

THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE MIND

The mind is such an incredible phenomenon and as a result it is extremely difficult to classify its numerous functions and astounding complexity. Over the centuries there have been many attempts to define the mind and its role in our lives.

Modern psychology, since the time of Freud and Jung, has provided us with many labels describing the anatomy of the mind. Some summaries and definitions are comfortably aligned whilst others present diverging descriptions and classifications. This has led to a situation where different theories and models have different interpretations about the topography of the mind. These different approaches are well documented for those who wish to research this area further. This, however, is not the primary concern of this article.

We believe that the mind's functions are best classified under four headings. These are: the unconscious, the subconscious, the preconscious and the conscious. These labels are not new and are already widely used (although the preconscious is less well known). However, in our experience they are not always used with clarity and subject to the context in which they are used, they often mean different things to different people. In fact, the terms unconscious and subconscious are often used interchangeably as if they are one and the same thing.

In this resource sheet, we are attempting to bring a level of clarification to this topic, enabling you to relate with greater understanding to what is going on within yourself and as a result, identify and fulfill your potential.

What follows is a summary of the four aspects of the mind.

1. The Unconscious Mind

You can see from the diagram that our deep-seated memories, drivers and patterns are part of the primary function of the unconscious mind. It's also driven by its overwhelming desire to protect us in order that we can continue to grow.

Everything we've ever thought, felt, said and done is recorded here. This is the hard drive where all data resides. So nothing is ever forgotten. When we 'forget', what we are really experiencing is a lack of access to a memory, event and time. This is one of many ways that the unconscious mind seeks to protect us from hurts and pain. It calculates the emotional consequences for revisiting certain experiences and can and does deny access when it feels the organism of the self is threatened.

Imagine remembering absolutely everything you've ever thought, said and done... all of the time. It would simply bring you grinding to a halt. It would be impossible to process it all and go on to make the best decisions and choices. You'd simply be overwhelmed. This is why it's primarily the impressions of our experiences that we carry with us - and those memories and feelings influence our outlook and behaviour.

Another way to think of the unconscious mind is as a cellar, which for the most part is kept locked and is largely immersed in darkness. The cellar is rarely visited, however it contains an incredible library of information with an accurate record of everything, good bad and indifferent, that has taken place in your life. However, without making special effort, most of what's contained in the cellar remains out of reach. If we are to be masters of our destiny we

need to make the effort to go fearlessly into the cellar on a regular basis, illuminating what's there.

This means performing an honest audit to establish the 'truth' about the real state of your inner world and facing demons you've denied and/or hidden away. Without this courage and honesty most of the contents of the cellar remain inaccessible and continue to influence and shape your life without your awareness.

Introspective practices like meditation, mindfulness, darkroom work and hypnotherapy can take you into this cellar and enable you to make those life-changing discoveries.

The whole Reach philosophy is built on the principle of making the unconscious conscious. Those things that remain in the unconscious mind that have not been checked, understood and where necessary resolved, continue to shape your decisions, choices and life. As a result we make the terrible mistake of thinking these things are simply our destiny, which allows the past to be recycled whilst we mistakenly call it 'the now'.

2. The Subconscious Mind

You can see from the diagram that the forces shaping our personalities largely emerge from the subconscious mind. The habits, attitudes and values that govern much of our lives are propelled from here.

The subconscious mind is much more accessible than the unconscious mind, nevertheless in everyday awareness it remains largely out of reach. This is because for the most part individuals are living at the surface of consciousness, i.e., the conscious mind. To access and experience the subconscious world, as with the unconscious mind, needs a special kind of effort. The previous activities listed (meditation, mindfulness, darkroom work, hypnotherapy) can all help with this adventure.

Most people access their subconscious minds and indeed their unconscious minds more typically in the dream state, when, as a result of sleep, they step out of the conscious mind and enter that realm of uncertainty, creativity and imagination. As a result, dream analysis is another way that the subconscious mind can be accessed in order to unveil its secrets and messages.

Sadly, far too many of us dispose of our dreams without proper care and consideration, which is unfortunate, because dreams do offer many insights and understandings beyond what is available to us through the conscious mind.

Trauma is another way that many 'fall' into the realm of the subconscious – bereavement, loss, war, torture, accidents and anything that is sprung upon us, often when we least expect it, can throw us into the subconscious arena, forcing us to face and discover those beliefs, thoughts and feelings that for the most part are out of view.

Obviously, it is more productive to access the subconscious mind through conscious decision-making and choice and we would encourage you to embrace self-examination fearlessly; and should you need help, don't be afraid to seek it out.

Below are listed a number of resources that will help you in this pursuit.

The Inventory of Incongruence
Understanding Your Blind Spot
Resolution Creates Time Space and Energy
Who are You When No One's Looking
The Pyramid of Shame
Actual Beliefs vs Professed Beliefs

All these handouts/resources are designed to help the reader discover the unseen and invisible forces that are shaping human life. Some of these forces are beneficial which of course we want to maintain, but there are just as many that are unhelpful, even destructive. And it's those that we need to detach from, otherwise they deny us access to our potential, steal our power and persuade us that we have no unique contribution to make... which is a lie.

3. The Preconscious Mind

You can see from the diagram that it is the preconscious mind from which intuition, instincts, insights and what many refer to as 'gut feelings' emerge. This is very much a 'feeling' mind, influenced by much more than logic. Many individuals discount its nudges and urges, which are accurately described as intuitions or instincts, whilst at the other end of the spectrum there are those who rely on them far too much when making decisions and choices.

The more you understand the four aspects of the mind, the more you realise it is balance that should be pursued above all else. There is an intimate dialogue, which takes place between the four minds that helps us to value the contribution each one is making for the greater good of the whole - we will explore this dialogue in the sequel to this article.

Gut feelings and intuition are a vital part of our repertoire. They bring to our awareness that which might not be seen or understood as a result of the machinations of logic and intellect. They invite us to question our calculations about a situation, person or event. Gut feelings and intuition call on us to take account of the invisible and the metaphysical. It's important to understand that logic and the senses although valuable tools miss so much of the data presented to us in any given moment and as a result cannot be relied upon to tell us the whole story.

The fairly recent discoveries about the four forces that shape our world (strong nuclear force, weak nuclear force, electromagnetism and gravity) have taught us that if we are to rely on our primary sense, seeing (if we are sighted), we can only see the tiniest fraction of reality on the electromagnetic spectrum. It has been calculated that we can see as little as 0.005%, which could be described as being blind, rather than even partially sighted. This puts into context how little of the world we can actually 'see'. So what might we be missing?

Logic does help us to 'see' our reality more clearly – this is where science has been invaluable – but we need to be aware that it too is limited.

So back to gut feelings and intuition... they are by no means the missing link but they are another sense (6th sense) that do add another perspective that we would be foolish to ignore.

As you develop your relationship with the different aspects of the mind, the preconscious bit will be one you come to respect more and more, and avail yourself of its wisdom as and when appropriate.

4. The Conscious Mind

You can see from the diagram that the conscious mind is the arena in which thoughts, feelings, moods and will power are most prominent. It is the bit of the mind that is most accessible as it interfaces with our everyday reality. Much of the game of awareness is played out in the conscious mind and one could argue that therein lies our problem – that we spend so much time entangled in our thoughts, feelings and moods that we are denied the other gifts of awareness, leading us to see a very narrow view of reality and as a result we end up misusing and mismanaging our will power.

That said living at the surface of the mind is part of the grand design. If we think of our cellar, with the books, files, albums and countless pieces of data stored there in the dark, would that be the most sensible place from which to act out and express our creative intelligence?

We do need the data stored in the unconscious mind but it's the experiences, impressions and feelings that we need most, not the raw data. Those experiences, impressions and feelings are what become the basis of our personalities, habits, attitudes and values (the subconscious mind). They also become the insights, intuition, gut feelings and instincts that arise in the preconscious mind.

As a result of this stream of consciousness flowing through the unconscious, subconscious and preconscious minds, the conscious mind then enables us to live influenced by what we've experienced before but with the option not to be defined by it – which is the role of free will. Unfortunately because these dynamics have not been understood, many of us end up being defined by the past and lose the discrimination required to act in ways that are valuable and beneficial to us.

If we are to live positive and healthy lives, informed by the stuff beneath the surface of the mind then we need to look beyond our conditioning. We need to ask soul-searching questions. We need to check and re-check our intentions and motivations. We need to question and challenge what we are presented with as facts and see if they stand up to scrutiny. Only by probing in this way can we move beyond the familiar and discover the true meaning of life which is to be the very best we can be and to find ways of empowering ourselves without harming others and sharing that empowerment in kindness and with love.

The Four Aspects of the Mind is another important piece of the jigsaw puzzle. We hope you will use the map provided here to improve your self-knowledge and your inner landscape. The better the subtle contract between these four energies is understood, the more likely you are to make the unconscious conscious in such a way that you do not blame destiny for your fate.

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

Carl Jung 1875 – 1961