

Awareness and Experience - Isaac Shapiro - September 2004.

Let us consider what we all call experience.

The entire universe, life, time, space, our family, everyone we know, is in this moment simply experience to us. We experience all the above through five senses, so I am calling all experience, sensations. These sensations are then given name and form by our ability to think and make distinctions.

Stop for a moment and simply experience the totality of your experience simply as sensations now.

Notice that what you experience, your sensations, are changing every moment and therefore cannot be described. In order to describe your experience of Now, you would have to speak volumes and as soon as you spoke, your experience would be already different.

Notice if when you experience like this, without trying to quantify or qualify your sensations, if there is a sense of boundary between you and your experience.

Notice that usually we think we can describe our experience and in this idea there is a sense of "I". Notice that in trying to describe our sensations, this activity appears to give the non-existent "I" a sense of control.

Now notice that you are aware of any experience. This awareness is already present. Whilst being this awareness, see if you can describe awareness.

You will notice that this is impossible.

Where is it?

Everywhere.

Are there any boundaries?

Nope.

What is in it?

Everything.

We have two words awareness and experience, but really they are only words. We can't describe either.

Notice if there is any boundary between awareness and experience.

We have the capacity to objectify experience and then it seems like there is an observer and what is observed. This gives a sense of "I". From this we can see that the sense of "I" is an activity and does not actually exist. As soon as the activity ceases, like in deep sleep, there is no sense of "I"

When experiencing the totality of our experience of Now, there is no possibility to objectify, hence no sense of "I".

Now notice what happens if you would like to have a different experience from the experience you are having. Firstly, is it possible? If the thought that it is possible to have a different experience that what we are having is entertained, then it looks as if "I" can do something about it.

As soon as we do not want the experience we are having, the not wanting it is also an experience and adds another layer into the tapestry of experience. Simply, what it boils down to is tightening up. Mostly we never consciously examine this tightening up and have an unconscious belief that this tightening up helps. Very often, we have resistance to this tightening up, which locks it in.

What we can notice about experience, is that it is always changing. When we don't want the experience we are having, we freeze-frame it, or objectify it, because we can't get rid of something that is changing. So in order to get rid of an experience or change it, we have to make it into something.

Check and see if what we make our experience into when we don't want it, actually exists?

The only human drama there is, is not wanting the experience/ sensations we are having now.

See if this is true!

Not wanting the experience we are having, feels uncomfortable in the body and this registers as a problem. Our thinking is the capacity to solve problems, so our thinking tries to help by projecting what the problem is and what the solution could be. When we don't want the experience we are having, I am going to call this resisting, all that happens is that our experience gets more intense or subjectively we call it worse. Now that it is worse we don't want it either, so we resist again, which makes it worse and now that it is worse we don't want it either, so we resist, ad infinitum. In a matter of moments we feel out of control, the experience we don't want is still there and we feel overwhelmed. Our experience feels bigger than us. Most people spend their entire lives feeling overwhelmed. There is a sense of too much to do and there is a constant underlying feeling of stress and the feeling that we have to run just to survive.

For most of us, the habit is to tighten up as soon as we wake, if we don't wake up already contracted, from what we have dreamt. We do this by thinking of what we have to do this day and unconsciously or consciously believing that this tightening up somehow helps us to survive.

Once we have tightened up, this registers as a problem and then our mind tries to help etc

In western psychology, what we call the subconscious mind is everything we never want to experience again and everything we think we want to experience, in other words all our unfilled desires, that we think will make us happy. All of this is our resistance to our experience NOW.

This is what our thinking produces when we have sensations we are resisting, in trying to help us by identifying what the problem is and what the solution could be.

As soon as we think we know what the problem is, in other words, what's wrong outside or inside of us, we project that what is "wrong" needs changing or fixing. We spend enormous amounts of energy trying to do the impossible. The non-existent "I" trying to change, fix or get rid of what doesn't exist.

Stop. Notice what your mind is constantly busy with.

Notice if what your mind is working with in this moment brings you peace. Could you for a moment simply let go of believing that thinking will help? Could you let go of believing that tightening up will help?

In this moment, being embodied awareness, aware in every cell, simply being, how is it? Notice if there is any boundary.

Notice that all experience is welcome. Some call this unconditional love or everything.

It is never the experience we are having that troubles us, it is whether or not there is an automatic habit of trying to not have the experience we are already having that troubles us.

Notice where in your body you experience not wanting the experience you are having. How does it feel? Can you notice or find anything worthwhile about resisting your experience? Could you let go of resisting having the experience you are having?

Most people measure themselves and their lives by their experience. What we could call waking up, is a shift, where we no longer believe in the describing of our sensations. In other words, we stop believing our thinking and the whole activity of trying to separate from our sensations.

Notice, that, That which is aware, is not a thing, not an object that you can sense. Some call this nothing. Where does this begin and end?

No beginning no end. This answers the koan, where were you before you were born.

A famous sage said, "When I know I am nothing this is wisdom and when I know I am everything this is love and between the two my life flows".