

Mind

It's nature and how to train it *

By
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* Your **wandering mind**

* **What if** the mind wanders? **Why should I bother?**

* **Is there any solution** within my easy reach?

* **When can I use** this method?

* **How is this experience like?**

* What does this powerful method **demand from us?**

* The **mind plays tricks** to keep us in our prison and also pull us back into prison

* **Our strategies** for continuous improvement

* **Why Follow up** sessions?

How is your Body helping you?

Do this simple exercise of counting letters described on page 61-62 in the 'The Complete Booklet' (65 pages) in my web site to see how your body cooperates with you in achieving your goal.

Do it alone, or better, as a group. Read the passage inside the box on the next page (top down) to find the total number of 'a' s in it. Target only the lower case 'a' s. Write that number in the space provided below the box. Next, count the same letter, starting from the last letter upwards (bottom up) and write this second number in the place provided. Both the numbers will be different for most people! Repeat this process and you may be embarrassed at the recurring variations in the count of 'a' s! In a group, it will be amusing to find educated persons reporting a different number, for such a childish task! There is no apparent justification for any difference. This exercise shows how your 'Body' (eyes, hand and brain) is bound to its habitual style of working. It is helpless, in correctly counting a letter, in spite of your best intention and efforts! Think about it.

* This article is to be read along with the article 'How can I control Stress?' that contains the 'Feel your Breath' method.

Of all the examples on mental conditioning, this is the most insulting one, for intelligent human beings. We see ads in newspapers and magazines, showing a celebrity (celeb) endorsing a product. We know many things in this game - that the celeb may not have used the product even once and he may be just selfishly selling his popular image to that company, to get a huge amount of money. He is most likely cheating us, by giving us the impression that he used that product, feels happy about it and hence suggesting us to use and benefit from it. We also know that the celeb gets his money out of all the monies that we, the buyers, pay for the product. In spite of knowing all this, we get influenced by the ad and the sale of that product goes up. Are we not indirectly paying the celeb to cheat us, without even realizing it?

Top down #

Bottom up #

Did you get the same number both times? Most likely 'No'. If you ask one of your family member or friends to do this exercise, you will get more variety of numbers. Amusing! But for such a simple task as counting a familiar letter, every one should get the same correct number every time.

You now realize that your **Body** (eyes, hand and brain) has let you down, in the above exercise. You can not rely on it, to do even such an easy task correctly. Next let us see how your Mind cooperates with you.

How is your Mind helping you?

Do this **experiment** to actually experience the totally uncontrolled and arrogant behavior of your mind.

Close your eyes and select a non-moving image of your **favorite object, person or place**. Order your mind to strictly concentrate on that chosen image, for 2 minutes and not deviate from it, even for a second. Do this for two minutes.

You have now seen that the **mind wanders** beyond your control. Let us estimate approximately. Wandering 10 times /min = 600 times/ hour = almost 10,000 times /day of 16 hours = more than 3 million times /year! We lose track of our mind **ten thousands of times** a day! In 30 years, we have allowed it to practice wandering sport 90 million times. No surprise that such an intensive practice has made it an expert in the sport of wandering!

To appreciate the seriousness of your mind not cooperating with you consider this example. I once saw in a hotel, a tall well built and well dressed person briskly walking, holding the leash of a dog. After some observation, it was clear that the dog was guiding

him and that **he was visually challenged** (blind). He depended entirely on his dog and it was doing a great job in guiding him. I wondered how troublesome all his life would be, if he were to depend on a poorly trained dog. It would have been leading him into many favorite places of dogs, neglecting his own places of interests. It would be a nuisance for him and might even endanger his life.

We depend on the **mind** for guiding our body in our best interest, just as the visually challenged person depends on his guide dog. How well trained is our mind and how well is its behavior tuned to our interests and activities?

Next, think about the **telephone game you might have played!** The message is told by the conductor of the game to only the first player in his ear. He in turn repeats what he heard to the second player and so on. The last player tells the conductor of the game what he heard. It is seen that the message gets 70 to 90 % distorted when this game is played by about 10 persons. How can we meekly swallow this distortion of a message which is being transmitted from mouth to ear? Why should there be even 0.1% distortion in such a process? How can we take this remarkable phenomena as a joke and forget about it, without seriously thinking about it?

Our bodies resonate with the wandering minds and restlessly jump from one activity to another. We have been treating this abnormal wandering phenomena of the mind to be a **normal one**. We collectively feel nothing can be done about it. But as owners, **we are 100% responsible** for the wandering habit of our minds. Why has this been going on? It is due to our **ignorance** about the nature of mind and consequent lack of any attempt to **train** it. Why ignorance? The answer is **tradition**. The topic of science of mind does not exist in general education and is more taboo in reading, discussion at home or work place than even sex. Every one has own fond opinion about the nature of mind.

Let us see the nature of mind in our common language.

Mind is like the **trunk of an elephant** – always moving and trying to grasp something. It can not be empty handed just as there can be no vacuum.

Mind is like a **monkey**, just brought from the jungle. Its present habit is to go on jumping from one branch to another restlessly. Its movement from one thought to another is restless and continuous movement.

What if the mind wanders? Why should I bother?

You may laugh at some of my examples –

Dangers

What if your **car** wanders like the Mind?

What if your **hand** wanders like your mind? When you are in a line and intend to put your hand in your pocket to take out money, it enters the pocket of the person ahead of you! Or what if your hands wander when you are driving!

What about the **negative thoughts** about past experiences bombarding the mind? We do not know how to stop them without using mind diverting addictions like smoking, alcohol, drugs, or compulsive activities like endless talking or watching TV.

Wandering of mind leads to stress. Chronic **stress leads to varieties of deceases**. The number of scientific papers published linking mind and body are increasing dramatically. If you search in 'google' for the word "Mindbody" (mind and body treated as a single word) you will get 58, 000 web pages.

Losses

Listening fully is impossible at home, school or office. Students in a **class** are like **TV sets** and the teacher taking the class is the channel. Are the TV sets (minds) switched 'ON'? Even when they are 'ON' how is the teacher, say the Math teacher sure that they are tuned to his Math channel and not to English or Sports channel? How can we pump knowledge and skills into their intelligent minds, hour after hour, day after day, at school or home without first making sure that at least the first part of effective communication, that is correct 'reception' is taking place? Only after 'reception' is successful can come the next steps - 'understanding', 'remembering' and proper 'application' of that knowledge.

A wandering mind is like a **camera** which captures reality poorly. It is like a **knife** without sharpness, requiring more effort and leading to a poor cutting performance or even total failure in cutting. How fruitful is reading a book with poor concentration?

Take the **home** situation, say one member of a family is speaking to another. Are we able to listen to each other fully? If only we can listen fully, understand the message including the body language, absorb the valid portion of the message leaving out the invalid part, many problems among human beings will not arise. How can a group of people in a family, school or a work place achieve a **common goal**, if they can not even listen fruitfully to each other? No wonder we have too many problems among people.

Opportunities missed

We are not tapping the tremendous hidden power of mental concentration. Consider these examples.

Magnifying glass - Sunlight falling on a paper can do nothing to it even after hours of exposure. But a magnifying glass which concentrates the same sunlight on a single spot without moving, can burn a hole in the same paper in seconds.

Needle - A needle with a sharp tip can pierce through a bunch of papers easily. But the same needle will fail miserably if its tip is even slightly blunted.

Laser - A laser can burn and minutely shape the lens of the eye to correct the vision defects and thus eliminate the need for eye glasses. What is the secret behind the precision and power of a Laser? It is only the alignment and concentration of the same rays of light.

Hypnotism - Hypnotism is an approved medical procedure for some physical problems and for carrying out some surgical procedures without anesthesia. Hypnotism is entirely the phenomena of the mind affecting the body, in a remarkable manner.

Visualization - Visualization is now considered a powerful process to give directions to the body processes, to eliminate some diseases. It can only be achieved with concentration of mind.

Placebo (belief) - Placebo is the term for the make-believe medicine or physical procedure carried out on a person. It is administered in such a way that the patient believes some real medicine is administered or real surgery is being carried out on him. It is documented in medical research that about 30% of people get cured of their problems significantly due to such Placebo treatment! This is nothing but the mind significantly affecting the body.

We are facing all the above problems and incurring the losses and losing the powers of the mind due to its wandering. We give technical or medical names to the consequent problems of mind, body and relationships and treating them with medicines or other treatments. But we are not tackling the **root cause** of poor mental concentration. Unfortunately, we can buy anything in the shops or on the internet, but not this skill of mental concentration at any price.

Is there any solution within my easy reach?

Yes. So far we have **not even recognized** the problem – hence no solution has emerged.

‘Counting Breaths’ method of concentrating the mind is one simple, easy and **proven solution** to the problem of the wandering of mind. There are many other methods but they demand far more effort and commitment from the practitioners and external support.

This method has been **field tested** for last 5 years, on a wide cross section of people. The benefits mentioned in the flyer are as reported by the people who tried it. They had an open mind or heeded my repeated appeals and tried it.

This is perhaps the **easiest such method** in the World. It can be **started** today, right now. It can be **maintained** all through life. It relieves stress, improves health and enhances personality. It gives continuous benefits to mind, body and relationships.

Your mind will come and **sit by your side**, like your pet dog or monkey, when it becomes idle. It will open its own **stress relief valve** automatically, like the safety valve of a pressure cooker.

What is this method ‘Counting Breaths?’

See the method in the web site ‘Counting Breaths – Basic Method’ – 2 pages in my web site.

When can I use this method?

How easy is it’s practice? and **When** to practice? (see as above)

Now practice the ‘Counting breaths’ method sitting in a chair, for about 20 minutes, before reading further.

How is this experience like?

Can you buy this kind of relaxing experience in any stores on on-line, even by paying a million dollars?

When we use this method, wandering of mind and consequent stress or mental tension is arrested. It is as though as though a **cooler** has been switched on in the mind to reduce its temperature.

It is like the **elephant trainer** giving a stick to the trunk of the elephant, to stop it’s continuous wandering and keep it steady.

It is like a guitar player tuning his **guitar** before starting a performance or focusing **magnifying glass** or a **laser** to make the light rays more powerful or like a wood cutter sharpening the **axe** periodically to maintain his performance.

If one practices this method frequently during the day till one goes to sleep and soon after waking up, one would feel as **fresh in the evening** as in the morning, in spite of busy work throughout the day. Plus many other benefits mentioned in the flyer.

What does this powerful method demand from us?

You do not need anything except utilizing the **wandering time** of the mind. No worry about sticking to any guidelines or restrictions.

We get these multidimensional benefits with **zero investment** of useful time. The return on investment is therefore infinity!

Who has this priceless capacity? Every one of us!

Why have we have **not used** this capacity all these days! (one electrician aged fifty said he wasted all his life not knowing this method)

- But at this point, our common sense tells us that there must be a **catch somewhere**. If this method is so simple and easy to practice and it gives many benefits, why is it that out of 100 people who read the flyer 90% are not interested in it, and will not use it to rid themselves of stress and it's related problems. Why do people behave like a **prisoner** who sees a clear escape door to get out of the prison but does not feel like escaping?. Why? This is the first paradox.
- The second paradox is, why is it that the few out of many, who start a **good practice** like – getting up early in the morning, exercise, diet control, yoga or meditation with all serious intentions, **discontinue** the practice after some time, giving some lame excuses? This is like a prisoner who is released from prison, misses the jail atmosphere to which he got used and gets **back to prison** doing some new crime.

There is no behavior without a cause. We will see the causes for these paradoxes now. This is the most important part of this article.

The mind plays tricks to keep us in our mental prison and also pull us back into prison when we try to escape

The secret behind the above paradoxes is simple. It is the continuous **conditioning of mind** to which we are subjected, right from birth. And we are not even aware of the poisonous effect of that conditioning!

Secret is simple but ...

Though the **secret** is simple, to realize and counteract it is not a simple task. In a typical folk tale, a demon kidnaps the princess and the prince goes to liberate her. He comes to know that the life of the demon is in an **insect** kept in a box, guarded by several giant and fierce creatures. But when he boldly faces them and strikes them with his sword, all of them instantly disappear. Similarly to tap the power of this method, we have to first **realize** that the hurdles looking like giant creatures exist only in our imagination. When we start taking simple **action** without caring for them, the giant creatures immediately vanish. Every time they reappear, our decisive action eliminates them from the scene. Every time we feel breath, the mind gets comforted and likes the method. It becomes easier for the mind to remember and repeat the effort. Gradually the opposing thoughts or feelings become weaker due to lack of attention and response from our side. It becomes an ascending circle.

Living in delusion

Another good example is from a Hindi (the national language of India) movie '**Namak Haram**'. The actors Amitabh Bachan and Rajesh Khanna drink a hallucinating brew. Amitabh sits down fiddling with his fingers, inserting the fingers of one hand into another. Suddenly he feels that his interlinked fingers are stuck, and not getting separated in spite of his best efforts. He cries loudly like a child, that his fingers were stuck and he

was not able to separate them. His friend Rajesh comes running on hearing his cries and sees the situation. He understands the delusion of his friend. To help him get rid of the delusion, he holds both hands of his friend with his two hands and quickly pulls them apart. His friend Amitabh is overjoyed with the separation of his fingers. Similarly, we are under the delusion that the mind can not be controlled. Once we taste a little success in controlling it, we will get rid of that delusion.

Let us see the reasons for **living in such a delusion**.

Negative thoughts

The whole process of mental conditioning that keeps us in the prison of negative mode starts right from birth. A child is brain washed by **450 negatively colored massages** and 75 positively colored messages in a day, from it's elders. Hence we develop a great appetite for negative thoughts, negative news and negative gossip about ourselves and others. The mind gets addicted to negative thoughts due to round the clock repetition of the negatives. It feels restless if there are no negative thoughts. Positive thoughts are felt to be tasteless and boring.

Nurturing of thoughts

Mind is like a field and **thoughts are like plants**. Negative thoughts are weeds and positive thoughts are useful plants. Our attention is like water and our response to thoughts is like fertilizer. As we are presently used to giving more attention and response to the negative thoughts, they become more strong and deep rooted. It becomes very difficult to uproot them, once they reach that stage.

Our personality is changing all the time

It is a false idea to feel that our personality is something final and nothing can be done about it. It is simply not true. Consider this. Suppose you are now 40 years and somebody had taken your picture on your birth day, every year. He now displays all the 40 pictures on the wall and asks you "which of the 40 pictures is yours?". What will you reply? All are yours but none is exactly like you, as you are now. It is because you have been changing to some extent from year to year physically. Now suppose another instrument had taken your mental attributes every year and now they are displayed on the wall and you are asked to say which is yours. Again all are yours but none is exactly you as you are now. What does this mean? It only means we are changing all the time, physically and mentally, whether we like it or not. We are not finished products. We are work-in-process till the last moment of life – ever changing.

As the statue of a person emerges a little bit from a block of stone with every chisel cut of the sculptor, our targeted personality also emerges a little bit with every new action or experience. We can take some actions to cultivate a new habit. Every such action shapes us a little. Does it not take millions of chisel strokes to get the shape of the person out of the block of stone? What if the block of stone is cut wrongly into a different shape? Will not the job of correcting that shape more difficult than making a statue from a fresh stone?

Our current personality is not our real potential personality. It is the result of deep conditioning of our mind by all those who had power over us from our birth and our passive way of responding to it. This truth can be understood symbolically from following stories and observations which bring out how our mind gets conditioned.

The giant elephant submitting meekly to a thin rope tied to a post

As soon as baby elephant is born, its leg is tied by a heavy chain to a tree. Every time it tries to make that leg free, it feels the heavy weight of the chain and realizes that it can not make its leg free, in spite putting all its effort. After many weeks of this struggle, it feels helpless and stops even trying to make any effort, to free its leg. The elephant grows over a period of time into a giant and powerful animal which can even break big trees, but it remains tied down meekly, by a thin rope.

The fisherwomen and smell of flowers:

This story was told by Sri Ramakrishna an Indian saint. Two fisherwomen were going home with their empty salted dry fish baskets after selling all their dry fish in the market. Suddenly there was a storm and they sought shelter in a house nearby. The house owner asked them to sleep in an unused room for the night. They were not able to fall sleep in that room, in spite of their best efforts. They realized that the room contained unsold flowers because their host was a flower seller. With his permission, they put the flower baskets out of the room and brought in their foul smelling fish baskets which they left outside the house, when they entered. Then they could sleep happily!

Learned pessimism:

Psychologists conducted some experiments on dogs. The first experiment was to condition them to a stressful experience. The first group was the control group, not subjected to any experience. Second group was subjected to the experience of getting a mild shock periodically from the floor on which they were standing which they could escape by pressing a bar accessible to them. They accidentally discovered this solution by hitting the bar while jumping randomly to escape the shocks. Every time the shocks started, they learnt to hit the bar purposely and stop the shocks. We can call them optimistically conditioned dogs.

The third group of dogs were subjected to the same shocks but no provision was made for them to escape the shocks. So they continued to suffer from the shocks in spite of all kinds of jumping. After some time they felt that whatever they may do, they could not avoid the shocks. They then simply sat down passively and continued to suffer the mild shocks till the experiment was called off. We can call them pessimistically conditioned dogs.

These three groups of dogs were then subjected to a second experiment in an enclosure divided into two parts by a low partition like a tennis court. One half

of the floor area in which the dogs were initially placed, was wired to give mild shocks and the other half area was free from shocks.

All the three groups of dogs were subjected to this second experiment. The first group soon jumped over the partition and escaped the shocks. The second group also escaped jumping over the partition. But the third group of pessimistically conditioned dogs simply sat down and continued to bear the mild shocks even though the low partition was visible to them just as it was visible to the other two groups of dogs.

Next, a similar conditioning experiment was conducted on three groups of people by subjecting them to a high level of noise in a room. They could escape it by pressing a particular sequence of numbers on a panel, accessible to them. Surprisingly they also behaved exactly like the dogs. The pessimistically conditioned people did not try to escape the noise though the panel with buttons was visible to them, whereas the other two groups tried many things and finally found the method to stop the noise.

The priest and the four thieves:

One pundit (a priest who performs religious ceremonies in India) was going home carrying a goat gifted to him, on his shoulders. Four thieves saw him and planned to cheat him and take the goat to enjoy a meal. They stood at four different places on the road the pundit was traveling. The first thief asked him sarcastically ‘What is this pundit? why are you carrying a dog on your shoulders? Somebody has cheated you. He has given you a dog instead of a goat as a gift’. The pundit brushed him aside and went forward. But after the second, third and fourth thief repeated the same statement in similar manner, he was totally convinced that it was a dog, threw the goat down and went home in disgust. The thieves enjoyed a feast killing the goat.

Monkey and the peanut plants.

Expecting unrealistic results. Once upon a time, there was a monkey who was ambitious and highly result oriented. Somebody gave it a few peanut plants and asked that they be planted and watered every day and they would in due course give peanuts that it can enjoy. The monkey planted them and watered them on the first day. It was sleepless that night, thinking about the peanuts growing inside the soil. As soon as it was morning, it rushed to the garden and pulled up the peanut plants one by one to see how many peanuts each had. Finding none, it was disappointed, planted them again, watered them and pulled them up again on the second morning. It continued this process every day. When will it get peanuts? Moral of the story: Allow the process to work for appropriate time, then it will give results. As long as you find some tiny comfort from a process like ‘Breath Feeing’, feel a little bit happy and continue the practice. Every bit of comfort is a precious gain, as we are not investing anything in this method – time, money, effort, not even belief! We are only utilizing the wandering time of the mind.

Goat minus mentality

A goat held by a rope would graze in a circle whose size depends on the length of the rope. Longer the rope, larger the circle of land on which it grazes. Similarly, a person also accepts the mental and physical freedom he feels he has been given. In this sense, man is like a goat. But man is superior to goat in the scale of evolution. Does he behave in a superior manner ?

The goat runs away and enjoys full freedom, soon after realizing the rope is missing. But a man, even after finding the rope missing, would continue to confine himself strictly to the same circle, as though an invisible rope is still around his neck. If you wonder and ask him why he is not using the freedom now available to him, he would reply that "they" might have forgotten and would anyway find out and tie him up. So what is the point in running away !

In other words, a human being gets mentally conditioned by the circumstances in which he has been living, even though he may be suffering badly. He does not realize that he has the power to choose his thoughts, feelings and reactions at every moment. Even on the occasions he is aware, he surrenders meekly to the inner tendencies that make him think and behave in the same set fashion, like a Robot. **In respect of grabbing opportunities readily available to him, a human being is worse than a goat, "goat minus!"** “

Comparing our progress

Comparing with others on similar paths, feeling discouraged and giving up totally is another trap for the practitioners of the method. No two thumb impressions or DNA's match. Who is keeping record of all **DNA's** at some central record room in the Universe which is an essential requirement for avoiding duplication? Who is making sure at the time of every single birth, that there is absolutely no duplication at the level of DNA molecules? No two people were same in the past., now, nor will be in future. Hence there is no meaning in comparing performances of people and feeling discouraged or encouraged. Every one has to make own efforts and follow own path.

Celebrity (celeb) advertisements (ads)

Of all the examples on mental conditioning, this is the most insulting one, for intelligent human beings today. We see ads every day in newspapers and magazines, in which some celebrity is shown associated with a product. We know many things when we see it - that the celeb may have never used the product even once and that he is simply selling his popular image, to some company, to earn a huge amount of money. In simple language, he is most likely cheating us in giving us the impression that he used that product and feels happy about it. We also know that the celeb is getting his money out of all the money we pay for the product. What does all this mean? Are we not knowingly paying the celeb to cheat us blatantly and we do not even seem to be aware about this cheating. Is it not an extreme case of extreme case of mental conditioning, that is making us spend our hard earned money, to be cheated by a person we admire?

- Now that we understand the simple nature of mind, we can develop some **winning strategies to avoid wrong conditioning and ensure right conditioning**. Our goal is to convert the innocent mind, conditioned so far to behave like a **villain, into a hero**, helping us all the time.

Our strategies for continuous improvement

1. Totally **stop blaming** the mind, ourselves, elders or anybody for the current negative state of the mind. It is a trick of mind to blame somebody or own self and make sure the status quo is maintained, as though its duty ends with pointing out the fault. Blaming anybody is only to escape self responsibility and avoid any change in our habitual actions.

2. The nature of mind is that, it can entertain **only one thing at a time**. Inside the big cage of a **circus**, only one animal can sit on a stool as directed by the ring master – either the lion or the goat. When you, the ring master of the mind, put the sensation of coolness of in-breath on your mental platform, there is no place for any other thought at that moment. After a few moments, some random unwanted thought will enter the mind and push out the breath sensation. Without getting upset or angry at the intruding thought, you simply reinstall the breath sensation in the mind. As this war of patience and persistence goes on, the unwanted thoughts realize that nowadays they are not getting the usual welcome reception and feel ignored. They will slowly decrease their visiting frequency, and after some more time not even attempt to enter the mind.

3. You have to act like you did as a **child, when just learning to walk**. You kept on trying without bothering about failures, till you succeeded. You were least bothered about the number of times you fell to the ground and even got hurt a little bit.

4. You have to try like a **rakshas** (means a demon in Indian mythology) who by sheer repetition of his favorite God's name, makes that GOD stand before him with an open check. God knows very well that the rakshas has very bad intentions but he has no choice but to grant his wish. That is the power of continuous repetition.

5. It is a false idea to feel that our personality is something final and nothing can be done about it. It is simply not true. We are **changing all the time**, physically and mentally, whether we like it or not.(see the story of pictures on the wall cited above). We are not finished products – we are work-in-process till the last moment of life. This is a reality from which we tend to run away.

6. Another escape strategy of mind is to make us feel that we either practice the method **perfectly** or not at all. If we are convinced that the path is right and we see ourselves inching forward (at least not sliding backwards), does it not make sense to **keep on trying?** We are bound to reach a better position after some time. This is far better than remaining at same place till the end of life. Going round in the same groove of activity is

in effect, same as standing at same place, though it gives one a false feeling of moving ahead.

7. **Lastly**, one can never become a **swimmer** by - reading about swimming, seeing video tapes on swimming, discussing swimming or standing on the edge of the pool keenly observing the swimmers inside the pool. One has to **get into water** and start moving hands and legs. Only then learning has even started, becoming skilled is far ahead. So any tiny action and learning from its result is better than total inaction.

As a wise strategy to counter the tendency of adults to run away from any method that tends to disturb their mental status quo, should we not **teach** mental concentration before any other skill to the children and adults? Then the children will do far better in studies and show better behavior. The future adults will be healthier in mind and body and will be better parents and professionals.

Why Follow up sessions?

The need for follow up sessions on this method of using the wandering mind can be understood, from the following narration.

My experiment in self-development with 2 batches of people

I had 18 technical staff in my department at one point of time. It was the season of annual performance appraisal. It was customary for the boss (myself) to mention in the appraisal, about the person's self development goal for the current year and his success in achieving it. Past practice was to mention something as a ritual. Neither the boss nor his staff were happy about the process. That year we agreed to explore this important subject of self appraisal.

We formed two groups of 8 persons in each group out of 16 persons, who volunteered to participate in the experiment. Members of the group ranged in age from 18 years to 53 years. Their official positions ranged from the initial starting position of an undergraduate in first line supervisory position, to a senior manager. I was the Head of the department and the common facilitator for both groups. They were told not to talk about their group's discussion to any of the members of the other group. We used to meet once a week, for an hour after the office time.

I started the discussion asking the first question "what is meant by self development?". It was a rule that every member had to speak when his turn comes or say 'pass'. After hearing all the participants, the group comes to a consensus on the question under discussion. Only then the next question would be taken up. The group reached the conclusion that self development means getting rid of some undesirable quality or behavior from own self or developing a desirable behavior which does not exist now.

Second question posed to each individual was "are you interested in self development?". Everyone replied "yes, I am interested".

The third question was “are you really interested in self development?” All replied “yes. I am really interested”.

The fourth question was “did you ever try to develop yourself in this senses?”. All but one of the members fell silent. The exceptional person said that he did try seriously to develop the habit of “getting up early in the morning”. Now the dialogue was taking place only with that single person and all the others were only listeners.

The fifth question was “how did you try to develop that new habit?” He replied that he tried several methods like asking his wife to wake him up etc. and ultimately succeeded by using an alarm clock. He was regularly getting up early morning and was very happy about his achievement.

The sixth question was “How long did this new habit continue?”. He replied that it continued for a month.

The seventh question was ‘What happened after a month?’ He replied with a sheepish smile that he gave up the new habit and started getting up late. All the other members who were keenly listening to the discussion burst out laughing at his frank confession. They seemed to enjoy seeing the great man also fail to develop himself in any manner. But the group got a shock at this revelation.

They started discussing seriously “how is it that all the members of the motivated and hard working group except that single person, did not even try for self development and even that one person who tried and succeeded, gave up his achievement, after a brief period of one month?”. Several views were offered and the discussion continued over several sessions.

Finally, a starting conclusion was reached by the group that “there can not be any self development unless the person is subjected to an external pressure, from which he can not escape”!

Most unexpectedly, the same conclusion was reached by the second group working independently.

The implication of above experiment on our subject is this - when you want to change your habits it is very difficult for most of us to achieve it, all by ourselves. Some external pressure to which we submit ourselves even grudgingly, is required, to help us develop that new habit. One way of getting this pressure, is to form a group of people with same objective and put peer pressure on each other to change the existing habit to a better one. The peers can also inspire by sharing their small success stories. This is the concept of many support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous. This is the reason for my suggesting that those who want to develop this new habit of ‘Feeling the Breath’ may improve their success rate, by forming a support group of people with the same goal and meet periodically for practice, sharing of feedback and discussion.

When no approach works in motivating a person to try some method, think of this story -

In spite of this method being easy to understand and practice, you will find some people absolutely unwilling to try even this method, in spite of your constant reminders or friendly pressure. This puzzling phenomena may be explained by saying that the time for that person has not yet come, to get out of his present hurting habit and cultivate a better habit. May be he is waiting for a real life crisis.

This may be illustrated by a story from Hindu spiritual teachings. Once there lived a devotee of a Hindu God named Siva. He was a great devotee, always praying to his favorite God Siva, but he was always poor, unable to support his large family. One day, God Siva's wife who was aware of this devotee's condition told Siva, to help his poor devotee somehow. Siva replied that his time for coming out of his suffering had not yet come. But his wife did not believe him and put lot of pressure on him to do something to help that poor devotee. So, Siva one day he put a bunch of gold coins in the middle of the road, on which the poor man used to walk everyday. Both Siva and his wife kept watching from the heavens, to see what would happen. The devotee started walking on that road and just before he came near the gold coins, he got a brilliant idea. He thought "I have been walking daily on this road, for many years and become very familiar with its turns and pot holes. Just for a change, today I will try to walk a short distance with my eyes closed". He closed his eyes and quietly walked over the gold coins and after some distance he opened his eyes. He congratulated himself for his ability to walk with his eyes closed!

So, if you find somebody absolutely unreceptive to even this simplest and easiest method in the world for getting over his stress and consequent problems of mind, body and relationship problems, you may think that his time for relief has not yet come and leave him in peace. Try again some other time when he or she may be in real difficulties and looking for some relief.

The priceless benefits by practicing 'Feel your Breath' method

Automatic **relaxation**,

Higher self **confidence**,

Far less **negative thoughts**,

Better all round **relationships**

More of **actions** than postponements, Better **achievements**,

And Overall **Happiness**

Most important of all is that practice of this method lays a solid foundation for practice of Meditation at a later stage. Effective meditation has the power of transforming your present false shape of a donkey into your real shape of a lion.
