

## **What Does It Mean to "Be Conscious"?**

by Bill Harris, Director

The word "conscious" is used a lot in personal and spiritual growth circles. I've noticed that there are almost as many definitions of "conscious" as there are people using the word. And, quite frankly, I don't think a lot of the people using the word really know what it means, why it is so important, or how to actually live consciously.

Here is the description of being conscious that I gave in my book, *Thresholds of the Mind*:

The awake person is not at odds with the world. He is a part of it, but not attached to the outcome. Like Jesus, he is "in the world but not of it." He watches as it all goes by, but he is also a participant. He knows most people are caught in the world but unaware of being caught, so he is compassionate, and does what he can to help others with their suffering.

To him, the world is a play, and life is like playing a part in that play. He knows it's just a role, but he plays it to the hilt, and enjoys every moment. But he also realizes that the script is just a script, and from the highest perspective it doesn't matter what part has been written for him. He exerts a certain amount of control over his part, but ultimately has only limited influence over what is, because his effort is just one of an infinite number of other efforts, all with their own ends in mind.

Instead of being an automatic response mechanism, responding to the world based on unconscious rules, beliefs, fears, and limitations, he is able to consciously evaluate each situation, in the moment, and instantly and instinctively know exactly what to do and how to respond in order to gain the most resourceful outcome, both for himself and for others.

Mainly, he watches as he plays his part and marvels at the complexity, the infinite permutations, the surprises, the certainties, and the uncertainties. He is calm most of the time, but sometimes his part requires him to be upset or to have some other emotion or reaction. That is being human. But whatever his mood, there is an underlying peace of mind, an underlying, effortless happiness.

You can be this way, too. It doesn't happen overnight, but it can happen. Using the Centerpointe program isn't the only way it can happen, but it's a very good and very fast way.

In the book, this description is given in a larger context that makes it easier (I think) to understand exactly what I mean, so I want to supply some of that context here. In addition, as I'm always thinking about these concepts and principles, and trying to come up with better ways to communicate them to you, I'll add some other comments that will, hopefully, shed further light on this very important concept and how to apply it to your life.

Let's start by looking at what "being conscious" does NOT mean. First of all (and I hate to even have to say this, but some people misunderstand, so I have to mention this), I'm not talking about the difference between sleeping and waking states. Second, being conscious does not mean being anti-war, or helping the poor, and saving the rain forest (though a conscious person might be or do any or all of these things--but then again, they might not).

It also doesn't mean that you're "beyond," or in some way not subject to, experiencing normal human emotions, such as anger, fear, being down, and so on. And, it doesn't mean that you're immune to getting sick, or that you can't die some dread disease (there are many instances of famous saints who die of heart disease or cancer or other terminal illnesses). It also doesn't mean you'll magically be prosperous, or powerful, or that you'll always find a parking space when you need one, or that you'll win the lottery or receive other potentially synchronous karmic goodies.

And, trust me, it doesn't mean that you don't experience the normal, everyday problems of being human. Your toilet will still overflow occasionally, your car may break down, the power may go off, the cable company might still screw up your bill and then blame you, your dog may roll in something that smells terrible...and on and on. Such is life.

On the other hand, by being conscious, you certainly have a greater ability to influence all of these outer--and, to an even greater degree--inner circumstances in your life. But since six billion other people are also doing their best to gain the outcomes they want, which often will conflict with what you want, and because many non-human natural forces are also occurring (think hurricanes, for instance, or just everyday weather, for that matter), you do not have total control over what happens around you.

Being conscious also does not necessarily mean you are in constant experiential and ecstatic union with God or whatever other heavenly entities happen to be your personal favorites.

Despite what you may have read in spiritual books, being conscious is not some fairy tale where you get everything you want and all your problems are solved. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but that's just the way it is.

However, in my opinion, being conscious is, in many ways, better than all of these things.

So, then, what IS "being conscious"? In my opinion, one of the most important distinctions between being conscious and being unconscious is that the UNconscious person is creating whatever happens in their life, whether it is an inner experience or an outer result, automatically and unconsciously...while the conscious person is in total control of what their mind does to create their life and circumstances.

As you know if you've been reading these articles for a while, each person has what I call an Internal Map of Reality. It is important that you realize that this map of reality generates all your internal experience of life, and has a huge effect (though not total

control) over your external circumstances. You might say that your internal map of reality is the software that generates your life.

A number of things combine and interact to make up your internal map of reality: beliefs, values, decisions, strategies, the language you speak, the ways you perceive and sort incoming information, the way you store and remember information, and a few other things. I have written extensively about each of these, so I won't go into any of the details here, but you can find those articles in the archives of the newsletter section of our web site (see particularly those written since mid 2001):

[www.centerpointe.com/news/archives.cfm](http://www.centerpointe.com/news/archives.cfm)

The important thing is that all of these different aspects of this internal map of reality combine to create your life. In the unconscious person (which is almost everyone), the results created seem as if they just happen, because the unconscious person does not see the creative part of the process. They do not see the link between these various parts of the internal map and the results they create.

The conscious person, on the other hand, DOES see this creative process. She sees the entire process of how a certain belief, for instance, attracts the people and events that make it come true, or how the belief leads to distortions in perception that make it at least appear to be true, even if it isn't.

If you are unconscious, it appears that life is just happening, and, as a result you tend to feel like a victim, especially in situations where what happens is unpleasant. A victim is someone who 1) feels as if they have little or no control over what is happening, 2) thinks that whatever is happening is coming from something outside of themselves, and 3) experiences whatever is happening as unpleasant. This puts the unconscious person in the position of (seemingly) not being able to do anything about what is happening. Since what happens seems to come from something outside of themselves, they think they can only change things by changing the (supposed) outside source--something that is usually very difficult to do (have you ever tried to get your husband or wife to change something about themselves?).

Now, let's look at what happens to the conscious person when they experience an unpleasant result. The conscious person, because they see the entire chain of events that generated the result, knows that it originated from something in them--not from something external--despite any external appearance to the contrary.

Knowing this, and having watched the actual creative process from start to finish, they find it very difficult to continue to create something that does not serve them. A person can only continue to create results that do not serve them, whether internal or external, if they are blind to how the results are created--that is, if they are creating them unconsciously.

So it comes down to this: the unconscious person is pretty much an automatic response mechanism, whereas the conscious person creates things they way they want them (either

that, or they allow them to be created in whatever way they happen to be created, but don't care what the result is). In fact, they have to create them in a way that is resourceful, because they cannot do otherwise AND be conscious. You just cannot create unresourceful results while you are consciously seeing yourself create them.

This means that "being conscious" is NOT the same as cognitively knowing that you do something. You may know very well that you continue to be attracted to people who mistreat you, or that you continually get angry when someone disagrees with you, or that you tend to get involved in business deals that never turn out (or whatever). Most people who've been in personal growth a while could write a book on their "stuff." Knowing about your stuff is not the same as being conscious. So what is the difference? When you are conscious, you are WATCHING the creative process, all the time--which is different than just knowing that you do it (you could know that you create something, but not watch the process, but you can't watch the process without knowing that you create the result).

So how can you do this watching? Doesn't watching take attention and effort, and if you're watching the creative process generated by your internal map of reality (thousands of examples of which are going on at any given moment), won't that keep you from attending to whatever else you're doing?

You would think so, but that's not the case. Conscious awareness is not the same as noticing, or really even the same as paying attention to something (now I'm really confusing you, aren't I?). The kind of conscious awareness I'm talking about is effortless, and can go on in the background while your mind carries out whatever other cognitive duties it needs to perform. It is a kind of meta-awareness that rides along above it all, just watching. And, it can handle watching an infinitely complex matrix of creations, all at the same time.

So here's the \$64,000 question:

How do you develop this kind of conscious awareness? Here are three ways: 1) meditate, especially with Holosync (MUCH faster and easier), 2) go through every part of your internal map of reality and examine it, piece by piece (in other words, look at all your beliefs and determine what results they create and how they are created, look at all your values and determine what results they create and how they are created, etc., etc.), and 3) relentlessly practice watching your feelings and thoughts and internal and external results until you begin to do it automatically.

Of these three, meditation is by far the most powerful. Meditating AND doing the other two is the fastest method. This is, in fact, what I'm trying to help you do: first, get you to use Holosync to make you more consciously aware. Then, in the support materials, including these articles in Mind Chatter, help you to examine your current internal map of reality. Finally, help you learn how to be the witness.

People have a way of trying to make the process of becoming increasingly conscious much more difficult, and more exotic, than it really is. They think there must be some secret formula that, if they can only discover it, will make it all clear to them. In actual fact, the whole thing is super-simple. It just seems complicated and difficult, until you get it--kind of like riding a bike seemed hard until you did it, and then it seemed easy and you did it without having to think about it at all.

So keep listening to those Holosync soundtracks (or begin, if you haven't done so yet!), keep exploring your internal map of reality (I'm preparing some great new tools that will help you do so), and keep practicing watching your thoughts, your feelings, and your results.

Though it may not seem so now, if you do these things, you will get it, I promise. If you feel stuck, and you are a Centerpointe program participant, call the Telephone Hotline and get some help. Consider attending a Centerpointe retreat (which you can do even if you are not in the program), which is guaranteed to give you a huge boost in your progress.

Once you do get it, everything in your life will come together. Your problems won't disappear, but when there are problems, you know just what to do, you'll be unattached to the outcome in any case, and you will not suffer over them, no matter what happens--unless for some reason you choose to create it that way.

It's the only way to live, and I highly recommend it.

Be well.

Bill Harris, Director

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