

The art of experiencing

EXPERIENCING
YOUR
THOUGHTS
AND FEELINGS
FREES YOU OF
THEM AND
RESTORES YOUR
EQUANIMITY

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I have been writing off and on about the power of experiencing one's state of mind, but I think it merits a column of its own. And I'll tell you why. For the longest time, I used to tussle and wrestle with my feelings and thoughts – going the spectrum of suppressing them, rationalising them, neutralising them with the aid of affirmations, and as far as possible, being aware of and accepting them too. Usually, however, I could only accept that I could not accept, and though there was some relief, the thought or feeling would keep jabbing at me like a jagged thorn.

And then, I discovered experiencing. It happened thus. It occurred to me one serendipitous day, that all my thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and so on were coming up only for voiding, and therefore I must simply experience them and allow them to go. This was a radical shift from my usual response to mental stuff which was resistance. Instead, I found myself metaphorically opening my arms wide to embrace them, and to allow them gently to leave me by experiencing them. Shortly after I stumbled upon this insight, I did a course called Mahadeeksha at the Oneness UniverCity, where the same insight was emphasised over and over again. "Experience your state of mind," we were urged again and again, and experiential processes and deekshas helped us to move easily into the state.

I came back from the six-day course in a wonderful state of mind. Anger, envy, jealousy, resentment, guilt, resistance, all showed up in the surface of my mind and with ease, I was able to contain them and simply absorb them, until they dissipated. What a liberation it was to be free from those constant feelings and thoughts so cleanly and fully. I realised then what many sages have emphasised. Thoughts cannot be eliminated at the level of thought. You have to go to a higher level to be free of them. At the same time, I cannot discount all the work that went before them, the desperate affirmations, acceptance and awareness of them. They all helped to get me to a state of experiencing.

What does experiencing actually mean? It means that one no longer seeks to resist or manipulate mental stuff. One no longer dreads the onset of

anger, or other negative emotions. One simply looks at them and receives them as they are. I find when I do this, I actually start breathing from my diaphragm and I become aware of my inner body. One moves from head to inner body, which means that thoughts no longer dominate you or make you do what you do not want to do. I had some wonderful experiences in the initial period. My mother, wonderful as she is, can also be a nag, and usually when she gets into the act, I tense up and try and tune out. This time, I experienced the nagging instead and actually began to enjoy it. I still remember listening to her with a seraphic smile on my face, breathing deeply, feeling absolutely liberated from the sense of guilt and resentment that usually overcame me at such times.

Experiencing gives back control to the Self and enables you to act in a manner that is congruent with your beliefs and values. Taken to its logical conclusion, when one has used experiencing to vacuum clean your accumulated garbage of conditioning, it enables you to achieve that ultimate freedom – when nothing about the outside world or the inside world can affect you, for you have a way of processing it all. I have a long way to go before I can claim this freedom for myself.

For I must admit that after a month or two, the wonderful ability to experience ongoingly went away. However, whenever I am distressed or emotionally fraught, I take recourse to experiencing the state and I am at peace.

I have not yet reached the state where the emotion, once experienced, disappears, never to rise again. No, it keeps coming up, and each time, I diffuse it. It is my hope that eventually it will fade away.

What is happening over time is a greater degree of comfort within myself. I am finally reclaiming all the parts of me that I had once excised and rejected, and subsequently, there is a movement towards greater integration and self-acceptance.

It's still a long hard journey, and there are times when the emotional impulse is too swift or strong for experiencing to work, but on the whole, experiencing is allowing for greater control over my thoughts and feelings and subsequently, a greater sense of space within myself. ☺