

Relax — Transform in Spirit *and the Three Levels of Consciousness*

In some religious and spiritual traditions, the goal of the seeker is to become a vessel through which spiritual energy can travel. The individual becomes an open channel and allows the energy or consciousness of spirit to direct his or her actions. From a more encompassing perspective, channeling spiritual energy has two benefits. First, it evolves the individual. Second, it contributes to both the spiritual and physical evolution of the species. As that energy enters the material plane, it blesses the Earth.

To move closer to this state of consciousness, then, we must address the elements that block the energetic flow of spirit. For the colorful but dark emotions like anger or jealousy, we need to move through them as gracefully as possible. Spiritual energy is powerful but peaceful and flows best when we are at ease.

These blocks live in our physical, mental, and emotional bodies, and in our soul. The mental body usually develops devolutionary patterns from interacting with society; the physical and emotional bodies inherit blockages at birth. Through time, the mental and emotional bodies work together and form a psychological entity that we call the ego. At its worst, the ego grows into a web of negative, emotionally backed beliefs. They are resistant to change. The physical body responds to these beliefs by tightening muscles, distorting the posture, engraving mask-like expressions into the face, raising blood pressure, and much more. “Past life” issues also may exist at the soul level. For those interested in spiritual evolution, the question is then, “How do I address these blocks?”

The main problem is that these barriers are difficult to detect. They are unconscious reactions and, if we are unaware of them, we can’t change them. One way to notice them is by watching for a negative response. That tells us that a block is operating. If we become tense, angry, worried, or feel possessed by a conviction, then that’s a clue. A light should flash in the brain, reminding us that we may be out of touch with spirit. So the first step is to become conscious of our physical and psychological states as they arise.

Each religious and spiritual discipline has practices that address these obstacles, and many are effective. Some address the physical desire for security or sex. Some focus on “right thinking” or mastering the emotions, while a few esoteric schools recommend working with the astral body (soul). I’ll share a simple technique that addresses some of these areas. It has helped me become more peaceful, release blocks, deal more adequately with stressful situations, and gain insight into myself.

This technique, which I call “Relax and Transform” (R&T), is useful in two ways. The first way is for relaxing, clearing blocks, and gaining insight into life. I practice it in the morning before getting out of bed and at night before falling asleep. Like that, I keep in shape psychologically. The second way is that it helps me deal more effectively with difficult situations during the day.

The R&T Technique

R&T is simple. Here’s how it works. Afterward, I’ll explain each step.

To begin, say, “I will concentrate on the procedure.” The intent here is to focus the mind only on the technique. Once focused, go through these five steps:

1. “I relax my body.”
2. “I relax my heart.”
3. “I relax my emotions.”
4. “I relax my mind.”
5. “I relax my soul.”

Step 1. There are many ways to relax the body. Use whatever method works best for you. I start by focusing my attention on my feet and say, “I release all tension in my feet: my skin, muscles, and bones.” I then do my ankles, then calves — all the way up to the top of my head. My shoulders, neck, jaw, and eyes, are places where I am most often tense, so I focus especially on them. When I’m done, I say, “I relax my whole body.” Then I say, “I fill my body with the light of my spirit.”

Note: In stressful situations, chances are you cannot complete the relaxation process in this step-by-step fashion. However, if you have practiced enough, then in those situations you can say, “I relax my body.” The whole relaxation process can cascade through your body in a moment. Being relaxed allows you to deal more consciously with the situation.

Step 2. Once you have relaxed the body, focus your attention on the heart. If you have relaxed sufficiently, you can tune into it, and maybe you can feel it beating. Say, “I relax my heart.” Relax it. Release all tension and ill feelings. We are not treating the heart strictly as a muscle, but as the seat of divine love as well. Release all negativity and “evil,” and fill it with the light of your spirit. Then, move to the emotional body.

Step 3. The primary physical anchor of the emotional body is in the brain — the amygdala. Located above the tip of the spine, the amygdala is an almond-shaped neuro structure. It produces and responds to nonverbal signs of anger, avoidance, defensiveness, and fear. As a primeval arousal center originating in early fishes, it is central to the expression of negative emotions.⁽¹⁾ Focus there and relax it. Say, “I relax my emotions.” Release any heaviness you may feel, and then fill the area with the bright light of spirit.

Step 4. Next, relax the mental body. Let go of all stray thoughts. Let your mind be in peace. Use whatever mental relaxation method works for you. I do this: I close my eyes and focus my attention on the Third Eye (located an inch above the point between the eyebrows). When I inhale — slowly and deeply — I think the word, “Inhale.” When I slowly exhale, I think “Exhale.” Before I inhale again, I think, “I relax my mind ... I relax my mind ... I relax my mind....” I repeat this cycle for 5 to 10 minutes.

The goal is to keep the mind focused only on those words. This is *single-mindedness*, which means that no other thought-streams are running simultaneously beneath (or over) those words. When I’m done, I say, “I fill my mind with the light of my spirit.”

Being Flexible

The Dalai Lama recommends training the mind to think differently. If the mind is constantly caught in habitual thought, how can it change? By calming the mind, we can create new thought patterns. During the day, observe your thoughts. If thinking a certain way is causing you to suffer or worry, try to view the situation differently. You don’t have to follow a “tried and true” idea all the way to its expected conclusion. In the middle, think, “I don’t have to continue like this.” Invent a more evolutionary ending. Change the story. Remember that not every thought is true or beneficial. You can *always* find another angle from which to see something, and the new way may be more evolutionary than the old.

Brain scientists have not only confirmed this idea about changing one’s thought patterns, but are expanding on it as well. They have found that using our mind like that can change the patterning of our brain. For example, neuroscientist Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin had Buddhist monks meditate inside his functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) tube. He measured their brain activity while they practiced the Buddhist meditation technique “the generation of pure compassion.” He concluded that quieting the mind raises the baseline contentment level. In other words, you can train your mind so that it’s easier to be happy.⁽²⁾

There’s a Zen story about a Western professor who visits a Zen master in Japan. The two spend some time walking and sharing stories in the temple garden and then sit to take some tea. The Zen master begins pouring the drink into the professor’s cup, but keeps pouring until the tea overflows and spills into the saucer. Surprised, the professor asks, “What are you doing!” The master replies, “If your mind is already full, then there’s no room for anything else.”

Step 5. Relax the soul. Most people don’t consider this. However, if we consider the possibility that the material and astral planes interact, then why not? While the soul knows more about the big picture of life than our physical organism, it is still not perfect. So we do what we can to influence it, though it may only have a minimal effect. We can try relaxing it by sending out the “Relax” command through each chakra, the points where the soul and body interact most intimately. Starting with the Root Chakra, say, “I relax my soul,” and send it into that area, relaxing it. Do that with each of the seven major chakras, ending with Crown. When done, say, “I fill my soul with the light of spirit.”

A note: This model presumes that in our wholeness, we are multidimensional beings. We are a physical body, an astral body (soul), and an even higher-dimensional body, a spirit — a point of conscious light. The idea of being a “multi-

dimensional being” alienates some people. However, having a soul makes you multidimensional. Taken to the ultimate level, everyone shares a highest-dimensional identity — God. However, that topic is beyond the scope of this article.

Once you have completed the five steps, you should feel profoundly relaxed. You can add more, though, by repeating, “I fill my body, mind, heart, emotions, and soul with the light of spirit.” Feel spirit enter each place as you say it. With practice, you can run through the process in minutes, even when you’re in public. To break identification with these bodies, you can say, “I relax the body; I relax the heart....” Rather than “I relax *my* body; I relax *my* heart.”

Changing behavioral patterns and filling yourself with the light of spirit can disorient you after a while. You might need more rest, or you could become melancholy as elements of the “old self” pass away. Psychological and spiritual change can affect the body, mind, and emotions.

Fate - Free Will - Divine Direction

As we have been discussing the habitual side of our personality, we can examine this in relation to fate and free will. If we are behaving habitually, then we are not exercising free will. We are living our fate. However, if we can catch ourselves in the act, we can then decide what to do next. We don’t have to continue reacting. This breaks the pattern. Once we have mastered many of our unconscious (fated) reactions, we will have reached the consciousness state. After living there awhile, we can advance to the next level. We do this by surrendering our free will and letting spirit direct our lives. This is *choosing Divine Direction* and represents the state of super-consciousness.

Not everyone is comfortable with the idea of surrendering. They agree that using free will is better than having unconscious programs control us. They understand too that it’s easy to mistake an unconscious program for free will. However, they would prefer to “be in control” rather than let spirit — a largely unknown entity — run their life. They equate surrendering with the loss of freedom and personal power. Maybe they are right. After all, controlling one’s environment is a prime directive of human beings. It may, though, be part a paradox: When spirit directs you, you are freer and stronger. This may sound like Orwellian Doublespeak (“War is peace”), but it is not. Besides, you use free will to choose that path.

Saints, gurus, avatars, and human-deities are examples of people living in the state of Divine Direction. Perhaps they are exceptions to the human race, but more likely they represent the evolutionary edge of what we as a race can be. These people usually do not channel divine energy constantly (although some say avatars do). They are more like a light bulb that turns on and off. When the light is on, spirit is directing them. In the mystical sense, when they are like that, they are not there. Peace on earth will grow as more people channel their spirit.

Three State of Consciousness and Their Relationship to Society

We have just reviewed three states of human consciousness. They are the subconscious (comma, sleep, habitual behavior), the conscious (making conscious decisions), and the super-conscious (channeling spirit). They represent fate, free will, and Divine Direction, respectively. Let’s look at how these states affect society.

Unconscious (or Subconscious) Societies

For most of recorded history, we have slept and dreamt a harsh animal reality. When society is operating at the unconscious level, that’s the reality it produces. Most cultures today reflect this condition. We organize ourselves in top-down control systems. Our religious, political, and socioeconomic structures are like that. Look at the popes, kings, capitalism, communism, fascism, class, and caste — all are symptoms of Empires large and small. In the reality of Empire, a minority rules the majority. The elite usurps the “non-elite’s” labor and resources, usually through the force of law or perhaps through tradition (religious or cultural). If that fails, they resort to force of arms.

Keywords for this basic animal reality include: instinct (and all positive associations); reactionary; fearful; enemy consciousness; thoughtlessness; unreasonable; dominated by emotion; superstitious; rigid; egocentric; closed; controlling; secretive; denying.

Conscious Societies

As the centuries unfolded, we grew in consciousness and began seeking justice for all. The spark of democracy — conscious organization — kindled the hope that everyone could have a say in his or her social destiny. Some cultures, which were operating at a higher level of awareness, began experimenting with new forms of social organization. They laid the groundwork for the first true democracies. Instead of enforced top-down rule, we began to realize that

cooperative, bottom-up agreement was a more beneficial choice. In addition, the spiritual evolution of the race would benefit as well, although that probably wasn't a motive in their decision to pursue democracy. Democracies show compassion for everyone, even killers. They do, however, keep them off the streets and especially out of office. No one should be free to harm others, either personally or through war.

You can tell the direction of a country by what it values more: peace and justice or aggression and war. The good news is that the *governments* promote the war mentality. Most citizens oppose it and have the most to lose by participating. This shows that humanity is awakening. We realize that the cost of war is loss of life and resources. The rewards, if any, go only to a few — and that few don't fight in them. The populous goes along with war only when the leaders scare them into it. They play on their lower animal instincts.

Today, the push towards true democracy is making gains in some regions, particularly in South American. Unfortunately, it is declining in others. The US, Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Japan, Israel, Sudan, and others are examples of this disturbing, devolutionary trend. These governments practice “unconscious democracy,” which is to say, Empire varnished with the rhetoric of democracy.

Keywords for the conscious state include cooperation; flexibility; willingness to compromise; openness; socially conscious; allowing; justice; creative; encouragement; support; sharing.

Divine Direction (or Super-conscious) Societies

Some envision an even higher form of democratic organization, one in which we create social forms through the inspiration of spirit. When the majority operates from the state of Divine Direction, it produces Heaven on Earth. This happens through the intervention of spirit. This doesn't mean that a deity will arrive in physical form. Rather, Heaven on Earth could emerge energetically through divine attitudes, behaviors, and through the creation of quality social systems. These systems would reflect and nourish love, caring, and creativeness.

Divine Direction, when applied to a society, is a state of group meta-consciousness. Jung referred to the collective unconscious, which is similar to meta-consciousness (in its universality) except that meta-consciousness flows freely *above* consciousness, rather than below. Operating at that level, humanity behaves as one coordinated being.

Star Trek TNG offered the Borg as a negative, hive-like expression of this consciousness. Every Borg member was stripped of his or her individuality so the “Collective” could function most efficiently. Meta-consciousness, though, powerfully supports the full expression and personal fulfillment of each individual while allowing society to flow organically. It's like the naturally orchestrated flight of a large flock of birds: organic, practical, sensitive, and beautiful. Although this may sound idealistic, it is still an evolutionary possibility for humanity. In any event, the arrival of either democracy or Heaven on Earth would be a qualitative leap above today's unconscious (but awakening) social organization. It would rapidly advance the physical, psychological, and spiritual condition of humanity. No modern society has reached this level. Perhaps the culture that has come closest was Tibet, before China brutally invaded and crushed its infrastructure.

Keywords for this state of consciousness include transcendental; inspired; wise; holy; flowing; visionary; universal.

Conclusion

Each body — physical, mental, emotional, and astral — has its limitations. R&T and other consciousness-raising techniques can help refine those bodies by increasing awareness of their limitations and transforming them. These limitations operate subconsciously — at the lowest level of our consciousness. Part of the work is to notice these hidden limitations. A step above the subconscious level is humanity's middle layer of awareness, the conscious level. Here we use free will and act decisively. A step above that is our highest layer of awareness, the super-conscious. Here the consciousness of spirit expresses itself through us. We have transcended most of our habitual limitations. These three layers are not isolated states, but represent the full spectrum of our capabilities. Humanity has been exercising the lower part of the spectrum for millennia, but we are evolving. We are a species in transformation.

Being relaxed and aware make it easier to manage difficult situations and with negativity in general. Acting rather than reacting usually produces superior results. The point is to move beyond the walls of ego and allow the universe to flow freely through us. When this happens, we do the right thing, because super-consciousness is directing the action. The super-conscious operates above the confusion inherent in dualism, the “this or that” system of logic that the brain uses.

In contrast, spirit uses “What it is” processing. It synthesizes the paradoxes embedded in a multidimensional universe, skillfully surfing the ever-shifting waves of duality.

No matter how we advance in consciousness, it will produce positive results. We will live a more fulfilled life and contribute to the spiritual and physical evolution of the species. In all humility, we make the world a better place.

1. http://www.wired.com/politics/security/commentary/securitymatters/2007/03/SECURITY_MATTERS0322

2. Time Magazine, January 29, 2007