

THE POINT

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The audience experienced
meditation with music before
and after Mike's talk.

True happiness: Your search is about to end

MANY YEARS ago, I was nervously preparing for a job interview. I shared my anxiety with a friend, who assured me, "You'll be fine, just be yourself!" I thought, yes of course, just be my self, and everything will flow naturally.

Later as I gathered my thoughts, one in particular triggered a deeper anxiety: "What does that mean exactly—how do I be my self? Who am I?" It would be many years later that I clearly understood.

Have you ever felt happy for no apparent reason? Have you ever felt peacefully content for no apparent reason? Have you ever felt loveful towards someone, benevolent towards other people, for no apparent reason?

In such moments you are, likely without knowing it, being your natural self. It's the absence of a reason to be happy or content, or loveful, that indicates this is your true nature.

Have you noticed that when you're angry or sad, scared or tense, irritated or resentful, there's always a reason? Either someone didn't do what you wanted, or took away what you thought was yours, or threatened you in some way. This indicates that such emotions are unnatural. We create them as a reaction to another person's behavior or an emerging situation. It's unnatural to make your self unhappy. The physical equivalent would be to stick a knife in your leg every day and say that it's a natural thing to do!

Emotional states don't originate in your body. They're created in your consciousness by none other than... your self. This is something they don't teach in school.

False sense

This is one way to separate your natural feelings from an emotional disturbance. Emotions and feelings are quite different. No one teaches us how to untangle the two. If these feelings that arise for no apparent reason indicate the real me, then what are emotions? They are a signal that you're trying to be something or someone that you're not. When you build the sense of who you are out of what you're not, you create something called the ego. That is, a false sense of who I am or, in the words of New Scotland Yard, "a case of mistaken identity." Then, when something happens to that which you are not, you react emotionally. You can verify this many times a day in your own experiences. It requires only an intention to be more self-aware.

Unfortunately, from the moment you arrive for this life adventure, you are taught to create many identities. It becomes a habit to try to be something, or someone, that you're not. For years I was not aware I was doing this, or that it was the cause of my unhappiness. Then one day, over thirty years ago, I encountered a very simple explanation about who I really am:

There are two energies that, together, constitute the dance of life. We know we are human beings, but we seldom think about what that means. Let me break it down

At a recent
presentation
titled "Being
Your Self" at
the Circuit
Makati,, author
Mike George
explained how
to re-discover
the authentic
self.



Photo Credit: Jojo Mamangun

into the two energies. There is the human and the being. The human form is occupied by a being of consciousness; thus, there is matter and mind, body and soul.

Physical energy is visible. You can see it, cut it, burn it, drown it—it's tangible. The other energy, the spirit, consciousness itself, the soul, is invisible, internal, intangible. Which one are we taught to identify with? Which one are we taught to believe "I am"? The physical.

Mirror moments

Because you believe you are mere matter, when you get up in the morning, you head to the bathroom, look in the mirror and go ... "Aaaargh! Is that me?" You may notice that your stress begins in those mirror-in-the-bathroom moments. You believe you are what you see in the mirror: an appearance.

If you're attentive, you may notice that from this belief arises thoughts of anxiety, tension and worry. As you look in the mirror you may start thinking, "Oh no, another wrinkle, another grey hair. What would 'they' think?"

Sound familiar? This is true of both men and women. Thoughts lead to action. What would then be the first actions of the day (again for both men and women)? You start to "make up" the face with creams and lotions, then adorn the body with clothes

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UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- You First...Parenting the Inner Child, Mar. 4, 2 to 5 pm
- Knowing Myself, Knowing God, Mar. 5, 9 to 3 pm
- Going Beyond Fear, Mar. 12, 9 to 4 pm
- Camp for Joy, Young People's Program, Mar. 18
- Inner Peace, Inner Power Retreat, Mar. 24 to 26

We'd like to hear from you. Please contact us at Mobile: (+63) 917 502 0243 Email: tagaytay@brahmakumaris.org

Visit the Center for Spiritual Learning at 1020 Magallanes Drive, Silang Crossing West, Tagaytay City. Contact us at (046) 483 2128

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and accessories, in order to enhance the reality of an appearance that you believe is you. Until you decide, “Now I can face the world!”

So we “make up” our appearance believing that “I am” an appearance. But that’s not true. The truth is you/I/we are each the spiritual energy that animates the form that we inhabit. I can’t prove this to you; only you can prove this to yourself. Some call this energy the soul, the spirit. It’s not that I “have” a soul; I am the soul. It doesn’t matter what you label it; this intangible energy of vitality takes the form of light. But it’s an invisible light, the light of consciousness.

Simple experiment

You cannot prove this scientifically. You can’t get you, the soul/spirit/consciousness into a test tube. We can’t poke it and say, “Can you see what I see?” But you can prove to yourself what you really are. Let me share with you a simple experiment that you can take away with you. You can be your own scientist in the laboratory of your own consciousness:

The physical form of your body has to be here, in this room, right now. But you can leave this room in one second. In fact some of you have already gone, I can tell. If you don’t blink at least once every four and a half seconds, I know you’ve left the room! Your eyes may be looking at me but “you” are not here!

Have you ever been talking to a friend, and they sense that you’ve checked out, that your attention has drifted off? That’s the moment they might say, “Are you still with me?” And that’s the moment you return instantly to the full awareness of the friend speaking and say, “Sorry, what were you saying?” And you have no idea how long you were away. Ten, fifteen seconds? You went beyond the awareness of time. You have no idea where you went, either. You went beyond the awareness of space. You went beyond time and space! But your body stayed here. That proves that you are of another dimension than your body.

If you ever learn to meditate, you will learn how to do this at will. Sometimes it’s called the journey of no distance in one second— the journey beyond the awareness of time and space. It’s not that you cease to exist; you simply raise your consciousness out of the awareness of this physical form to a vibration where you are beyond time and space. You transcend the material world. You’ll also notice, with practice, that when you come back into the awareness of movement around you, your energy is refreshed, refocused, renewed.

In order to rest the body we put it to sleep. But to rest consciousness—you the soul/spirit—you awaken. Waking up means raising your consciousness above the mundane. As the old saying goes, “Rest does not come with sleeping, it comes with waking.”

So this is a simple experiment that anyone can do. The big mistake we all make is identifying with the form of our body. It’s so deeply ingrained in our consciousness that it’s quite challenging to free ourselves, to awaken from the habit of building our sense of self out of what we see in the mirror.

Two realities

When you believe you are what you see in the mirror, you get life’s two realities mixed up. The secondary reality is the world of people and events around us, constantly moving and changing. The primary reality is the one within us—our thoughts, feelings and emotions, also constantly changing. We get the two round the wrong way by believing we are material beings, and that the world out there is the primary reality. This creates another belief, that your happiness lies in the world out there. That’s why everything that everyone does everyday is motivated by one thing, the search for happiness.

Of course, you do seem to get some happiness from the world and people in it—whether via shopping, watching a movie, eating chocolate, or being with someone. That’s not “authentic” happiness; it’s pleasure. We get pleasure and happiness mixed up.

There are entire industries whose function is to keep us mistaking pleasure for happiness. Thus, we get to join the world’s most popular religion—not Christianity, nor Buddhism or Islam. It’s called hedonism. The hedonist is always looking for the next pleasure, believing that it’s happiness and that it comes from the outside in, through any of our physical senses. So we look outside for stimulation.

Have you ever noticed that what you believe is happiness is usually temporary and always dependent on something or someone? When that something/someone goes away or threatens to go, or is taken away, we don’t create happiness then, only sadness, anger, and fear. That’s what stress is. You create your own stress, your own unhappiness. When something happens to what you believe makes you happy, you feel it’s happening to you. You take it personally and create some level of misery, all because you believe you’re a material being.

Feeling of significance

Sometimes you hear about people who get fed up with all that. They stay consistently unhappy and often depressed. They wake up one day and decide there is no meaning to life. These are often people with great wealth, great position, success, and all the physical comforts. One day, they give it all up, give everything away, and they go live in a kibbutz. Or they do charity work. You talk to them a year later and they say, “I wish I’d done that ten years ago!” They don’t realize they have then converted from



Performer looks into the illusion of ego in the dance concert “Being Your Self”

hedonism to eudonism.

Not many have heard that word, eudonism. The result of eudonism is a feeling that comes from inside, from within the consciousness. It’s a feeling of significance, meaningfulness, fulfillment, that comes from the giving of your energy without wanting anything in return. Sometimes that feeling is called love because that’s what love does.

True love is unconditional. When you give your energy, your self, in whatever form or at whatever time, at whatever level, without expecting anything, that could be described as true happiness. For me, the essence of life and living can be packed into 6 words: Peace is... love does... happiness rewards.

Peace is what I am, what you are. It’s your true nature. But it is love that is the “active ingredient” at the core of your being. Love is what shapes your highest intentions. To love is what you are meant to do—not Hollywood love, but the giving of your self—and the result is authentic happiness, self-generated happiness, happiness from the inside out.

Can you see the journey? Can you get a sense of it? It’s quite challenging because the world around us doesn’t want us to wake up to that journey; it keeps us trapped in the hedonistic life. As I said, there are entire industries that feed on keeping us trapped. They’re called marketing and advertising.

Have you noticed how advertising and marketing try to give us a sense of identity— material identity? They tell you who you are and, if you happen to not know who you are, no problem they say, “We can help you with that. Identify with this brand, this fashion line, this way of life, these wonderful technological toys.” Or, “You mean you’ve got the old model? Oh, you need the newer, the faster, slicker and sleeker edition. Your friends will respect you a lot more!”

What stress means

Thirty-five years ago, I woke up very stressed out. “Stressed out” just means very unhappy. So all I’ve done for the past 35 years is... investigate. Most people wake up everyday thinking, “How can I be happy today? What can I get, where should I go, who should I be, what should I do?” The journey doesn’t begin until you stop searching “out there” and earnestly ask your self, “Why am I not happy now?”

One day you will realize that your true nature is to be happy but that there’s

something in the way, an obstacle that you put there which keeps you from your true nature. Liberation from stress, which means inner freedom, occurs only when you strip away all the things that you falsely identify with. That could be family, possessions, nationality, position. It could be ideas, beliefs, images, philosophies. When you stop using these to create a sense of who you are, you don't lose them; you just stop allowing them to define you. You change your relationship with them. So if anything happens to them, you don't take it personally.

The deepest things we identify with are beliefs and memories. These things are not bad and not necessarily to be avoided. It's just that we make the mistake of building our self-image out of them. To build your identity out of such material things, or even out of intangible things like ideas, is a mistake. But it's such a common mistake; many will go to war against anyone that threatens what they identify with.

When you know who and what you really are, nothing and no one can ever threaten you. When you take away all that you mistakenly identify with and is obviously not you, then you will see with great clarity the illusion of those identities. Eventually you become naked. This is called "naked being." Imagine someone mistaking his clothes for his body and then believes the clothes need more care than the body.

Amazingly, people do that. They spend more time and money on clothes and accessories than they do on their health—until the day arrives when they realize, "Wait a minute, my clothes are not my body!"

Liberation from worry

Has anyone ever suggested that you take off your clothes in public? Most people would run a mile from the idea. Should you ever meet someone who had the courage to do that, he may tell you that after about 10 minutes, he felt fantastic! Do you know why? One word – liberation!

Liberation from the tension of body consciousness. Liberation from the worry about what other people will think. I'm not asking you to take your clothes off. I'm just using the idea of a naked body as metaphor.

It's the same as "stripping away" the things that you've learned to identify with, in your mind. All those "things" are like veils that we use to cover our consciousness. These are the stories we tell our selves about our selves—stories that contain all the things we are attached to and identify with, stories that contain all the beliefs and memories we have assimilated and created. None of these is you or me. When you take them all off, let them all go, strip them away, you become a naked being. There is a tremendous feeling of freedom. You cannot be authentically happy unless you are free. Happiness and freedom are like brother and sister.

Final example: You just had a new, pristine white carpet installed. Then you have friends over and now one of them is walking across the carpet carrying a cup of coffee. You know what's going to happen... you see the coffee going over the edge... as if it's happening in slow motion. The coffee is heading for... "My new carpet!" you scream in a state of emotional suffering. In that moment you are the carpet.

The point of this story: We are not taught that everything exists in two places at once. The carpet is "out there" on the floor, but it's also an image in your mind. You lose your sense of self in the image so that when the carpet is damaged, you feel damaged.

How meditation helps

It's simple, yet not simple. It's not easy to break this habit of attaching to and identifying with what I am not. The method to break it is called meditation. If you experiment with almost any kind of meditation you will understand why this habit is the cause of your stress and unhappiness. You will realize you are not the carpet or your new car that got scratched, and certainly not what you see in the bathroom mirror! These "things" just appear in your mind. The secret is to observe what's going on and stay in a watchful state, instead of losing yourself in there.

That's why the first step of any meditation practice that is worth your time is "detached observation." Observe your mental activity in a detached way, and eventually you will reclaim mastery over your mind. Remember you are not your mind, either. It's just the space where you create, and you are the creator, not the creation.

The second thing you will realize in meditation practice is the true nature of the first and second realities. Carpets are bound to be stained and cars are bound to be damaged, money is bound to come and go, and jobs are never permanent. Why argue with that? Because you've lost your sense of self, the first reality, and that's also how we create a false sense of identity known as the ego. In relation to the carpet, this state of mind may last only for a few minutes. But identifying with other "things," like people and beliefs, can spell a lifetime of struggle.

I hope this has sparked a little bit of clarity about how and why you frequently make your self unhappy. May you see for your self and be free within your self and know what it means to be truly happy from now on.

(Mike George is the author of 14 books that focus on self-awareness and personal enlightenment, including "Being Your Self." To subscribe to his irregular e-article, "Clear Thinking," go to www.relax7.com. It's free!)

How to overcome the urge to criticize



Focusing your energy on the weaknesses of another person drains your own inner power.

BK Jayanti: "In silence I remember who I am and also who you are, each of us a being of light. I see not the differences in our external forms, only an eternal connection and our unity with the One."

IN HER book, "Awaken Your Inner Wisdom," BK Jayanti recalls presenting a challenging situation to her senior. This was a case of the Difficult Personality, or DP. Even if Jayanti's case was solid—based on facts and other people's observations—the senior firmly interrupted her.

Feeling that her senior simply didn't want to hear her out, Jayanti stopped. The senior said she was aware of the facts, but that she was not about to support such a negative perspective. Instead, she challenged Jayanti to discern the lesson in the situation and DP's positive attributes.

"People should be empowered," the senior said.

Criticism comes in many forms: Sometimes we harshly judge a person from his appearance, or food preferences, or lack of finesse, and so on.

Jayanti likens criticism to poison for the mind.

"It is very easy to be critical, because all of us feel that we are intelligent and that we understand," she writes. "Yet, every time we are critical of someone, we are poisoning our relationship with that person. We are poisoning the atmosphere, too. When we poison our minds, we destroy the seed of wisdom even before it has the chance to sprout."

Clear thinking

The alternative to criticism is to separate right from wrong, while differentiating it from criticism.

"They are not the same," says Jayanti. "Discernment is very important. It's our emotional reaction and our expression of right and wrong that becomes a critical expression because the emotions of attachment and possessiveness cloud our ability to give a clear guidance."

One should develop clear thinking, wisdom and discernment without being critical—even of oneself.

"When you think of your weaknesses, it is as if you are putting a stamp on them," she notes. "They tend to grow, and your own strength—or innate wisdom—is reduced. The same thing happens when you start looking at the weaknesses of others. It doesn't matter who is right or who is wrong. Focusing your energy on the weaknesses of another drains your own inner power. If that negative vision is translated into words, you criticize or gossip—that's another huge drop in the energy of the soul."

One has to accept responsibility for one's attitudes. Jayanti recommends creating thoughts that are noble, positive and compassionate; and speaking words that inspire and help others. Together, these produce harmonious energy in the soul.

She explains: "Negativity and positivity are commonly referred to as sin and good action. Any aspect of sinful behaviour will deplete you of your spiritual power and reduce your inner wisdom."

On the other hand, actions based on caring for others, forgiveness and generosity of spirit empower the soul.

Jayanti elaborates: "Understanding this means you can see why you lost touch with your inner wisdom. It also means that you know how to regain them. When you have that inner power again within your being, you can do good things once more, existing not only for yourself as an individual but also to serve a higher purpose." responsibilities here in the world. Now I use this inner power to guide me.

Easy way to meditate



I focus on one direction—the awareness of the eternal point of light. In this awareness of I, the eternal soul, I use my thoughts to connect with the Supreme. As I make the contact with the Being of Light who is the Supreme, God's light.... God's love.. reaches me, filling me with strength.



Sitting quietly, I stop my mind from running around in many different directions.



Keeping this connection with the Supreme, I come back to the awareness of peace, love and happiness.

Darkness dissolves and only the light remains. In this awareness of my own original state of peace and light, energy grows within my being.