



Sibella Circle Member & Visionary Leader

## THE POWER OF AWARENESS

### Body Awareness

By Catherine Dowling

**Like lots of people, I've often discovered bruises on my arms or legs** and have no recollection of how they got there. Obviously I've bumped into something, bumped hard enough to cause bruising, but have no memory of my encounter with a chair or table or car door. This is a common experience for many of us who walk around so contained in our heads that we don't notice what our bodies are doing.

I once shared a hotel room with a woman who gave voice to every thought that passed through her head. "I'm falling asleep," she announced as she lay in bed. "No...my ankle is itchy...I wonder what makes things itchy? Maybe the cloth..." In full audio, my roommate answered my question: Where are we when we're not 'in' our body? The Laboratory of Neuro Imaging at the University of Southern California estimates that the average person has around 70,000 thoughts a day. When we're not present in our body, it's often because we're caught up in those swirling, never-ending streams of thought.

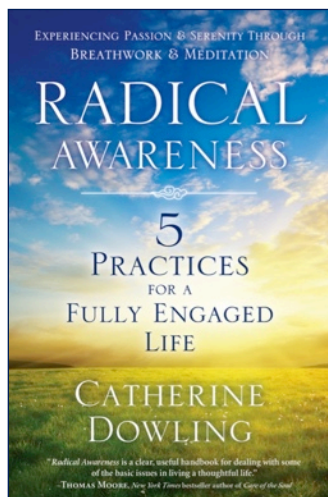
Being absorbed in thought regularly results in productivity, creativity, problem solving and deep understanding. Unfortunately it can also produce a cycle of rumination and catastrophizing, of negative interpretations based on nothing but imagination. And sometimes, like my roommate, our thoughts are a stream of harmless commentary going nowhere. No matter how creative the thinking, being absorbed in the chatter of our mind can cause us to walk through life oblivious to both obstacles and opportunities.

The starting point of meditation, prayer and pretty much every spiritual practice is to be present in our body in the moment. It's a tall order. Thinking can be seductive. It can lure us away from awareness that we are cold, hungry or so tired we need to rest. I am now paying the price of decades ignoring my back screaming at me to adjust my posture and find a chiropractor. Lack of body awareness can also have consequences that extend beyond the body.

Experience, and all the research I've done, tell me that gut instincts—those inexplicable reactions we have that tell us when we are in danger—are called gut instincts for a reason. They're experienced in our body. But physical reactions speak to us about more than imminent danger. They can be warning systems that someone has crossed our personal boundaries, that a course of action is not right for us, that a relationship is problematic. Equally they tell us when something is right for us, is in our best interests, is the path we should follow.

Body awareness when working in cooperation with our mind rather than subservient to it, can be a potent guiding force and a key ingredient in wise decision making.

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