

The Four Aspects of the Mind Continued

In the first handout on this fascinating subject we laid out the anatomy of the mind and summarised the roles of each of its four aspects.

In this follow-up document we are focusing on the relationships between these four aspects and by understanding how the mind relates to itself we can begin to become masters of our inner world.

The unconscious mind

As described in part one, the unconscious mind is the library where everything ever thought, felt and experienced is stored. It is vast and incredibly powerful. If we think of consciousness as an iceberg, the unconscious mind is the deepest point and in terms of influence and power, it contains somewhere between 40% and 50% of the overall capacity of the mind - although this figure can vary significantly according to one's experiences and personal evolution. In other words, this percentage could be much bigger, such as 60% to 70%, leaving one largely dominated by one's beliefs and drivers - unaware that the unconscious mind is essentially running the show.

The most accurate description of the unconscious mind's role and how it relates to the other three aspects is that of protector. This is its primary function. It is always using the evidence of the data it accrues to make what it 'believes' to be the best decisions and choices in the name of protection. This evidential characteristic of the unconscious mind means it is not persuaded by our hopes, intentions and dreams. It only believes what has been previously proven. It trusts nothing else because it retains substantial evidence of the promises and the pledges we have broken. Only actions and results that have been repeatedly played out make any sense to the unconscious mind. The whole culture of the unconscious mind is built on protecting those paradigms where promises have been kept. These 'promises' can either be positive or negative.

The way the unconscious mind relates to the rest of the mind is quite simple. Unless new data can persuade it to change course, it simply will not deviate. The unconscious mind is not fickle or gullible, and it will not be sweet-talked into taking a path it's not convinced is true and certain. There is however an unfortunate aspect to this characteristic; it often holds onto things long after they stop being useful. This is because the unconscious mind is simply 'data-matching'. It's not making value judgements - it is, after all, unconscious. The merit of the experiences coming in is not its primary concern - it's how they relate to the existing patterns.

The beliefs that are constructed in the unconscious mind drive all of human behaviour, feeding up their influence via the subconscious mind into the preconscious and conscious minds. It should be said for accuracy that this is a dual carriageway, so what is imbibed via the conscious mind will cascade down through the preconscious and subconscious minds too, eventually becoming part of the unconscious terrain.

The primary language of the unconscious mind is formed from our deep-seated beliefs and the subsequent drivers, which emerge from them. The best way to communicate

with this realm is through repetition. Any activity that generates an obsession will find it has influence on the unconscious mind – whether it is healthy or unhealthy but since we are trying to change the internal dialogue, then of course we are concerned with healthy obsessions.

Activities that take the mind into trance offer a valuable inroad into the unconscious maze. Storytelling, metaphor, symbolism and imagery are also precious currency, which will help strike up a conversation at this level.

For us at Reach the primary thrust of personal development is to re-educate the unconscious mind so it is aligned to our ambitions and dreams.

The subconscious mind

The role of the subconscious mind in this intimate dynamic is best summarised as the mediator. It's in this arena of consciousness where an intimate dialogue between the unconscious mind and the conscious states takes place. The subconscious mind carries a similar level of influence/power as the unconscious mind – about 40%. However, if the unconscious mind has been left to dominate the inner mindscape then the subconscious mind can find its role is significantly diminished as the unconscious mind then flexes its superior power in such a way that the subconscious mind's role of mediator is overshadowed and diminished.

You can see from the accompanying diagram that the primary drivers and beliefs which reside predominantly in the unconscious mind do 'overlap' into the subconscious arena and it's those drivers that influence our patterns, habits and predispositions.

Going back to our analogy of the iceberg, the subconscious mind is equally entirely submerged occupying the layer immediately above the unconscious mind. Its intimate relationship with the unconscious mind is the primary dynamic driving all human behaviour. But it's this critical role of being the mediator that we really need to understand.

If we are to carve out a new road of fortune, one that will serve us better in every regard we need the mediator to make the necessary representations to the unconscious mind. Sincerity is the key to the success of this conversation. It is the one with a sincere heart that can galvanise the powerhouse of the subconscious mind, which will then make a passionate plea to the unconscious mind for positive change.

This brings us to the importance of the preconscious mind in the establishment of a new contract, which will bring the paradigm shift that is needed if we are indeed to sit on that seat of self-respect and self-realisation.

Positive change depends on the preconscious mind being able to secure the services of the subconscious mind. Here we see again that it's the art of conversation that is driving the relationships between the different aspects, and when that conversation breaks down, we lose our way.

The primary language of the subconscious mind is shaped by habits and patterns and so if we are to communicate effectively with this aspect, as with the unconscious mind we will find that repetition, metaphor, storytelling, symbolism and imagery are wonderful media for achieving this.

The preconscious mind

This aspect of the mind is best described as the intuitive. It is the preconscious that is able to see beyond logic and the senses. Its primary interest is with the metaphysical because it realises this is where the magic happens - and being a slave exclusively to the conscious aspects of reality serves to deceive us. It 'knows' there is much more to the human story than what we can 'see'.

Other labels that have been used in different contexts to describe the preconscious mind include: sixth sense, third eye and ESP. They describe in different ways our ability to understand what is beyond the material world.

The preconscious mind unfortunately has for so many become redundant. The spiritual and the metaphysical aspects of reality are increasingly viewed with disinterest and scepticism. Although there appears to be a mini revolution surrounding topics like mindfulness and meditation, the truth remains that our overall interest in the deeper philosophical issues has waned as modernity has increasingly consumed our hearts and minds, with the growth in technology, countless 'quick fixes' and an expectation that our insatiable needs should be met now!

So it's not a surprise that the 15% to 20% of influence the preconscious mind is capable of having when everything is balanced as it should be, can quite easily be reduced by two thirds - in some cases the preconscious mind is virtually non-existent as the unconscious dominates the inner terrain, reducing the talents and capabilities of both the subconscious and preconscious minds.

When the preconscious mind is playing out its unique role, acting as the representative between the conscious aspects of the mind and the subconscious and unconscious minds, it seeks to persuade the subconscious that the new tendencies and traits being developed consciously are worthy of being considered as 'game changers'.

In our work with clients it is primarily the preconscious mind that we are seeking to resurrect and develop. In our iceberg analogy, the preconscious mind is partly submerged and partly emerged. When in balance, that's about a 50:50 split. It is this unique role of straddling the conscious and unconscious areas of the mind that is critical for the negotiations that need to take place in order to bring about sustainable change.

All the personal development activities we promote help to develop the preconscious aspect. These activities help to develop our intuitive propensities, offering insight and the language needed to secure the subconscious mind's support.

The primary language of the preconscious mind is shaped by metaphysical concepts/ideology and deep-seated feelings – these are heartfelt, seemingly intangible murmurings emerging from the core. This is why introspective activities such as meditation, yoga nidra, conscious breathing, creative visualisation, mindfulness and prayer are all useful vehicles for communicating at this level.

The conscious mind

The conscious mind's primary role is best described as the interface. It's the meeting point between the external environment and the internal environment. It's where whatever transactions have taken place between the other three aspects percolate to the surface, shaping and influencing how we are in the world. Our way of being is visible through our moods, attitudes and behaviours. These, whether we know it or not, are symptomatic of the powerful relationships and politics that lie primarily below the surface, that bit of the iceberg that is not visible to the eye – somewhere around 80% to 90%.

The conscious mind is the least influential aspect at around 5% to 10% of influence/power. However, if the unconscious mind comes to dominate what's below the surface, the preconscious mind becomes redundant, thus allowing the conscious mind to double in size. This is not a good thing because it tends to mean that logic is dominating our behaviour and the emotional, subtler aspects that are of equal importance are largely inactive. It also means in these cases that we are much more likely to be wedded to dogma, caught up in the web of our own experience, perceptions and opinions. This is a dangerous position to operate from because we are unlikely to be listening and are less open to reason.

The primary role of the conscious mind, as it is 'front of house', is to receive data, information and experiences from the outside world and allow them to be vetted and sieved through our internal filters and respond accordingly.

Of course the conscious mind is important in its own right and so its take on reality should also be respected, but when it is viewed in isolation, then a lot of reality is missed and misconstrued. It is important that the conscious mind is not overrun by the environmental factors. To that end, engaging in activities that slow us down, encouraging us to ponder and reflect enables what is happening at the interface to shape, educate and inspire us in the right ways – otherwise we simply become a set of reactions, rather than developing the art of being able to respond.

If we were operating optimally, although the conscious mind is the first point of entry, the preconscious mind would also be in attendance as the countless environmental messages pour in through our senses. This would lead to the best decisions and choices before the subconscious and unconscious minds step in to play their roles. It is here that we can achieve the momentum for positive change. If we nurture and cultivate positive activities, then the representations made by the preconscious and subsequently subconscious minds, are much more likely to succeed.

The primary language shaping the conscious mind is thoughts, ideas and feelings. It is much more likely to be persuaded by conversation, intellectual concepts, relationships and their impact on one's self image and self-worth. Social conditioning has a big part to play in how the conscious mind receives or repels information.

Summary

Hopefully this overview will have helped you to understand the dialogue that is always taking place between the mind and its environment. There is a constant ebb and flow – messages making their way down from the conscious mind and in the opposite direction powerful urges, impulses and impressions emerging from the unconscious and subconscious minds which make their way to the surface. The conversation taking place between the internal and external environment is arguably the most important conversation on earth and if we are not aware of it and so are not consciously partaking in that conversation, we become victims of our circumstances.

We have seen that the conscious mind makes representations to the preconscious mind when seeking to undertake a new positive path and the preconscious mind when stimulated by introspective practices and positive pastimes seeks to persuade the subconscious mind - again through the art of conversation. At this point repetition, storytelling, metaphor, symbolism and invocation all become part of this dialogue.

If the subconscious mind is persuaded by the preconscious mind's representations it will go enthusiastically to negotiate with the unconscious mind for a new internal order and where there is sufficient evidence, it is the subconscious mind that has the ability and power to move the unconscious mind away from protecting the old paradigm and into protecting the new.

This is not an easy undertaking, because the unconscious mind only trusts and believes what has been laid down in action. This is why practice, patience and perseverance are most influential in bringing about lasting change. Intention and fine words carry no weight at this level, as the subconscious needs to provide evidence of change. Green shoots of promise need to be visible. Only then will the unconscious mind listen and become open to the new possibilities.

This is a subject that has many more layers, but if we can exercise in our own lives what has been proposed here we can make incredible changes. The thing that is most clear is that we have to become part of this conversation. There's no lasting change without the right communication and the whole of The Reach Approach is about having an informed dialogue with one's self, each other and the planet.

We hope this will lay the foundation for you to enhance your internal dialogue, which in turn will make all the conversations you have going forward richer and more fulfilling.