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The Nine Orientations of the Mind

The human mind has nine orientations that can be grouped into three main categories:

The first category is **“Charge” (Positive, Negative, and Neutral)**

The second category is **“Time” (Past, Present, and Future)**

The third category is **“State of Mind” (Thoughts, Feelings, and Body Sensations)**

In the first category, the **“Charge” of the mind** describes whether the mind is currently processing:

1. A Positive charge
2. A Negative charge
3. A Neutral charge

The **“Charge,”** describes an awareness of pleasant (positive), unpleasant (negative), and neutral (neither pleasant nor unpleasant) thoughts, feelings, or body sensations. Of course, experiences will have stronger and weaker charges within each category; such as mildly pleasant experiences, vs. highly pleasant experiences (eating a piece of buttered toast, vs. eating a sumptuous feast of your favorite delectable foods.)

In the second category, **“Time includes”**:

1. Present
2. Past
3. Future

“Present” describes living/focusing on the present moment, and one’s experiences moment by moment, whether those experiences are positive, negative, or neutral. Focusing on the breath is a powerful way to bring oneself to being fully alive and awake in the “now.”

When **focusing on the past**, one tends to create sadness and depression, in that a past focus often leads to longing and grasping for what no longer exists.

When **focusing on the future**, we tend to experience fears and worries about what may or may not occur in the future, which also leads to longing for that which we do not have (i.e.-wealth, love, success).

Focusing on the present is a natural antidote to depression; because with each breath we take, we realize we are safe at that moment, and that the breath is always there to soothe us, and assure us, that we are OK.

Think of the breath as always with you, and always there to soothe you in the present moment; no matter what challenges you are experiencing, whether they are in relationships, in work/school, or with physical health.

Additionally, think of the breath as a proverbial best friend, or family member, in that every breath taken slowly and deeply offers respite from the challenges of everyday life; and provides a proverbial loving hug with each deep, healing breath you take. Those deep, slow breaths facilitate the relaxation response in both the body and the mind, and engages the parasympathetic nervous system responsible for sleep onset, digestion of food, and romantic experiences.

Each breath we take also offers a new beginning, for self-awareness, for appreciating one's gifts in life, and for being more awake to the beauty that surrounds us, and the temporary nature of all things, which helps us be more fully alive to the possibilities that each moment, and each breath brings. Focusing on the breath helps us be more aware of the transitory nature of all things; as each breath has a clear beginning, middle and ending, just like all of our experiences in life.

Taking slow and healing deep breaths also helps facilitate acceptance of the transitory nature of all things, and provides us solace when we experience pain of any kind. These slow and deep breaths also help us remember that just as the breath is transitory, so too are all of our life experiences, and that we can be comforted knowing that pain, of any kind, is also temporary in nature as well.

In the third category, **“State of Mind”** includes:

1. Thoughts
2. Feelings
3. Physical Sensations

“Thoughts” or “Thinking mind” is centered in the cortical/executive functioning region of the brain, in which one makes decisions, plans, organizes, prioritizes, initiates tasks, inhibits unwanted responses/behaviors, and makes judgments, problem solves, and focuses on topics such as selfcare, work, academic pursuits, social relationships, hobbies and pleasurable activities.

The thinking mind is responsible for executive functioning, in which one manages one's daily activities of living, including performing academic and professional pursuits, caring for one's nutrition, exercise, sleep schedule, and managing one's finances. This part of the mind is also responsible for conflict resolution, learning different perspectives, and developing creative solutions to problems. The thinking mind is also responsible for creating balance between engaging in pleasurable activities and work activities,

successfully completing basic activities of daily living, and managing one's self-care, leisure, and productivity.

“Feeling,” or the “Feeling mind” is centered in the limbic structures of the brain, in which emotions such as sadness, happiness, fearfulness, anger, passion, and joy is experienced. The feeling mind is primitive and is not based on logic. It is also responsible for the “fight or flight response,” when one perceives threat of harm for self or loved ones. The feeling mind is also the center of desire for pleasures such as sex, and fulfilling other material and physical needs.

When one practices mindfulness of breathing exercises, they achieve a form of calm, clear awareness that helps the executive center of the brain thrive, taking into account one's desires, feelings, thoughts, and body sensations when planning and engaging in healthy communications, and behaviors.

Mindfulness of breathing exercises also offers the opportunity for accepting and self-soothing experiences when unpleasant feelings come into conscious awareness, given that taking slow, deep breaths promote the relaxation response, which is an essential feature in achieving a state of calm acceptance of whatever is occurring in the present moment.

“Sensing or the Sensing Mind” is centered in the Parietal Lobe (tasting and touching), the Temporal Lobe (smelling and hearing), and the Occipital Lobe (seeing). The sensing mind is central to the development of our habits and desires, and when taken to excess, leads to imbalance and addictions. Our culture is particularly susceptible to the sensing mind getting out of balance due to overstimulation of the five main senses.

Mindfulness practice is an essential method to create balance when seeking positive sensory experiences. Because humans now have the capacity to achieve instant gratification of the senses by playing hyper-stimulating video games, eating fast food, ordering Uber Eats at all hours; immediately listening to a favorite song or watching a favorite video on U-Tube or Spotify, or instantly purchasing a favorite fragrance for same day delivery,

humans are becoming accustomed to immediate gratification that can easily lead to imbalance and the development of unhealthy habits.

Mindfulness practice provides the opportunity to gently observe the desires of the sensing mind to be experienced but not acted upon, and then notice the wanting melt away without succumbing to the impulsive, immediate desires of the sensing mind. This mindfulness practice enhances one's executive functioning abilities to effectively filter and control unwanted, unhealthy emotional, behavioral, or cognitive responses to the sensing mind.