

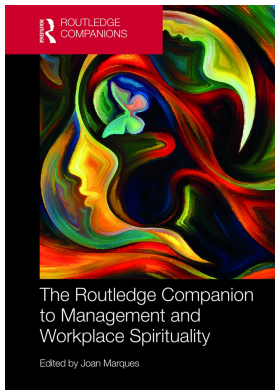
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SPIRITUALITY A Personal Exploration

Jeffon Seely

Spirituality: A Personal Exploration

As we begin to ask ourselves, “How can I manage spirituality from a personal perspective?” we have to take an honest look at what is happening within ourselves. The easiest place for us to start is observing what is taking place within our mind, our consciousness. It has been said that if we are unable to shift our thoughts, it will be difficult to shift any area of our lives. This is what many people refer to as walking the pathway of mindfulness.

We are always filling our minds with something. For most of us, instead of being aware and attentive of what we are filling our minds with, we are filling our minds full of mess. If we keep filling our minds with garbage, eventually our thoughts will stink.

Our thoughts act as the building blocks that flow forth and direct our choices, often habitual, and ultimately our actions. These three keys, thoughts, choices, and actions, are always under our control and act as the paintbrushes we use each day to color the blank canvas we might call this moment.

The question becomes: what steps can we take to recognize that we are not at the mercy of our thoughts but are that which empowers our thoughts? A few empowering ideas we can bring into the forefront of our consciousness to reveal the potential within us and assist in the creation of our reality are as follows:

- If I continue to think the same thoughts for the next 12 months that I’ve thought the last 12 months, where will I be one year from today?
- If everyone I know were to think the same thoughts that I think on a day-to-day basis would I like to be surrounded by these people?
- If someone was asked to take a journey through the deep recesses of my mind and heart and was asked to keep a journal of what they saw taking place within myself for the next 6 months, would they come back and let everyone know that my mind reflected one of peace, compassion, positivity, possibility, and equality ... or would they even come back at all?

These questions cause us to become conscious of our thinking, *thinking about our thinking*. These questions also allow us to find pockets of freedom between the thoughts we think and the part of us which does the thinking.

So often, we are looking to the outside world, exploring books, seeking mentors or guides to help reveal more of who and what we believe we are, completely unaware that what the majority of us are seeking is that which is within us and allows us to do the seeking. From this

point of awareness, we come to understand that the thoughts flowing through our mind are creations of our own consciousness. We have the ability to focus on the thoughts that bring about peace, respect, and compassion, just as much as we have the ability to focus on thoughts that are of the opposite. If we are willing to honor this internal freedom that is available to us all, we are at the doorway of transformation.

A Space of Freedom

While we cannot control the events that occur in the world or take place around us, we are always in control of the way we respond to these situations. We often allow the external world to dictate our inner peace, thus are always at the mercy of what is happening “out there.” As the thinker of our experience, if we are willing to interpret the external world without allowing the events outside ourselves to determine our inner worth, peace is always within reach. It is similar to a deep anchor in the ocean, centering a boat among large waves in the middle of the storm, feeling the effects around it but centered from within. A simple analogy to explain this is to imagine you are lying on your back, looking up at the clouds on a warm summer day. You feel the breeze gently brushing against your skin, seeing a few puffy clouds floating across a clear blue sky. You do not attach to any one particular cloud, instead lie peacefully, simply observing what is taking place above you. If a large storm cloud were to appear, you wouldn’t jump up and walk beneath it as it continues on its path.

So it is with our thoughts. If you are able to look up at the conscious mind, simply observing the thoughts that grace your experience, not attaching to any particular thought just letting them flow as you would do the clouds, it is from this state that you create a space of freedom, almost as if you are looking up at your thoughts from your heart center. When a dark thought enters into your mind, you have a choice as to whether you will follow that thought or just let it pass. If you are willing to connect to the moment, honestly looking at your thoughts, and directing your focus, attention, and awareness to the thoughts that bring the most peace to yourself and the world, eventually, your choices, emotions, and actions will follow.

No one can jump within you and think your thoughts for you, though the opinions of others, the television and peers can tell you how to think, you are the thinker of your experience.

This is your space of freedom.

How to Create this Mental Space

Scientific studies have shown that the average human takes 25,000 breaths each day. That is over 9.1 million breaths a year. If we sleep on an average of 8 hours a day, roughly 2920 hours a year which is nearly three million breaths, that means, we still have 6.1 million breaths while we are awake, moving and being. This makes us ask the question, are we even aware of these breaths we are taking throughout our day?

The reason this question is so important is because by being mindful of the breath we breathe, it connects us to this space of freedom within. It reminds us that as with each breath, we have the ability to be attentive and direct each thought moment to moment.

The breath is the first way to find this space of freedom to consciously empower our thoughts, emotions, choices, actions, and energy to whatever ends we desire.

In addition to the breath, there is one more naturally occurring phenomenon that takes place internally that can help us tap into this space. This is our heartbeat. Studies have shown that the

average person has roughly 100,000 heartbeats a day which totals 36.5 million heartbeats each year. Again, if we are asleep nearly 2920 hours a year, that means 12.1 million of those heartbeats occur when we are asleep. This leaves 24.4 million heartbeats that occur when we are awake each year. Most people don't recognize their heartbeat unless they are walking up a steep flight of stairs. However, if we are willing to be mindful of the heart beating within us, connecting to the beats moment to moment, this allows us to connect to this space of freedom. Because our hearts can only beat in this moment, it helps us remember that our thoughts can occur only at this moment as well.

Therefore, the second way to connect to this space of freedom is to recognize, appreciate, and honor each beat of our heart. Not just feeling the physical heartbeat but moving into a deeper introspection of recognizing the part of us that is beating our heart. For this is the same part of us that breathes our breath, enables our blood to flow, cells to divide, and atoms to thrive.

All occurring in this moment. All providing us with life.

Spirituality from a Personal Perspective

The essential element of this approach is to understand that no one can do this for you but you. Books can help to open doorways within our minds, religious settings can help open doorways within our hearts, but we must be willing to walk down that corridor toward the unknown, becoming an astronaut of inner space.

Spirituality from a personal perspective does not only mean what is occurring within ourselves, however, it requires us to embrace our interdependence with the planet beneath us, the sun above us, the air flowing through us, the people around us as well as the life within us. Each step we take is an interaction with the earth below, each breath we take is a connection with the cosmos above, each fruit and vegetable we consume brings the sun within us, ultimately deepening our connection to this intricate web of life.

This challenges us to embrace responsibility, accountability, and empowerment for the reality we have assisted in creating for ourselves. To he or she who can rule their mind, heart, and spirit, the universe is their playground, to he or she who is unwilling to rule their mind, heart, and spirit, often see themselves as a victim to the "cruel" world they find themselves in.

This leads us to the idea that world peace is impossible without inner peace. Creating a world of compatibility, ascending from a state of survival, is something that must be done on an individual level. The answers that we seek, the solutions to our problems, equity, justice, and unity is not found in some ancient script or at the bottom of a baptism tub. The answers that we seek are contained within you and me.

Are We Willing to Do Our Part?

If the answer is yes, then we must take the next step. This step requires us to bring this state of peace and awareness out from within ourselves and into the external world. It challenges us to look at the way we show up each day and includes the unconscious perceptions we carry with us, the words we choose to speak, and the footprint we leave on the planet. To deepen our understanding of what an outer expression of mindfulness is we must reflect on the impact we have on people and environments we find ourselves in.

To start this process we have to look at the behaviors and actions we show up with on a daily basis. It is a natural progression, from internal awareness to outer awareness, because the behaviors, actions, and results we experience are brought to life by that which occurs inside ourselves.

Therefore, if we are unwilling to recognize what is taking place internally, we'll never be able to consciously direct how we show up outwardly. Now that we have that out of the way, let's look at this a little bit deeper.

Outer Reflections

In the same way that a large rock dropped in the middle of a still lake will create ripples that eventually reach the shore, so it is with the way we interact with others and gently shake the world. Our words, actions, and interactions with others send these ripples out into the world, whether consciously or unconsciously. The first layer of this ripple can be observed when we examine our closest relationships. These are the people we spend the most time around. Unfortunately, for so many, we often take these people for granted: surface level conversations, being there but not fully being there, engaging with them but not at a level where we are brought to life. This is caused by not fully valuing the present moment we are sharing with one another or recognizing that each interaction is a "sacred" experience that will never happen that exact way again.

How have you chosen to show up with these people in your life? It may be your loved ones, children, partner, or great friends. Have you really been there or just been there?

An idea to think about which effortlessly helps us be more mindful is to remember that this life you are living right now is a one-time thing. There are no do-overs, unless we talk about reincarnation, but that would have to be another multiple volume book.

These same ideas and questions mentioned above can be asked about the second layer of the ripple that reaches our outermost relationships. These typically consist of co-workers, neighbors, or the individuals we are familiar with but are not in our innermost circle. The third layer of the ripple flows into our communities, our cities, states, and ultimately the world.

As we look at all of these areas we must ask, how am I impacting all of these layers? To find the answer, we have to look at the center that causes the ripple: ourselves.

Outward Expression

The way we communicate is one of the main ways that ripples are created. We can see there are three levels of communication when we look at the Subliminal Communication Model developed by Innovations International.

The first layer of this model is verbal. These are the words we choose to say that act as seeds that are deposited into the minds and hearts of others. Verbal communication, however, is the

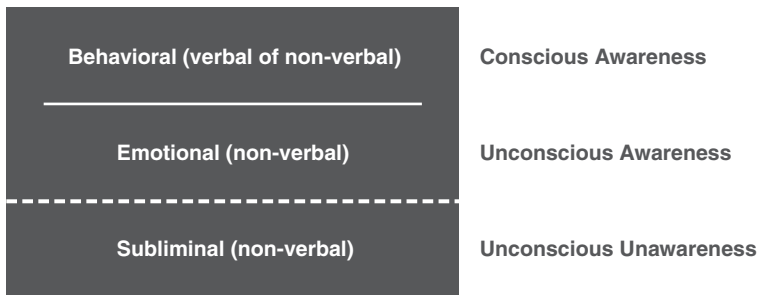


Figure 4.1 Subliminal Communication Model

least powerful of the three but is the level that we are most conscious of. The second level is emotional communication and the third, which is the most powerful, is subliminal. Both of these latter two levels cause us to step into the unconscious realm in ourselves. They explore the bottom two layers of this model we have to explore our intent, our unconscious perceptions, and the emotions that we allow to dominate our day.

As we take the steps to be mindful about the way we choose to think about the world and people around us, mindful of the thoughts we give our power to, attentive of how those thoughts fuel our emotions, words, and the way we carry ourselves, we then see the tools for transformation are found within.

Mindfulness and awareness both internally and externally are ultimately your responsibility.