation itself.

Before you go about the business of the day spend time 'opening up'. Relax, take some time to reflect. Enjoy the new day. Consider what a beautiful world it is, reflect on the miracle of a new day with fresh and new opportunities. Objectively assess any difficulties you might expect to face today. When you step out of your front door you should be calm, happy and full of 'get up and go'. If you are not happy either because of your job, relationships etc. you need to sort them out. There should be no major obstacles that continuously block your chances of being open.

Treat every experience as absolutely new. Even if you've done it a hundred times before treat it as if it is new. Remember the time you first learned to drive or took delivery of your new Hi-fi? How happy you were, full of wonder. That is because anything new presents you with something to learn about and enjoy. As the experience becomes old your reactions to it also become more drab. If you treat everything as brand new every day you can live in that wonder all the time. When you walk, change the speed of your walking, if you drive, change the average speed and the route, if you greet someone at work use different words, if you sit at a particular chair, sit somewhere else, if you meet someone you do not like much be extra friendly. You will find that as soon as you move out of the groove of your everyday life, the slight changes make a difference to you.

Do not just change though. You must also watch what is happening. Imagine you are separate from your body. Just observe how the changes affect the body, the reactions, the emotions. As you watch you will find that new things appear which you were not aware of before. The watching process is active meditation. Remember you are not watching as you would watch television. You are watching with all your senses, all your intuition, from your heart centre. Drop the past experience and enter the workplace as if for the first time, greet your partner as if were for the first time, make love as if it were the first time, if you are late for work, run for the bus as if it were for the first time. Eat your food as if you were tasting for the first time. Remember, this is a first time experience every time.

Do not make assumptions of what you should feel, and do not expect anything. Just let it happen as it happens. And if everything is new it means you cannot let a train of thoughts develop because that is just your mind making decisions based on the past. Be open, suspend your paranoia and anxieties. Drop your likes and dislikes..

MEDITATION AND DISLIKES

One way to actively meditate is to do things you do not like. This is because you would be doing them for the first time or after a long time. You would be doing things which you are not familiar with. All you need to drop is your feeling of dislike rather than as with things you like where you have to drop many more things because you have built up many opinions of the things you do all the time.

Make a list of your top ten dislikes. Include food, people, places, etc.

PART 7 - CONSCIOUSNESS

People often find it very difficult to define consciousness, and it does have many meanings depending on what you are referring to. We will start by saying what consciousness is not, in the terms of how it is used in this programme.

Consciousness is nothing to do with the medical definition where it is compared to unconsciousness. In medical terms consciousness is the normal functioning of the senses and the body as opposed to unconsciousness when the body and senses fail, usually temporarily. Consciousness is not to do with the normal awareness which we have in everyday life: "I am conscious that you like my suggestion..."

Consciousness has nothing to do with conscience. It does not refer to what is right or wrong in terms of the law of the land or what you should and should not do.

Consciousness is: a heightened awareness of what is going on around you which allows you to have a very clear and distinct view. In ordinary thinking we tend to be only partly involved in the discussion and so often only give part of our attention. When our minds are full of other things we cannot give full and proper attention to everything going on around us. Often we are waiting for the person to stop talking so that we can jump in with our opinion, one which is almost always prepared before the other person has finished talking.

Consciousness is about being total. When you listen, listen totally; to the question and to the person asking the question, and the environment it is being asked in.

Listen to the whole question; people often hear the first part of the question and guess what the rest is going to be and start answering before the question is finished. You must know people who fit into this category, the ones who are always 'butting in'.

Listen to the person; there is sometimes more meaning in the way the question is asked than the words themselves. Look at the person's attitude, tone of voice, the level of consciousness being used by the person asking the question.

Listen to the environment in which the question is being asked; Why is the question being asked at this very moment, why is it being asked of (or to) you? What is the expectation of the questioner?

Every day we make decisions which can often lead us into great difficulty and they do so mainly because we weren't really there when we made the decision. Consider the example below:

Well, when I first met her what really attracted me to her were here lovely bright eyes. It was love at first sight. Those eyes made me delirious. Nothing else mattered. It was either her or nothing. We got married just three weeks later, and that's when the problems started...

OR

Well, when I first met her what really attracted me to her were here lovely bright eyes. It was love at first sight. Those eyes made me delirious. Nothing else mattered. It was either her or nothing. She didn't seem interested, and now I am not interested in life without her...

This unconscious person has no chance. Making a life changing decision based on the types of eyes someone has got is bound to lead to difficulties. One day the eyes will be nothing special because he will have got used to them and then the problems start because relationships are about many other compatibilities than eyes. And if she is not interested then he is also in difficulties because he has decided that it is her or nothing, he has created an irrational desire which is based on an unconscious fantasy.

But don't laugh! We all make decisions as unconscious as these. Don't we??

Developing consciousness or awareness is related to self-watching. Our unconscious lives are so because we do not think about what we are doing. We simply run on auto-pilot day after day. When you begin to self watch you become aware of what you are doing and this awareness is the seed from which total awareness can develop. When you observe yourself and your actions you begin to see the mistakes you are making, the automatic decisions which you make or are made on your behalf. If you go to a restaurant, why is it the same table and not another? If you sit down to watch television why is it this channel and not another, and why has it always been this channel? The questioning starts the process of awareness.

But real awareness requires another perspective as well. At the moment you are looking at the object of your activities and trying to understand the reasons why you do them..

Do not just try to intellectually understand consciousness. Try it yourself! Whenever the situation arises when you have to make a decision, consciously remove yourself from the event. Stand aside. When you do this you will realise that the picture is much clearer. The problems associated with making decisions are often related to the many aspects of yourself that you are trying to satisfy. Why do we go to magistrates, judges, adjudicators, facilitators? When we are so close to the problem, or we have too much emotional financial etc. investment in something, we cannot see the 'wood for the trees'. We cannot be aware because we let our irrationalities get in the way. The independent observer can see all sides of the argument and come up with the best compromise. Why go to an adjudicator when you can be the adjudicator yourself? When you separate your self from the event you can see the problem from all sides, and understand the opinions of all concerned. Where you can improve on the adjudicator is that you

can also look at the level of consciousness which the participants in the event are using. If you have ever visited the courts you may have seen the judge change the tone and level of discussion in order to involve people who are at a lower level of consciousness and understanding, whilst raising the level of the hearing at other times. Only some people are aware enough to recognise when the other person is failing to understand and is 'losing the plot'.

Joe was walking down the street, drunk and stumbling about. Father Jones was coming the other way. Many times the Father had lectured Joe on the dangers of drink. Today he became weary when he saw that his efforts had been wasted.

"Oh! I am so disappointed Joe," he began.

"Father, don't be disappointed."

"But I am so disappointed, and I feel sorry."

"Are you really sorry Father?" asked Joe.

"Yes I am."

"In that case Father," said Joe, "I forgive you."

We all wander through life semiconscious, not necessarily through drink, but usually because we do not understand where the other person is coming from. And to the other person, we are ones who appear to be unconscious. This is the remarkable thing about consciousness. We can see the unconsciousness in others but fail repeatedly to see it in ourselves. It is easy to try out the experiment where you step out of the situation in order to see the whole picture if it someone else's problem, but extremely difficult to step out of your own problem. If you do manage to step out of your own problem then the difficulty is recognising whether you are truly being impartial or

whether you are merely saying and thinking the same things but from another position. When you step out of the situation and look at it from the third person you must remember to leave behind all the prejudices and preconceptions. There is no point trying to look with awareness if you are expecting a particular outcome or have some motive of your own. The third person has to be unburdened, impartial and disinterested. This means that you have to look at the problem as if it did not mean anything to you whatever the eventual outcome might be..

There are many layers of our everyday life, decisions which have greater or lesser significance on our welfare. One aim of developing consciousness is to be able to distinguish important matters from the majority of tedious and irrelevant things. We tend to behave on a single level, applying the same principles and level of decision making to all matters which arise. It is not surprising then that when we make decisions we are only partly there, because there are many other matters which are pressing on our minds. One important thing to recognise is that we need to prioritise. Throw away the lots of irrelevant matters which encroach on our minds. Why carry useless things around? Spring cleaning is required if we are to free up some space in our minds. If you keep feeding information into a computer without deciding which things are important and which are trivial then two things will certainly happen:

Firstly, the hard drive will be filled and at some point there will be no space left for new information.

Secondly, it will be very hard if not impossible to find information because it has been stored ineffectively.

Our minds are just like the badly inputted computers, and because of the chaos inside it is difficult to get any real sense of what is going on either inside our heads or outside in the world. Use the techniques described in earlier sections to reduce the burden you carry inside

your head. The outside is easier to handle if your head is clear because you have more resources at your disposal. You also need to change the way you address new problems. Be objective and always analyse and study a problem from the third person. Living from your heart centre means that you cannot but think from the third person. It is when you ignore the heart centre and start moving solely in the head that you start getting clouded consciousness because in your mind you have to think about the various voices of ambition, money, relationships and ego.

The mind distorts your awareness and leads you to make decisions in a way which is dependent on other factors whilst the heart centre lets you see things clearly and with awareness.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP CONSCIOUSNESS?

Every day you make many decisions about all sorts of things. Some are very simple like 'What should I have for breakfast?' whilst others may be very big decisions and have a longer term affect on your life. It is because of these types of big decisions that a greater consciousness or awareness is useful. Consider for a moment all those decisions which you have made which turn out to be bad decisions or have consequences which you did not envisage. Ask yourself why these decisions had effects which you did not expect. Yes, it is probable that some implications cannot be forecast in advance, but it is also true that some mistakes happen because you do not think through the problem properly. One reason why mistakes are made in decision making is that the person involved does not recognise that they have a problem with awareness. They are used to making decisions and feel that the very fact that they make decisions all the time means that they make good decisions. Even senior managers fall into this trap and sometimes let their habit lead them into repetitive and potentially damaging decisions. The problem often lies with repeating: 'I did this

last time and it was alright so why not do it again?' Why? Because things may have moved on and the action required may be different.

The main obstacle to greater awareness is people themselves. You block your own way by failing to see new situations. Your mind necessarily starts off by comparing this decision making situation with one which was similar in the past. It looks for a context in which to place the present situation. But remember that this situation is this situation and not the last one or one from the past. Stop your automatic thinking process and state to yourself that this is a new situation and even if you come to the same decision as many times in the past it should be reached as if it were original and unique. You may be surprised to find that you do actually change the decisions you make even about fairly simple matters. Just because you keep making the same choices does not mean that you should automatically go down the same path again and again. Small matters are as open to variation as more important things.

Consciousness is all about stopping in your tracks and stepping out of the situation. What would you decide if you were someone else, or in another context, or at a different time? Sometimes you make decisions at a time when you are stressed out, or angry, or particularly happy. In other words you decide when you are in a deeply subjective state of mind. Of course by the time you get home, or the next day, or week, you may feel differently. Most people who find themselves in difficult situations do so because they make decisions which they later regret, and these decisions are themselves taken when the person is not at their most aware.

Some guidelines when making decisions:

Do not be forced or force yourself to decide if you feel that you are not in control of the situation

You can always change your mind later, (why has everything to be

written in stone'?)

You can defer your decision or make part of the commitment now and think about the rest later, (there are very few situations where you need to commit yourself completely)

You can just walk away and refuse to decide anything..

George Gurdjieff, the Eastern trained (philosopher, mystic, psychologist? I am deciding not to decide on what he was to me because he was not really any of these although he showed some characteristics of all these types,) had a very interesting story he used to tell his followers regarding decision making and awareness.

When Gurdjieff was still very young his father died. Before dying he called his son to him and told him that he had nothing to give him except one piece of advice. He told him that if he was ever insulted by anyone he should never reply immediately but instead think about it for 24 hours. Then he could reply.

Gurdjieff stood by this advice. Whenever he was insulted he would simply state that he had made a promise to his father and would come back to reply in 24 hours time. In the 24 hours he could sit and properly think about what had been said and there was always only one of two outcomes. Either the person was right and Gurdjieff would return after 24 hours and thank the person for pointing out a deficiency, or Gurdjieff would conclude that what had been said was not a reflection of his real personality and it was the other person who was mistaken. In that case Gurdjieff would not bother to return or comment further because it was not his problem.

In this way Gurdjieff was never angry and always kept a very clear and objective thinking.

The Gurdjieff principle can be applied to many situations but will

always lead to a greater level of consciousness because it is feelings like anger, guilt, love, hatred, and greed which lead to less conscious decision making. All of these are subjective and emotional factors. If, by using the 24 hour rule, you can eliminate the influence of these factors you are already half way to being more conscious.

The other half required to becoming fully conscious is the recognition that you can not tell the future. When we make decisions we think disproportionately about what effect this decision will have on our future. By creating a forecast of the future we enter into a world of illusion, a world that has no right to exist but in our minds. When the reality of life changes the imagined reality we created, then we find ourselves in difficulties: the 'Why does this always happen to me' syndrome. It always happens to you because you are living a different life from everyone else and do not see that things will very rarely go your way just because you imagined they would! Consciousness requires you to see moment to moment because that is all that life is. You can only be certain of this moment and be aware enough to move if the moment requires it. Do not decide something and not be prepared to change it. Never write it in stone. Never draw a line in the sand. The person who commits themselves and then stands firm is a fool, and will be simply left behind by the times as they change.

The person who never decides will also be left behind dithering in the past. Have you noticed that ditherers always live in the past and the decisions they make are already out of date when they make them. The times have changed before they decide. They are always running for the bus and when they get there they again become undecided. The bus races off again and then they are running behind once more. Consciousness and awareness are all about being there in the moment. Do not be there in the past or the future. Be in the present NOW..

The unconscious person proceeds through life until a problem or issue blocks the way. In a one dimensional process the person passes

through without caring to look at any other angles, potential implications, or outcomes. Their main aim is to continue on their previous path and they are unaware of anything else. Most people fall into this category of consciousness.

The partly conscious person takes an all round view of the problem but only in so far as it affects that person and the 'box' in which that person lives. The view is one directional and looks at 'what effect will it have on me?' These types of people are not much better off than the totally unconscious person because their main aim is to continue on their way with as little interference as possible.

The fully aware person is not determined to go anywhere just because everyone else is. This person does not live in a box, looks at all angles of any situation and does not prejudge or assume anything. The person of awareness is prepared to change direction and even do a 180 turn if required. Awareness means that even problems are not seen as problems but rather as potential opportunities.

PART 8 - OURSELVES AND OTHERS

THE WESTERN WAY OF THINKING

It is important to look at how we see ourselves in relation to our surroundings and the world. This may seem like a very basic point but it needs to be understood because many of the problems which we face stem from either a misunderstanding of our relationships with others or a difficulty in coming to terms with the results of our relationships.

In the West people tend to see their relationship with the world as one of conflict.

It is a case of me being here and the world being out there. I am alone and the world is a very competitive place. If I am to attain or achieve anything I must do it through struggle because I am separate from the world. At school, in my work, and in my relationships I have to struggle to achieve what I want. There are only a limited number of resources in the world and millions of people trying to take them for themselves. It is a question of each individual fighting and struggling to get their share. Some people win and some people lose. I intend to win.

This way of looking at life means that every stage of a person's development involves some degree of struggle. The more that you see life as being a struggle then in all that you are doing you are prepared to come into conflict.

From childhood parents try to instil a sense of competition into their children. Even getting a part in the school play is a big deal for some parents. And although parents might say to their children, 'try your best', the hidden implication of this is to encourage the child to compete. Competition in the West is seen as perfectly acceptable in all aspects of life.

At high school the competition intensifies. In all aspects of schooling from academic subjects to sports to extracurricular activity competition is encouraged. There does not seem to be much of a desire to see the child do well for itself but instead success is measured in relation to the performance of that child to other children. There is sometimes an unbearable pressure put on the child to achieve good grades. The same happens in work. People are encouraged to compete very hard for the best jobs, (what is best?), even though the person competing may be happier not stretching so far. Success is not measured by how happy the person is in the job they are doing but rather in how far the person can reach. One of the essential problems in the Western way of thinking is the idea that it is the important to progress as far down the path as possible, whether it be in education, work, or leisure pursuits. The problem of relationships must be very difficult in such a driven atmosphere.

Competition of this sort is like a drug and people sometimes become so embroiled in it that they lose the sense of why they are doing something. This can be clearly seen in every day examples where people become obsessed with trivial things. Often people do not know when to treat something in a seriously competitive way and when simply to relax.

THE EASTERN WAY OF THINKING

In the East people see their relationship with the world in a different way.

I am part of the world. The world is one huge united mass and I am a very small part of it. It is like being a baby inside a womb. The world will take care of me. I am a single drop in the huge ocean. I am surrounded with people who sometimes I help and sometimes they help me. I work hard and am sure that people recognise my worth. If I am the best person for the job then I will progress.

In the West people see themselves like a wave on the ocean. The wave thinks it is separate and has its own identity. In the East people see themselves as if they were a drop in the ocean. The drop is very small and insignificant but merged in the ocean it becomes the ocean, moves with the ocean, is alive. Being one drop in the whole ocean is beautiful because the whole ocean is there to support you. Being a wave on the surface of the ocean is also beautiful as long as you remember that you are just another manifestation of the ocean and not separate from it.

The Eastern way of thinking is much more relaxed. Because people do not see themselves as on their own, facing the world, they do not need to fight and struggle as much. The Eastern mind sees the world as a unity with everyone and everything having its part to play. To people in the West this often sounds like laziness with people seemingly content and waiting for things to happen. In fact it is more active in many ways than the fast competition and racing of the West.

People in the West take an interest in almost everything and overburden their minds with useless information. The West is obsessed with information, with knowledge. The East is not interested in collecting data, in collecting knowledge. The Eastern approach concentrates on understanding. Knowledge is information, understanding is based on experience. As a simple experiment just sit down at the end of the day and think about all the pieces of paper and scraps of knowledge you have accumulated in the one day. Does it make any difference to your life whether you had collected these things or not? The Eastern mind does not hold as much knowledge and information as the Western mind and what is held in the Eastern mind is usually based on experience. The Eastern mind looks at fewer things but looks at them much more deeply. In India today it is virtually impossible to find people who are addicted to the Internet, or who use fast communication like faxes or email. Even the use of telephones is limited. Part of this is to do with the speed of technological change, but much of it is to do with not being used to taking in so much information: because unlike the West, the East does not collect

information for the sake of collecting information. It is virtually impossible to find someone in the West who can talk at any level of understanding about religion, mysticism, or philosophy but even in the smallest and most remote Indian villages it is easy to find someone, probably illiterate, who can discuss at the deepest level. This is because the amount of information taken in by the illiterate villager is very limited but all the information is properly digested, understood, and appreciated.

BEING EXTRAORDINARY

People in the West are frightened of being anonymous. Everyone wants to be someone, to have their name up in lights. Somehow they feel that they must be extraordinary. In the world of extraordinary people sometimes it is extraordinary just to be ordinary. In their search for that something which makes them extraordinary people are prepared to sacrifice their peace, harmony, and happiness. A few people do attain extra ordinairiness and may be famous for a short time. But think about the price which has to be paid. In the East people understand that they are already extraordinary. It is enough to be alive, to feel one with existence.

This desire to be extraordinary means that people must always stay one step ahead of everybody else. If the world is full of people trying to be better than everybody else then it cannot lead to anything more than a mad rush. The mad rush for information, technology, knowledge, trivia, power, and so on. Our relations with other people most suffer because it is a race and in a race second place is not good enough. So when we talk about ourselves and others we should first decide what do we want our relationship with others to be like? If we want to be friendly and cooperative then we cannot be competitive and aggressive. It is a matter of firstly deciding what kind of relationship we want with those around us and then thinking about what sort of qualities we need to develop in order for that relationship to happen. We need to step out of the competition and the race. We

need to decide first on the relationship and then how to go about it. We tend to work the other way around. We are always competing and running and do not have the time to fit other people into our lives in any other way except on our own terms. In turn other people are trying to fit us into their lives on their terms.

Ask yourself what is wrong with being ordinary? It is all part of the Western way of thinking; 'don't just be ordinary, compete, be the best'. Eastern people are quite happy to be ordinary because being ordinary is extraordinary in itself. Rather than stretching and reaching towards the impossible the Eastern mind accepts what it is and sees the beauty through understanding.

The Eastern mind says:

You are unique. There is no one like you anywhere else in the whole world. No one has ever been born or will be born who is quite the same as you. Imagine, you are truly unique and have the chance to play your part on the stage of life as yourself. You don't have to pretend to be someone else, or do anything which is forced or unnatural. There is no need to wait for things to happen for you because they are already happening. And there is nothing which can make you better than you already are..

MOST PEOPLE ARE ANONYMOUS

Most people live their lives quite anonymously. Even those people who think they are achievers actually achieve very little. You might be a big fish in a small bucket but the bucket is only one out of millions of buckets. Someone is the president of the local sports team, or the golf club. If you fight for years to become the big fish remember you are still in the little bucket. The real target is to jump out of the bucket and fall into the ocean. Which is better? To be a big fish in a small bucket or a small fish in the ocean? Most people in the West choose the bucket.

But you cannot jump into the ocean if you do not trust anyone. The whole journey is about trust. In your bucket you are very secure, you know everything, there are no disturbances. In the ocean you do not know what is going to happen next and if you do not trust then you cannot make a jump. We all prefer to live in our small houses, in our limited lives and pretend that we are big fish.

If you have trust then you can spread out and reach further. But it all depends on your relationship with others. If you see the world as a huge fight then as an individual you can never win because you are one and the world is millions. You can fight and struggle all your life but it is useless in the end because a single person can only achieve so much. If you see the world as one unity then suddenly you are part of it and it embraces you. There is no one to fight or struggle against because if you fight against somebody you are fighting against yourself.

EXERCISE: JUST RELAX AND DO NOT TRY.

As an exercise, each time you are placed in a situation where you usually take the lead, just step back and do not assert yourself. See what happens and observe closely how the situation changes when you relax. This is a trust exercise. Trust the other people involved in the situation. It might be difficult if you are used to always being in the middle of the action but it is only an exercise so relax! Note how other people in the situation do involve you and think of your needs. It might be that the situation takes longer to resolve than you would have taken. But don't be concerned with this. Everyone has their own way of doing things. Be anonymous and see if your needs are met or not. You will find that your needs will be met in almost all the situations because people are always aware of other people in a situation. Afterwards think whether you would have achieved more if you had got involved, and think about the way you feel in yourself for not having been directly involved.

Life is like a fast flowing river. Our Western minds are determined to swim against the flow. The river is not concerned if we swim against the flow or not, it just keeps on going the way it wants to. The Western mind is always in turmoil. All it has to do is to relax and let the river do the work. Eventually when the swimmer gets tired he or she will have to give in and be taken by the river in any case. So why fight against the river, (life)? Why not just relax and let whatever happens happen. The Eastern mind has been floating effortlessly downstream for lifetimes, relaxed, at one, and happy.

HOW DO YOU THINK?

Mr. Greene had a tree at the end of his garden. The garden adjoining his was Mr. East's. One day Mr. Greene's tree was blown over in a storm. It fell into Mr. East's garden on top of his garden shed. Mr. Greene offered to pay for the damage but Mr. East said it didn't matter. Mr. Greene was puzzled because the damage would cost a lot of money to repair. Mr. Greene said that because it was his tree he was responsible but Mr. East argued that the tree just happened to be there, the storm just happened to come, and his shed just happened to be in the way. Mr. East continued, and said that it was probably very arbitrary where the fence had been put when the houses were originally built. If the fence had been put a few feet further away it might have been in his own garden in which case who would have paid for the damage? Mr. Greene was impressed.

This story is factual. It is relevant because it illustrates the difference between Western and Eastern thinking. Mr. Greene thought in terms of ownership. Because he owned the garden where the tree was planted he also took ownership of the tree. Mr. East on the other hand saw the arbitrary divisions of land into gardens as meaningless. The tree was just a tree and did not belong to anyone. It was pure chance that the tree fell on his shed. So what?

NOTE

When we talk about the Western mind and the Eastern mind it is not a geographic distinction. Everyone has a Western mind and everyone has an Eastern mind. You may have been reading previous pages and thought, the East is not like that. In the East there is competition, there is ambition and there are nuclear tests, surely the greatest example of ambition, greed and power. And you are right. The Western mind and the Eastern mind both exist within you and within every person. It is just that you have been using your Western mind more than your Eastern mind. It may even be the case that you didn't know you had an Eastern mind. It is just a way of differentiating between different ways of thinking. The Western mind is the mind of ambition of drive of materialism. The Eastern mind is of understanding. The Western mind is about dividing things into sections, the Eastern mind is about seeing the whole.

As an exercise every time you need to make a decision ask the question; am I using my Western mind or my Eastern mind??

THINKING IN ISOLATION

In the West we tend to analyse things very carefully. Analysis usually requires us to divide the problem into small parts. Rather like the scientist we divide our problems and analyse them and come to conclusions. But just like the scientist taking a flower apart to find out what its chemical and physical properties are, it is difficult to put the flower back together again afterwards. In the same way sometimes it is not appropriate to look at single parts of our life but to look at our life as a whole. Some of the main problems we face are because we isolate issues in our life and do not understand later how we can link them back in to our life as the whole. An example of this might be someone who fights very hard for a promotion at work. The person spends lots of time preparing for the interview and when that person is unsuccessful he or she then becomes very miserable and takes it out on everybody at home. By isolating the promotion and concentrating

on it totally it becomes huge and all consuming, and the person cannot understand that other people do not feel as upset as he or she is when the promotion does not happen. If the person looked at the promotion as part of his or her whole life experience then it would not take on the huge proportions that it does when you isolate it.

There is a beautiful Zen law, (not a law as we would interpret the word). It is called the law of three in the morning.

The new monkey trainer went to talk to his monkeys. He told them that instead of getting four rations of nuts in the morning and three in the afternoon, in future they would be getting three rations in the morning and four in the afternoon. The monkeys were incensed. They insisted that they always had four in the morning and they would not accept three. The monkey trainer who was quite intelligent gave way and agreed to stick to the old routine.

What the monkeys did not realise was that if they got four rations in the morning and three in the afternoon or three in the morning and four in the afternoon the total was still seven. The Western mind always wants four rations in the morning. But in the afternoon surely there will be disappointment when only three rations arrive because before there were four. The Eastern mind settles for three rations in the morning knowing that there are four to look forward to in the afternoon. In this way there is less disappointment. But both the Western mind and the Eastern mind miss one important point. It does not matter whether you get four in the morning and three in the afternoon or three in the morning and four in the afternoon. The important thing to realise is that you will always get seven in total.

The point of the law of three in the morning is that you will get whatever you are going to get. You will get according to your input. If you give a lot of attention to one part of your life you will get the reward. It might not be instant or even in line with how you think you should achieve but you will get there. But you will get there at the cost of losing something somewhere else in your life. The law of three in

the morning means that you have a certain potential in your life. If you spend time in one direction of your life you will not be able to achieve elsewhere. If you watch one TV channel you are watching it at the expense of all the other channels. If you spend time following one rainbow you will not be able to follow another. The rich person does not know the pleasure of buying something like a poor person does. The poor person does not know the relaxation like the rich person does.

You will always get seven, (this is just a figure and not a meaningful number). If you eat too much of the main course you might not manage to eat the dessert. If you wear out your body in early life you will not have health in later life. That is why the Eastern mind is relaxed. The net result is always seven. You can run and run all your life but you will only get what you are going to get. There is a price to pay for your running.

Stop! Try to understand the law of three in three morning. It is very simple if you spend time on it. Anyone who starts living according to this law is guaranteed to be happy because it does not matter how many nuts you get in the morning, (early life), or in the afternoon, (later life), you know you are going to get the full compliment by the end of the day, (end of your life)..

Some common everyday matters and how the Western and Eastern mind deals with them.

SOMEONE INSULTS YOU.

WESTERN: You take it personally, it raises instant anger in you even though you might not show it. You will either retaliate immediately or find some way of getting your own back.

EASTERN: You listen to what is being said and then think about how this is a genuine reflection of you. If the insult is based on some real

weakness in you, you will thank the person for guiding you. If it does not reflect you, you will simply continue on your way. In this case the problem obviously lies with the other person and not you.

SOMEONE PARKS THEIR CAR RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR HOUSE
LEAVING YOU NOWHERE TO PARK.

WESTERN: The person is obviously doing it to annoy you or is unaware that you need to park your car there. You go out and remonstrate, probably getting quite excitable in the process.

EASTERN: It's a public highway. Everyone needs somewhere to park. There are other places to park the car.

YOU HAVE WON £2 MILLION ON THE NATIONAL LOTTERY.

WESTERN: Wow! I'm going out to buy that Ferrari I always wanted, a foreign holiday, new house, new wife, new husband, new everything!

EASTERN: I can concentrate on more important things now that I have no worries about money. A few luxuries, yes, and maybe that new Ferrari. The main thing though is that now I don't have to play any stupid power games at work.

YOU HAVE LOST THE IMPORTANT LOTTERY TICKET AND GET NOTHING.

WESTERN: That's it! The last straw! I've had enough! All my life I've been waiting for this moment... Which b*^\$£" lost that ticket. Someone is going to pay....

EASTERN: The world is the same now as it was yesterday with the same opportunities and chances. Every day the sun rises and it is another beautiful day.

SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU DIES.

WESTERN: What will I do without him/her? It is so unfair. Why has this happened to me? I have lost someone very precious.

EASTERN: It is a sad moment but without the Autumn and Winter there can be no Spring and Summer. I remember that old Zen master who sat and banged a drum and sang loudly when his wife died. People thought he was mad but he said that he had celebrated his life with her and now saw no reason why not to celebrate death with her as well.

Make a list of everyday events which occur in your life and write up Western and Eastern responses. Do not be serious about the exercise, just enjoy it and have fun, as in the examples above.

PART 9 - LANGUAGE

THE PROBLEM OF DEFINING WORDS

Language is very inadequate. When we are talking about everyday things language is useful, but as soon as we start talking about ideas or concepts we realise that language has its limitations. Concepts like 'positive' and 'negative' are classic examples of this. Ideas tend to be subjective. This means that the idea means something different to whoever is using it. What you may consider to be positive I might think to be aggressive or interfering. So before we can talk about being positive we must understand what we mean, create a context for it.

Often we do not think about what we are saying when we tell someone to be positive because we naturally assume that they understand the term in the same way as we do. Much of the misery which occurs in our life is caused by misunderstandings, either on our part when we transmit an idea to someone else, or by the person who is listening to us and understands it in a different way.

'How much is that cauliflower?'

There is not going to be any misunderstandings about this question because it is everyday and one dimensional.

'Don't be negative.'

This type of statement is three-dimensional because it involves an understanding of the idea of what negative is. It also requires an understanding about what it is that we should not be negative about.

DECISION MAKING

At the time someone makes a decision the decision is always correct in the context of the moment in which the decision was made.

Sometimes we make decisions which we later regret but we never make decisions in order to regret them later. Imagine each moment as a bubble. When you make a decision you consider all the factors which are present at that moment. You take in all the pros and cons, and the opinions and feelings of people involved. As circumstances change you may regret the decision but that is because the circumstances have changed. If the same situation presented itself exactly again you would probably make the same decision again.

It is because you base decisions on ever moving and fluctuating factors that often you regret them later. Most people make decisions in quick sand. If you make a decision based on what someone else wants then the decision is only adequate for the period of time that the person is thinking in that particular way. As soon as the person begins to think in a different way then your decision becomes less relevant. It is because we always try to please everyone that we make decisions which suit others but may not suit ourselves.

If we make decisions based on subjective attitudes and views then the worth of those decisions changes as our subjective attitudes change. If we are objective and very clear when we make decisions then they are likely to be more valuable and relevant for longer. But before we can make such decisions we have to know ourselves properly so that we can reduce the amount of subjectivity involved..

Bad decision making stems from a lack of understanding of oneself.

You want to be someone other than you already are but you are in a position where you must make decisions for the person you are at the moment. The decision has to be relevant to the reality of today but your mind is wondering somewhere in the future of what you want to be. If you have to book a weekend break but your mind wishes it was a world tour then obviously you will not be happy. The reality may be that you can afford a weekend break but you dream of much more. You may never be able to reach to your dream but you will ruin the

weekend break you can afford because of a dream which has no right to exist except in your mind. Decision-making should be practical and achievable because dreaming and decision-making don't go together. Dreaming is one activity, decision-making is another.

When you make a decision you should base it on objective factors. You should first of all think what is actual and real and what is imagination or a dream. Put imagination and dreams to one side and see what is left. Most decisions made in this way are very easy because the clear and objective facts present themselves. Once you remove the masses of opinions, dreams, and hopes then what is left is usually very simple.

If you are planning a holiday the first objective thing to do is to look at the amount of money you have and the amount of time available. How many people do you know who go to travel agents and come back with brochures for destinations they will never visit? Make a list of destinations which you can happily afford to visit both in money and time terms. Then decide.

Poor decision-making also happens sometimes because of a failure of the individual to accept responsibility. Some decision-making is very difficult and rather than face up to making the decision we either leave it up to someone else or we only make a partial decision on the things we feel comfortable with. But the bits which we feel uncomfortable with are likely to be the ones which cause us most distress. It is important to take responsibility because then we can reach decisions and hopefully outcomes which we want. If you let other people decide then they are going to decide in a way which will benefit them most.

We have already talked about the problems associated with defining positive in the sense that sometimes people interpret words in a different way to how you may interpret them. But what does positive mean in terms of the individual? It is too simple to consider positive as being the opposite of negative. Even when we behave negatively it can be because people want us to behave in a particular way. If we then

behave in a positive way we may still be as unhappy because we are behaving according to what other people think positive is. It is, therefore, important to define positive for yourself. Positive in this sense means acting and behaving in a way which is in line with your nature. Nature in this sense means what you are comfortable with deep down. There is no right or wrong way to feel - you just feel. Be natural. Some people are naturally more cautious, others adventurous, still others jokers, or quiet. Find out who you are. What sort of person are you? Being positive is easier when you know yourself because you will be acting more naturally. Never do things as others want if it goes contrary to your nature, either positive or negative. It is your life and you have the right to proceed in your own way. Be honest with yourself and start out from today in a more positive way.

Firstly you must know yourself.

Secondly you must know what you want to do and where you want to reach.

Thirdly you must be prepared to do what is required in order to achieve your aim acknowledging that you may have to drop things which you presently do.

Fourthly you must be determined.

The points above may seem simple but most people cannot fulfil them. If you get to know yourself you are in a minority of a few percent of the population and have achieved a great deal already. Knowing where you want to go and what you want to become is also hard unless you are absolutely honest with yourself and totally positive. The hardest thing of all is the third point. Most people are afraid to do anything out of the ordinary to achieve their aims, and even more frightened to risk changing the things they already do. Determination comes from a deep understanding that what you are doing is right. Ask yourself honestly, have you got the courage to be yourself??

CLASSIC TYPES OF NEGATIVITY

People often do not see the whole picture, or concentrate only on parts of a situation. One example of this is when a staff appraisal at work or a course includes many good points and one or two points which need improvement. The person in question often only remembers the criticisms or points which need improvement. It is a good idea to assess the whole situation; look at the positives and negatives and 'weigh up' the balance of the situation. In almost all situations the positives are there but you have to recognise them. Negatives sometimes appear bigger and more imposing because they are the things which make you feel uncomfortable. Proper balanced assessments put the negatives in their place and their significance reduces often to a manageable level.

One of the main obstacles to positive thinking is seeing things in black and white, on or off, yes or no, good or bad, terms. The mind works like a switch; either something is good or it is bad. Another way of looking at things involves seeing them on a scale: At one end of the scale is 'good', at the other 'bad'. Almost everything has both some good and some bad in it. If you start thinking in terms of a scale then things can be very bad but you will always find some good in them as well.

A favourite trick of the mind is to think of things in terms of grand final conclusions:

'I will never pass my driving test'.

One failure does not mean that success can never come but how many people do you know who use this very negative strategy? One failure, two failures, even more failures, do not mean inevitable failure, or failure forever. By making sweeping conclusions like these people stop doing all sorts of normal activities:

'I will never eat cheese again because I used to hate it at school'.

Some people can turn failure into success;

'I might have failed the interview, but as I see it, it is good preparation for the next one'.

Sometimes people become mind readers. Often, insignificant actions by someone can become huge in our minds because we decide what the other person must be thinking;

'He just put the slice of my home-made cake to one side and ignored it. I don't think he likes me, but he can't admit it out in the open'. In his mind: 'Well, I'd really like to eat that piece of cake. It looks delicious. But I'm on a strict diet because I'm diabetic.'

The classic mind reader seems to know everything that everyone is thinking and it always seems to be bad. The mind reader is always negative because the very act of mind reading is a defensive weapon to try to prevent insults or pain. If the mind reader dropped their defences for a moment they would realise that there is no enemy outside trying to ruin their happiness..

The Armageddon type of person always sees things as finally coming to a disastrous end. They will not enter relationships because one of their friends was hurt, or they had a bad experience and think that all such relationships in future must end the same way. This extends to other areas of life as well:

'If I lose this job I will never get another job...it could be the end of everything.'

'I'm not going on holiday abroad. What if I get sick? What if the aeroplane falls out of the sky? What if my house burns down while I'm gone?'

'I'm not going to let anyone get close to me again because I can't face all that pain of separation again.'

This type of person suffers because of imagined consequences which may or may not happen. Starting off in a negative way, however, makes it more likely that the end will be disastrous. Sometimes people create their own failure where there would otherwise be only success.

Seeing yourself as an island standing against the world is also a favourite trick of the mind. This causes increased stress because it means you are totally responsible for every failure or success, and you keep on comparing yourself to others. The success of other people means failure for you. If nine people you know are not high flyers but the tenth one is, you tend to see only the one who is successful and take it as failure on yourself for not being as successful. Self worth suffers in this type of person because you are bound to be unsuccessful in some things.

Feeling in control or out of control are two sides of the same coin. You cannot be positive because you are not in control of your life and circumstances. Or you are negative because you are in control of your life and must be defensive in order to keep the things you have. People who are in this category always try to use their level of control to justify their fears and they cannot grow because they are always struggling with an often non existent entity of control.

Relating your moment to moment feelings with your self worth means that you can never be positive for any period of time. At some time or other people always feel; happy, sad, angry, fearful, etc. Often this has nothing to do with the long term value of a person. If you feel that you are worthless because you feel bad one day, or you feel you are very successful because you feel happy, then you are always going to live on a see-saw of happiness and unhappiness. This type of person can never attain a balanced appreciation of life especially since the happiness of this type of person is subject to the actions of other

people;

If I say that her cooking is the best I've ever known she will be over the moon. If I say it does not really matter to me she will be upset. Now how do I want to control her today..?

His car is really no better than any other but I know he is obsessed by it. I feel like a spoilsport today. I'm going to ignore it completely. Ha Ha!

Some people manage to see faults everywhere and find people to blame. These type of people are incapable of taking responsibility for their own actions and remain negative and critical as a defensive action. The ones who blame others are one side of the coin; the other is far worse. People who blame themselves for everything usually are even more negative..

Inflexibility often leads to negativity. If someone is very fixed in his or her opinions they will find it very hard to achieve anything because other people are not likely to do everything in the way these type of people want. It also means that these people are incapable of development or new ideas. The most successful people are the ones who are always open to listen to new ideas, approaches, ways of doing things. Nothing 'should be'. People who are 'should be' types are deciding on a course of action before they know what needs to be done. These type of people also often say;

'I should not be negative'.

As soon as you say what you should be you are setting yourself up for failure. Why not just try to be positive? 'Should' means that if you are not as you think you should be then you have in some way failed. This type of failure means you will only become even more negative. Don't lay down requirements because they will lead to failure. Take every day and every situation as it comes. Try to be positive but do not make

it a requirement. When we make things into 'laws' then we are storing up trouble for when we cannot meet the requirement. It is something for you to try and learn from, not a prescriptive law passed down to you. Why can't experiments be fun? Do not take it seriously just enjoy trying different methods of thinking.

Some guidelines on how to be positive:

Always look at the whole situation you are facing rather than having tunnel vision,

Start thinking in terms of a scale rather than yes-no, on-off, black-white, do-don't,

Do not make final statements - I will never, I will always, That is it!, Never again,

Do not be a mind reader - give people time to tell you what they are thinking and don't jump to conclusions,

Do not be an Armageddon merchant - the end is not nigh,

Never take things personally,

Drop all 'shoulds',

Stop blaming yourself or others and try to look for deeper reasons for any problems or situations..

The biggest obstacle to positive thinking is habit. We are all habitual in most things we do simply because it allows us to function better and more effectively. If we never knew what to do and in what order, we would spend an inordinate amount of time every day just rethinking the basic activities of life. Habit is not a bad thing in itself but it can become destructive to personal development if the groove of the

everyday habitual behaviour is allowed to become too deep. If you dig a hole too deep eventually you find it impossible to get out. That is why many older people seem to be so stuck in their ways; they have been digging all their lives.

Take the example of the young tree which is supple and sways in the slightest breeze. You can fashion it, shape it into any design you like. You can grow it into any size or shape. Compare that to the old tree with a huge trunk. It is impossible to move it or change it in any way. People are like that. You can influence and direct children quite easily, but old people are a different matter. Of course there are always older trees which happen to be made of more flexible wood...

Sometimes people have to backtrack and become more supple and adaptable before they can begin to be more positive. The Signpost programme should have started the process in you and there should be no reason why you cannot become more positive starting from today. Step out of the everyday and look at yourself. On the next page there is an exercise which asks you to question your attitudes and decisions and to begin to change your decision-making processes. Ask yourself why you think in the way you do. Find out who it is that you are trying to satisfy.

Positive thinking is precisely a thinking attitude. Nothing can make you think positively except positive thinking. There is no prior stage to it. Either you think positively or you don't. So you can't say 'I'll start tomorrow'. Either you are doing it or you are not. It is so simple. But remember, positive thinking does not mean that you will get instant positive results. You have woven a tangled web of negativity over a long period of time and it might take time to unravel that position first. You might, though, be surprised that you begin to feel much better as soon as you start thinking in a different way. Always remember the classic:

Is your cup half full or half empty?

The cup is the same and the contents of the cup are the same. It is just the attitude which makes you either grateful or pessimistic. A person of middle age can either cry because youth is gone or be happy because the rest of their life is standing before them. You can either be sad because Winter is coming or be hopeful because the Spring will follow and bring new life.

People who think positively often are surprised how others can continue to live with such depression and heaviness all the time. It is incredible how many people spend all their lives complaining and missing the miracles which occur every day. And yet it is so easy to just relax, stop swimming against the flow of the river, and just let things happen as they will. People who do not swim against the flow of the river usually end up with more in any case. The ones who spend all their life clinging onto their few possessions greedily miss the opportunity of collecting the other things which are available just for the taking. The sun shines on all equally. It is not anyone else's fault if you keep your curtains pulled tightly across your window. All you need to do is open the curtains and the sunshine will flood your home. It takes nothing away from the sun but gives you everything. It is not anyone else's fault that the summer breeze does not enter your home. Just open the windows and doors and let the freshness and warmth in. Only you are preventing yourself from gaining the blessings of nature. As long as you wander in the darkest valleys you will never know anything of the mountain peaks. The mountains cannot come to you but no-one is preventing you from going there. Everything is available to all equally - it is just that some people are afraid of losing their darkness.

EXERCISE

This exercise asks you to list the thoughts you have at a particular time and then assess whether and how the thoughts are negative. If the thoughts are not negative, are they positive or just neutral?

PART 10 - PLANNING AND SUCCESS

Success is one of those words which mean different things to different people. The mechanism which determines the level of success which you yearn for is desire and ego. We have already seen, in earlier parts of the course, why desire and ego lead you into unhappiness. In the same way you can never be successful simply because your desires race ahead of you and you never reach the climax of your expectations. Rub the surface of any old person and you will see that they are going to die with a list of unfulfilled dreams and expectations. Most old people die a bitter and saddening death. Look back into history and see how many of the most 'successful' people died in sadness and misery. Even Alexander the Great who conquered almost all of the known world of his time died unhappy. You are not going to rule the world. If you don't see through the pointlessness of ego, desire and success then you will simply follow like sheep, the mistakes of generations gone by.

At first all I wanted was to make enough money to pay the expenses and leave a small amount of money for myself. When I started achieving this level of sale I started thinking of more success. After all a business is supposed to pay more than a normal job isn't it? I started making more money and employed two part time workers. But I was never happy because other people seemed to be making more money than I was and their businesses seemed to be running more smoothly than mine. Eventually, I realised that things were not going as they should. I was making more money than I had originally expected, I had increased the business to a size bigger than I had envisaged but I was more and more unhappy every day. Looking back I can now see that it was sheer greed caused by more and more desire, dreams of more and more, simply to have more and more.

You must try to realise from your own experience why you are never going to succeed. The desire for more will always be running ahead of you. Try an experiment. Think of the times when you dreamed of a certain job, car, object, person, etc. The desire for this thing was so

great, and you were probably very excited. When you attained the thing you wanted the excitement lasted only for a short while longer and then your attention began to wander to other things. Think about why your mind is always wandering and think how your ambition, desires, and wants always keep you running for more. Why can't you learn to say: NO! I've been down this road before?

Tips to achieve realistic success targets:

Look at your whole life situation and not just be infatuated with a small aspect,

Write down your targets and do not change them until you have reached them,

Set achievable targets,

Do not let desire and ego get in the way too much - see them for what they are,

Realise that success means different things to different people and do not try to achieve success on other people's terms,

Make your personal development and happiness your main priority..

You must define success for yourself because traditional ideas of what success are will bind you to the ways of the humdrum and pointless. Traditionally, success is thought to be the attainment of targets, to get something which a person is aiming for. This also requires people to keep aiming for things. The person who works very hard and becomes rich is called successful. But if the person then decides that they have attained enough, people will soon start thinking that the person was once successful but no longer is because he or she is no longer trying to attain something else. In this traditional sense one can never be successful because you are always measured by your most recent success. If you decide you have attained all you desire but still want to be seen as successful you have to carry on the game or else be seen to be in some way inadequate. One way of defining success could be to

measure it by factors other than attainment of something new. You could think in terms of what you already have, or think in terms of things other than material, like happiness, contentment, and relaxation.

It is also important to look at things in perspective. For one person, walking a few yards might be a success whilst for the marathon runner 26 miles is the target, and even that has to be in a certain time! The way to be yourself necessitates the re-defining of things like success and you should always approach such concepts in this way. Never accept the standard definition of anything unless it suits you.

When you allow other people to define what success is for you, then you are going to pursue goals which belong to the other person and not you. They may overlap, but they will not be your goals. Examples of this can be seen in most families and relationships. It is easier to go along with other people than struggle to identify yourself. You can often see 'carbon copies' of family members, and particularly amusing are the carbon copy perfect husband and wife. But this type of compliance also leads to problems because the person who is fulfilling other people's success ambitions is never really happy. This type of person prefers peace with slavery and sacrifices freedom. There are problems, however, associated with being yourself. Society is increasingly becoming standardised and people who are different stand out. Often, people decide to go along with the traditional way of doing things because they do not want to become too visible as different. But again, define different for yourself. Do not fulfil other people's definitions. If you are an individual, you can also decide how visible you want to be as a different person. Be aware! Some of the greatest people in the world were great because they were different, because they tried to do things in a different way.

Diogenes was a Greek who lived naked by the side of a river. He had nothing but was very content because he had attained enlightenment. Alexander the Great, ruler of the known world visited Diogenes and told him that he only had to ask and anything he required would be

provided for him. 'Yes, there is something I need right now,' answered Diogenes, 'please step to one side, you are blocking the sun.' If you do not want to be part of the race you don't have to and you can follow Diogenes' example. But Diogenes also had periods when he deliberately provoked people in an attempt to wake them up and make them think about their actions.

Diogenes used to carry a lit lamp with him during the day. He explained, 'I am looking for an honest man.'

'Why is gold pale?' someone once asked Diogenes. 'Because so many thieves are always plotting against it.'

You can apply the law of three in the morning to success. Some scenarios:

The high flying young executive who works 7 days a week trying to earn as much money as possible. This person will either be burnt out early in life, (as we saw in the greedy 1980s), or will end up materially rich whilst spiritually bankrupt. He or she will also have a very unbalanced health. This type of person has had all 7 nuts in the morning.

The person who shunning all else seeks enlightenment. He or she has a poor material life and does not contribute materially to the community. Materially bankrupt this person is saving all 7 nuts for the next life. This is a pity since people are not known to be able to take their nuts from this life into the next one.

The person who is balanced is most successful. Everyone needs to have material well-being first and to some extent an extra amount of material resources to fall back on or guarantee a relatively worry free life. Once this is achieved then attention should switch away from materialism for its own sake. Some spiritual or life enhancing activity is useful. Three nuts in the morning and four in the afternoon types are usually very happy people.

The happiest people of all are the ones who are not concerned with nuts at all. They know that they will get their 7 in any case. This type of person does not create situations but waits with a keen watchfulness. As situations arise they react to them accordingly. How many times have you played out scenarios in your head? There is a big meeting tomorrow:

if he says that I will say... if she doesn't say it I will... If there are more people than I think there should be... If, if, if....

Of course when you do get to the meeting it is completely different to the way you had envisaged it and none of your scenarios happen. The person who is not concerned with nuts will have a very good night's sleep and think about the meeting when it happens.

Success is three dimensional in that its effects have implications in many areas of your and other people's lives. If you are determined to be a millionaire you will certainly not be spiritually happy. If you concentrate your energy in any one direction then other sides of you will suffer. People who love money, for example, are the meanest people around. Their love of money makes it very difficult for them to use it, or if they do use it it is for their own benefit.

Ancient Hindu beliefs assumed that the body produces a certain amount of energy each day. A person has many ways of dispersing that energy. Sex, communication through the senses, physical work, all drain the energy. If you can keep some energy within by restricting your activities it becomes more subtle and aids your spiritual development because unused energy can be diverted through meditation to the chakras, (centres) in your body. This course does not consider chakras but it is a good way of looking at your activities. When you engage in an activity think about how much energy you are expending and how much benefit you think will result. Stop doing things which unnecessarily wastes energy especially subtle energies like thinking and planning. Eliminate the useless and find more time for

things which will benefit you. Remember, Alexander the Great achieved more than you will ever achieve in material terms but he died miserable. Happiness is not dependent on material success. Success is something inside you which only you can activate.

Go back through the signpost programme and do the exercises - self-watch, relax, revise the concepts. But most of all live the experience in real life and not intellectually in your mind..

The Guru asked one of his disciples, 'How close do you think death is?' The disciple thought about the question and then answered, 'Well, I suppose we get through today and hope that we wake up in the morning.' The Guru queried, 'that far away?'. The Guru explained that the only guarantee was the breath we have just taken, 'Can you guarantee that this breath I have just taken will not be the last breath I ever take?'

The problem with planning is that we don't know what is around the corner. The story above should be thought about very deeply. There are some things which need to be thought about and planned in advance but many others which we do plan for but which do not need to be planned. For example, the farmer has to plan this year for next year's crop and without that we would all starve. But do we need to plan that if I save so much money every month I can buy the motorhome I always wanted in 12 years time?

I might lose my job and not be able to afford to save,

I might die early,

I might not like motorcaravanning in years to come,

I might become interested in other things,

I might win the lottery and would have wasted time saving all these years,

I am missing out on other things in the meanwhile.

The main objection to over planning is that by always thinking of tomorrow we miss the 'now' of life. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow never comes. The only reality is now and if we spend it dreaming of tomorrow we are just dreaming through our whole life without achieving anything. The motor home dream can be realised earlier:

rent one and go on short holidays,

buy a cheaper one,

share one with others through co-ownership.

If you really want something, why has it always got to be tomorrow? If your ambitions are realistic you should be able to do it now. These suggestions are not pie in the sky dreaming: many people live like that now. Ask yourself; what is there to stop you from doing the things you always wanted to do?

The answer is simple. What is stopping you is that you have your hands full of everything else and have no hands free to grab anything else. You want to hold on to everything you already have and so must dream about what you will grab in the future. If you just loosened your grip on the things which occupy you now you could do anything you wanted. Try this exercise now!

Make a list of what you want in the future.

Make a list of the things which occupy your time and money now.

Work out which things you need to drop in order to realise your ambitions.

What is holding you back?

There may be some things which do not fall into this type of analysis but most things that people dream of are realizable right now. Hospitals and old peoples homes are full of people who say; 'I wish I'd have done all the things I dreamt of'. You will never do most of the things you really want because you always hold yourself back. There is no-one else holding you back. It is just your paranoia and distrusting nature which makes you always think of the worst scenario whenever you bring yourself to think about greater things..

Ask yourself some basic questions about planning:

What will happen if I do not plan at this time?

Why do I need to plan?

How much planning is needed?

When does planning become a prison of commitment?

Who am I planning for, myself or others?

Everyone needs to plan to some extent but in the West planning has become too important and is often the reason why people are unhappy. People invariably over plan and end up being a slave to the plan. You should never write anything in stone. Situations change..

We are afraid to make mistakes and that is one reason why we are obsessed by rules and regulations. Do not be afraid to make mistakes because life is mostly a trial and error experience. By making mistakes we learn the difference between right and wrong, good and bad. The worst thing to do is to be unable to admit that you are wrong. Most of us are wrong in many of our decisions and choices and it is the failure to admit it that leads to the added anxiety of having to hide our mistakes. Hiding leads to feelings of guilt, and the weight of misery builds. When you are wrong, admit it! Do not carry the burden of the wrong action with you because it has happened and by worrying or feeling bad it is not going to change. Instead you should learn from the experience and then drop it. The most you can do is recognise that you

made a mistake, assess where you think the mistake happened, and learn the lessons from it.

Make lots of mistakes in your life; but make sure they are different mistakes each time. That way you will become a better person. The person who never makes mistakes has forgotten how to live. The more careful you are, the narrower the scope of your life is bound to be:

Do not do this without thinking...

What if something bad happens...

Maybe it's better to wait...

I'll try tomorrow....

Rather than living like this it would be better to give up completely. Remember the famous saying by French Philosopher J. J. Rousseau- "Better freedom with danger than peace with slavery."

There is a balance to be achieved between risk and caution but most people start by erring on the side of caution and never getting to the point where they test the risk side of their nature. Risk does not mean putting all your money on the horses, or gambling; risk is all about moving off the straight and narrow when you feel that there is something you must do or try which might raise a few eyebrows. History and science are littered with such moments which have changed the direction of humankind.

A room is not made up of it's walls, but the empty space inside the walls. No-one lives in the walls of a house. People today tend to live for the rules and regulations rather than see them as the walls are to a room. Observe the rules and regulations but live in the empty spaces inside them. One of the problems with society is that we always wait to be told what is right or wrong and do not think for ourselves. Live for yourself, and if the rules don't fit, try to change them. Don't be led like an animal on a lead- be dynamic, creative, different.