



Session 3: The Heart – Living from Open Hearted Awareness

- **Ground Rules**
- **Wake up, Clean up, Grow up, Show up.**
- Living in Awareness, rather than thinking, as the container that all things live in is the goal of waking up.

“What a liberation to realise that the “voice in my head” is not who I am. Who am I then? The one who sees that.” - Eckhart Tolle.

- We practice it in meditation.
 - Awareness of your body.
 - Awareness of the now – use a word to bring you back to awareness of the present moment.

The Heart

The heart is often referred to as the place of our feeling or of our emotions, in our culture. But this a misunderstanding and a reduction of what is actually the core of our being. Most ancient cultures have an understanding of the heart as the centre of the human being. For example, for the Jewish people, the heart was the centre of the person, much more than the mind. The heart was the seat of not just the emotions, but actually of the intellect too. More importantly, it was the seat of the will, our volition, the place from which we made decisions. It was also the point of contact with the divine.



AWAKEN

I can see examples in my own life where my heart has come into play, even though I have largely lived life from my head. At one point I was offered a job that seemed perfect for me, as principal of a bible college. I had just finished graduate study in theology, and it almost seemed too good to be true that I would be given this opportunity. We met with the CEO of Bible College of NZ and I was filled with enthusiasm. On a rational level, this was exactly what I wanted and seemed like a perfect fit for me. But after sleeping on it that night, I woke up in the morning feeling completely cold about the idea. I had no enthusiasm for it whatsoever. It was a prime example of my heart knowing something that my head didn't. And so we never applied.

Question: Have you ever had an experience of knowing that was deeper than your head – something you might consider your heart knowing?

Recent medical science has confirmed this ancient belief in the centrality of the heart. They have discovered that the heart has a brain.

Let me read Deborah Rozman from the HeartMath institute:

When I was a practicing psychologist, sometimes when I'd be working with a client who was confused about an issue or decision, I'd ask, "What would your heart say?" I often adapted a gestalt technique using two chairs. When the client was sitting in one chair, I asked them to speak from their heart and talk to their mind sitting over there in the other chair. Then I'd have them switch chairs and speak from their head, talking to their heart, telling their heart the mind's views and concerns.



AWAKEN

It was like two different people talking. The heart spoke from genuine feeling and authenticity, in the present. The mind spoke from opinions, fears, shoulds and shouldn'ts. I had them switch chairs several times, until they had an epiphany. Very often the client would realize their heart's voice was their true self, a voice that offered both more intuition and common sense intelligence.

This is no coincidence. What's really fascinating is that the heart contains a little brain in its own right. Yes, the human heart, in addition to its other functions, actually possesses a heart-brain composed of about 40,000 neurons that can sense, feel, learn and remember. The heart brain sends messages to the head brain about how the body feels and more. When I first heard about this scientific research, it intuitively made sense. I had felt for a long time that the heart has its own mysterious way of knowing.

- **Heart Coherence Exercise:**
 - Focus your attention in the area of the heart. Imagine your breath is flowing in and out of your heart or chest area, breathing a little slower and deeper than usual. (5 seconds in, 5 seconds out)
 - Make a sincere attempt to experience a regenerative feeling such as appreciation or care for someone or something in your life.
 - *What was that like?*



AWAKEN

Not only does the heart send information to the brain, but it also senses and knows in quite a different way to the head – to our rational thinking. In the last session, we looked at the way that thinking separates into subject and object – and that it ultimately divides reality into compartments and categories that can be labelled, compared and acted on as objects.

The heart knows in quite a different way. If thinking is dualistic and conceptual, then the heart knows in ways that are non-dual, non-conceptual and unitive. Rational thinking looks at the world and can grasp the many-ness, the differences between things. The heart grasps the oneness, the connectedness of everything. But these two ways of knowing are not mutually exclusive or competitive – they are complementary and necessary. In the healthiest of human beings, the mind is subordinated or entrained to the heart. As we saw in the last session, the mind is subject to illusions, not least of which is the illusion of our ego, our false self – the person we think we are in our imagination. The mind exists in past or future and is focussed there. From our heart comes our truest and most authentic selves, and it is always present to the now, in awareness – in non-conceptual, non-dual awareness. This is the place human beings are meant to live from, and the place that most religious and mystical practices aim to lead us to – to living from the heart. To connect to the heart, we must first be free from our addiction to thinking.



AWAKEN

○ Glimpse 3: The 18 inch drop from head to heart

1. Sit comfortably, eyes open or closed, and simply be aware of all your senses. Notice the activity of thinking in your head.
2. First, unhook local awareness from thoughts in your head. Next, let it move down through your neck and into your chest, and then know—directly—from within your upper body.
3. Become familiar with this kind of direct knowing, which is neither looking down from your head nor going back up to your thoughts.
4. Feel the awareness and aliveness together: rest without going to sleep, and stay aware without going to thought to know.
5. Feel that awareness can know both the awareness and aliveness from within your body.
6. Notice a feeling of an open-hearted awareness from within the space in the center of your chest.
7. Feel as if you have relocated from your head to this open-hearted awareness, which you are now aware from.
8. Notice that you can invite and welcome any thoughts and emotions into your heart space so that you can remain at home in open-hearted awareness and have information from the office of your head come to you by Wi-Fi.
9. Inquire within: “What does open-hearted awareness know?” Wait and feel what it’s like to know, from this not-knowing that knows.
10. Be here, receive light with your eyes, and look out from the eyes of open-hearted awareness.

○ *What was that like?*