

1=NO QUESTION SHOULD GO UNANSWERED

Many questions are raised about what it means to people across many disciplines to base their work on the principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought. I'll try my best to answer some of the questions I've heard. If the answers lead to dialogue, or to further questions, that would be a wonderful way to resolve things that seem puzzling to many.

1. Everyone knows that your thinking determines your reality. What's so different about the principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought, and why should you consider your work different from a lot of other people's ideas and techniques about changing thought?

Most of the extant work regarding the connection between thinking and reality is focused on the thinker taking certain thoughts as givens and working with them. The assumption is that some thoughts are better or more constructive than others and people should manage or control or re-think their least constructive thoughts. The idea is to become more mindful of thoughts, and grapple with and improve or correct the content of thoughts that are not working out well. The focus is on the content – **what** people think – with the idea that it is a “real” factor with which people must cope.

Our focus is not at all on the content of people's thinking. What the principles offer is a deeper explanation of where content comes from and how people's thinking changes. We are working with the fact **that** people think, with the assumption that if people leave their thinking alone, it will naturally change, because the constant creation of new thoughts is a principle of life. We have to re-think thoughts to hold onto them and work on them. Otherwise, thinking is naturally responsive to life in the moment and comes and goes.

When people understand how their thinking works and that thinking is creative gift, a way for us to continually paint the picture of our own lives, they are not living at the mercy of any particular picture. They come to understand the human imagination as a powerful tool that can re-create the known (*e.g.*, remember knowledge, reconsider the past, analyze data, or recombine memories into different ideas). They come to understand the human imagination as a powerful tool that can create or originate entirely new ideas from the unknown (*e.g.*, dream, envision, write fiction, fear the worst, hallucinate...). They come to understand the human imagination as a powerful tool that can re-create and create simultaneously (*e.g.*, invent new machines based on existing concepts, re-design formats, draw new conclusions from old data). They are not frightened by their own imaginations. They are not negatively affected by the imaginations of others. They can keep their bearings in the face of their own and others' least constructive thoughts, and they can enjoy and learn from their own and others' most constructive thoughts. Their focus is not on coping or dealing with thoughts they don't like, but simply understanding

that everyone is bound to have thoughts they don't like. If we don't react to them or hang onto them, they pass – just as the most wonderful thoughts pass, too.

An example of this might be a very common sense parenting experience that all parents have had. If a little child awakens from a nightmare and is “sure” there's a “monster hiding in the closet,” we don't explore the details of the monster (content of the nightmare) with the child. We don't ask what it looks like, how often it's been seen before, whether it has huge teeth or claws, whether it is hairy. We look immediately to reassure the child that everyone “makes up” monsters sometimes and explain that nightmares are just our night-time imaginations telling us scary stories. We let the child know that this is a common experience for all people – everyone has nightmares sometimes, and everyone can calm down and see them for what they are. We may let the child look in the closet to be sure there's nothing there, but we focus as little as possible on the content of the nightmare, and as much as possible, with compassion for the nature of the experience of dreaming and how frightening some dreams can be, on the way children's imaginations work and how easy it is to scare ourselves and get over it.

2. Isn't it weird or “New Agey” to put so much emphasis on a calm mind and good feelings, or on deeper human feelings and rapport? Isn't that kind of phony? What's wrong with people being “real” with each other and just speaking their minds however they want to – telling it like it is?

The most important assumption underlying all work based on the principles is respect for the dignity and integrity of the thoughts of every person (*e.g.*, questions, judgments, ideas, dreams, hopes, plans, and everything else that originates within a person's mind). That means, simply, that every person's thoughts are real and important and clear to them as they are thinking and expressing them, and no one can change or interfere with another's already formed thoughts. But when people in a conversation understand the nature of thought (*i.e.*, the principles that explain how thought works and manifests as experience), the tone of discussions changes for the better. It changes because each party to a discussion understands that the thinking expressed is coming from the way the other has formed his/her own thought at that moment. Each party understands that the freedom to think whatever one thinks is a profoundly meaningful gift of life. A person's thinking, therefore, is not deliberately directed at or resulting from the other party. The thinking belongs to the thinker. If it changes, it changes only when the thinker sees something differently for him/herself and changes his/her own mind. Each party also realizes that changing one's mind is the result of nothing more than forming a new thought.

Here is a practical example. A colleague comes to me and says, in an accusatory voice, “You decorated your office all wrong. You should have put the desk at the other end of the room!” If I have no understanding of how thought works, it's quite likely that I will take that as an affront, a personal judgment about my taste and sense. I might become indignant, and retort: “What do you know? I had good reasons for putting the desk where

it is! You didn't even bother to ask me about why I did it that way. How dare you come in here with all this criticism when you don't even know what you're talking about?" This would not lead to a constructive discussion, and might even create a rift that would take a while to heal between me and my colleague. Certainly, it would not lead to either of us learning anything about the other, or coming to a better appreciation of each other's ideas. Each of us would just conclude the other was wrong, and hotheaded.

On the other hand, it would be different if a colleague came to me with that statement about my office, and I *did* have an understanding about thought. I would know that her thoughts are her own, made up in her own mind from her own way of seeing life, and that she must have some underlying assumptions about decorating that are driving those thoughts. And I would understand that I have a choice about what I do with my own thinking in response to her. I can take her thoughts personally, get offended and dismiss her. Or I can learn something from talking to her further. Either way, she is not "creating" my thoughts, nor I hers. We are each creating our own thoughts and responding in our own manner, from our own way of seeing life.

In this case, then, I might say, "Really? Why do you say that?" Maybe I'll learn that she recently took a decorating course and learned some things about furniture placement. Or maybe I'll learn more about how she works – whether she is uncomfortable, for example, facing a door or a wall. Or maybe I'll learn that she just doesn't feel welcomed in my office and is trying to figure out why. The deeper ideas she might have that led to her say what she said are completely unknown to me (and possibly even to her) unless we can explore them neutrally, knowing that in a calm and civil discussion, we'll both be thinking clearly and we'll be able to ask each other more meaningful questions and really hear our answers.

What keeps discussions calm and civil is the recognition that each person's thoughts originate with them, arising from how they are using their gift of thinking and using their knowledge and creativity in that moment. It is the faith that all people have a right to their own thoughts and to full expression of them. When discussions remain calm and civil and respectful of each person's right to think whatever they want to think for themselves, without any need to become argumentative, defensive or accusatory, the discussions evolve. People are able to appreciate where others are coming from, and look to learn how they came to the conclusions they did. And people are able to take in new information in a calm state of mind and allow themselves to be touched by others' ideas. They part knowing more than when they arrived, respectfully.

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