

## Witnessing Consciousness

For most people, consciousness is synonymous with awareness. "I became conscious of that" means I became aware of that, I noticed it, I saw it. When we direct consciousness toward an object or thought, we become more aware of it.

Consciousness is a palpable energy. All the spiritual and healing traditions that study the life energy that flows through and animates us know this. This life energy is variously called chi (as in tai chi, chi kung and acupuncture), ki (as in the Japanese martial arts such as aikido), the holy spirit (in Christianity) and prana (in the Hindu and yogic traditions). In Western complementary medicine, it is now referred to as "subtle energy."

To better understand this energetic quality of consciousness, try this exercise:

1. let your body relax where you are... close your eyes...
2. now bring your awareness to the sensations of your left eye... stay there for 10 seconds.
3. Now shift your awareness to the sensations of your right eye... stay there for 10 seconds.

What happens when you brought your awareness/consciousness to your left eye? There was a change. Perhaps it suddenly felt bigger or heavier or lighter – it doesn't matter. Moving your consciousness into it made it feel different.

Witnessing the mind and body is a basic skill in all meditative traditions. It is referred to variously as mindfulness, self-observation, non-judging awareness, witness consciousness and silence. In Western psychology it is referred to as strengthening the observing ego. It is a way of strengthening the observing part of your mind that can bring the following benefits:

Physically, it calms your body.

Psychologically, it strengthens your ability to be aware.

Spiritually, it helps your normal mental patterns to quiet down and allows your awareness to notice the subtler higher mental states, such as the wisdom mind.

You can do this sitting or lying down, but if you do it in bed, the chances are good that you will fall asleep. If sleeping is a problem, you should definitely add this exercises to your nightly routine for sleep.

Read the instructions through, and then try the steps.

1. Bring awareness to your feet... now begin to bring awareness to your left leg... now begin to bring awareness to your right leg... now begin to bring awareness to your pelvis... now bring awareness to the sensations of your stomach... and the middle of your chest and now shift to the left a little and begin to meditate on your heart... and now begin to bring awareness from your heart to your throat.. mouth... left eye...

2.

Did you notice the feeling of the awareness leaving your left eye and entering the right? When we shift awareness, you can feel it.

2. Now the space between your eyebrows and move awareness up to the middle of your forehead, meditating on the sensations at the middle of your forehead... and now begin to bring awareness to the top of your head, noticing the sensations up there...
3. Now at your own pace, slowly begin to guide awareness downward from the top of your head, guiding it slowly, gently, distributing it throughout your entire self... take your time.. notice how you are feeling right now.

What was witnessing like for you? Did you notice your breathing slowed down? Did you feel heavier or lighter or warmer? These would all be signs that you entered a deeply relaxed state.

Did your awareness at some point not notice anything at all even though you were still awake and present? In some cases, the experience is actually one of timelessness, a very pleasant, freeing sensation. These changes in your perception of time indicate that for a while your mind was actually liberated from its usual busyness.