

King Unconscious Mind

Why King Unconscious Mind? Isn't our mind the boss and decides on our actions? Actually, in many daily situations this is not the case. Perhaps you can find yourself in one or more of the following scenarios:

- Somebody is teasing or even bothering you and you would like to give a witty reply. Unfortunately, nothing suitable comes up to your mind - a little later, as soon as the situation has passed, you could give the perfect reply within instants.
- You keep postponing unpleasant tasks.
- Actually, you are a person who likes structure and organisation, but somehow you always manage to have a mess in your documents or your office.
- Your opinion differs, however you prefer being quite rather than making your own statement. At the same time you feel bad about it and wish you had the courage to show your own colours.
- You had promised yourself that you would not blow up again in certain situations but it keeps happening – with all negative impacts for your personal environment and yourself.
- You know it is not right or it is not good for yourself, but you continue doing it. This might be the potato chips or sweets when you are on a diet, the cigarette at each opportunity, a third glass of wine in the evening the range is wide.
- You keep experiencing the same situations and you do not know why. You cannot detect a mistake in your own behaviour, but there has to be a connection.
- You are scared of flying, entering a tunnel, or crossing an open square.

There might be many more bullets to this list.

The bad piece of news is:

Often wilful decisions to change our behaviour do not help in such situations.

The good pieces of news are:

- We should not feel guilty as past experiences usually have conditioned our behaviour. In most of the cases these are connected to our childhood or even to a prenatal phase. Often we are not aware of these experiences or we would not link them to our behaviour. Our subconscious mind, however, remembers them and affects us accordingly.
- By mental training, we may access the enormous repository of our subconscious mind and relieve blockages.
- Our subconscious mind does not only store negative experiences but also positive ones which may be recalled and strengthened to enable us to reach our aims.

Why is our subconscious mind so powerful that it can continuously annul our will at our disadvantage (the dominance of the subconscious mind with respect to the rationality is assumed to be 95% - S. Freud's iceberg model was still based on the assumption of 80%)? First we have to realise that by our five senses our subconscious mind receives much more input per second than our reason. The subconscious stores most of this input and is therefore an enormous repository of knowledge. Images, emotions, symbols, and metaphors are the language of the subconscious. Occasionally, we have access to this intuitive knowledge in the form of an inspiration, an idea, an instinct, a flash of wit, or a sudden conclusion.

A small excursion into neuroscience helps to understand the coherences: The human brain consists of the great brain, the inter brain, and the hind brain. The great brain developed only in the past millenniums and takes care of the rationality i.e. of logical reasoning and speech. The smaller inter brain had developed before the great brain and is in charge of emotions and the assessment of threats. The even smaller hind brain, the so-called reptilian brain, controls life-sustaining functions such as the respiration and the activity of the heart.

The great brain stores a large quantity of information, nevertheless, at maximum only 1-2% of the information input directly arrives at the great brain. At first, most of the information input from our senses reaches the hind brain (mainly the senses of feeling and hearing) and the inter brain (mainly the senses of seeing, tasting, and smelling). On the basis of their memories stored, the inter brain and the hind brain react rather quickly by releasing hormones which is connected to our history of development (e.g. decision on fight or flight). In the case of situations when we keep reacting in the same way although we know it is not right, our inter brain is active. Mental training uses this knowledge. If you want to change your inner programmes, you can communicate with your inter brain e.g. by images, movement, and rituals. By this you can weaken the negative impulses of the inter brain and hind brain and considerably strengthen the function of the great brain at the same time.

One part of the inter brain, the amygdala (cerebellar tonsil), controls the assessment if a situation is threatening. If permanently exposed to stress, people assess situations more often as threatening and react accordingly. Then the amygdala appears to be inflamed and can be increased in size. If this is the case, the person continuously feels threatened or fears that something might go wrong. This can lead to depression, burnout, or unreasonably aggressive behaviour.

TIP:

Studies have shown that the following basic perception exercise may considerably reduce the size of an increased amygdala already after eight weeks, even if the stress level remains the same. The attitude of life becomes more positive and the perception of being in a painful situation decreases:

- Take an imaginary tour through your body for about 10-30 minutes per day on five days a week – just go through your body mentally and perceive everything that shows (body scan – part of the MBSR method – Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction). This might be a feeling of pressure on your head, an increased heart rate, a feeling of restlessness in your fingers, cold feet etc. Observe all thoughts, emotions and feelings that come up with favour and just accept them the way they are. Turn this exercise into a ritual e.g. after waking up in the morning, in the lunch break or after the office hours in the evening.

By this exercise you may considerably increase your subjective well-being, reduce the physical effects of stress on your body and at the same time strengthen the area in your great brain which is controlling body perceptions, the insular cortex, which might bring other advantages as well.

I wish you a relaxing experience!

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