



DISCIPLINE

IS THE KEY TO FREEDOM: METHODS OF PRACTICING SCIENCE OF MIND

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How many of us dislike the word discipline? Usually it implies either punishment or sacrifice, doesn't it? There are, however, other uses for the word discipline. It also means to "train oneself to do something in a controlled and habitual way" and an "activity or experience that provides mental or physical training." Think of athletes and meditators.

Think of what we are each doing when we seek to reprogram our subconscious mind with affirmations, visualizations and spiritual mind treatment. Aren't we engaging in activities that are designed to train ourselves to perceive, think and act from a spiritual viewpoint?

Used as a noun, a discipline is "a branch of knowledge, typically one studied in higher education." When you study a discipline, you focus on it, dive deeply into it, explore it from as many angles as possible, and eventually gain a level of mastery over it.

As we learn the principles and engage in the practices of Science of Mind, we are studying the discipline of metaphysics, specifically focusing on New Thought, mental science, spiritual healing and mysticism.

The root word of discipline is *disciple* — someone who follows a teacher or leader or philosopher. Since we don't follow Dr. Ernest Holmes per se, we might say we are followers of a philosophy — or as Holmes would say, we are "practitioners of the Science of Mind."

Anyone who follows the principles and engages in the practices of Science of Mind is a practitioner (lowercase p). Those who are specifically trained and licensed to be spiritual coaches and to use these principles and practices for another we call professionally Licensed Practitioners (capital P). So all of us are, in fact, practitioners, disciples of this philosophy, faith and way of life.

THE TENDENCY OF OUR THINKING

Many of us love the Science of Mind teachings but only practice haphazardly. We may engage in self-awareness or practicing the presence for a period of time — while reading a book or taking a class — but have you noticed how easy it is to drift away from it?

In the press of our busy lives, we revert back to old patterns of thinking and ways of behaving. Why do we do this, even though we know better and absolutely want to live from the deep truths that we believe in? The answer is simple: habit.

In 1906, Thomas Toward called it "grooves of thought." In 1938, Holmes called it our "thought atmosphere" based on the "tendency of our thinking." Today science describes it as "synapses that fire together, wire together."





These are habits of thinking, feeling and acting that have become subconsciousness patterns of belief, which then act as the filter through which we perceive the world and determine how we react, speak and behave.

What can we say about habits? They are automatic, unconscious and we are somehow comfortable in them even when we claim we want to change them. Maybe it's just easier to live in the habit because it is automatic and unconscious. We don't have to do the diligent work of becoming aware of the habit, deciding to change it and then actually choosing to see, think, feel or do something differently.

Habits themselves are neither good nor bad. We are designed to run on habits because our brains simply couldn't be consciously aware of and respond to every single one of the 6 billion bits of information that come at us every second.

We need our habits to help us notice what's important, filter out what's not and respond accordingly. The fact that we have habits isn't the problem. It's the fact that we, ourselves, haven't consciously programmed our habits to be what we choose them to be.

The good news is that habits can be broken, or rather, rewritten. If you want to have healthy eating habits, you don't just stop eating. No, you create a new habit of eating healthy food. Science calls this using the neuroplasticity of our brain. Holmes calls it the use of "trained thought."

METHODS TO RESPOND IN ALIGNMENT

How do we, then, engage in a habitual mental and spiritual training that grounds our consciousness, our habits and our whole lives in the teachings of Science of Mind? First, we learn and study the principles (discussed in the October 2019 issue of this magazine). Next, we begin to use the practices to deepen our understanding and apply what we are learning to our lives (in the November 2019 issue).

Finally, we realize that we need specific, regular disciplines to train our consciousness and reprogram our brains so we will automatically and unconsciously respond in alignment with our practice of the principles of Science of Mind. We call these disciplines "methods."

Here's how they go together:

Principle: a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.



Practice: the actual application or use of an idea or belief, as opposed to theories relating to it.

Method: a systematic procedure, technique or mode applied to practice principles.

Truthfully, there are potentially hundreds of methods to help us practice the principles. Centers for Spiritual Living has decided to focus on a specific set of methods because they directly aim at developing this regular, systematic training of our consciousness. Methods provide technique and structure to our practice.

Think of it like having a personal trainer at the gym. We can start working out on our own, but isn't it great to have someone tell you not only what to do but how to do it, along with what specific muscle groups you are strengthening?

We may not always like doing what our trainer tells us to do, but it doesn't take long to begin to see results. As we see results, we are encouraged to carry on, stay focused and stay committed. Over time we are thrilled with how our body is stronger, healthier, more flexible and fit.

Isn't this exactly what we want from our mind, heart and consciousness?

Methods are processes, procedures and techniques designed to reprogram our subconscious minds, strengthen aspects of our awareness and open doors in our consciousness. The challenge, of course, is that we have to actually do them, regularly and systematically.

And there we are again, right back to discipline.

Methods are useful only if we use them. The methods support our practice by keeping us engaged, motivated, disciplined and strong in our spiritual living. This means we work with the methods whether we feel like it or not, because we have decided how we want to live and we value the outcome.

Let's make friends with discipline. We'll never stop engaging in methods of training that support our practice of the principles. They'll just get more and more refined, taking us to deeper, higher and richer levels of creativity, consciousness and awareness.

PRACTICING SCIENCE OF MIND PRINCIPLES

Each method is associated with the primary practice Centers for Spiritual Living teaches to apply the principles. Methods can clearly be in support of more than one practice.



SPIRITUAL MIND TREATMENT, BOTH A PRACTICE AND A METHOD

Spiritual Mind Treatment is an act, art and science. It is an act, being the conscious activity of thought. It is an art, in that there must be conviction, appreciation and realization. It is a science, in that it produces verifiable results through the application of impersonal, consistent spiritual law.

METHODS FOR PRACTICING THE PRESENCE

Meditation opens us to inner awareness. It transcends all theologies and allows us to directly experience the One Infinite Reality. There are many forms of meditation, each of which opens us to be receptive to the Presence of Universal Spirit.

Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment, objectively observing the behavior, attitudes and beliefs of ourselves and others. Mindfulness creates awareness of our inner alignment and congruence in daily living.

Visioning consciously opens us to be receptive to the impress of Universal Spirit. Visioning is the practice of cultivating the field of consciousness and illuminating what wants to emerge into form, without preconceived ideas or limitations. Visioning has a specific methodology, which can be used individually or in a group. Visioning may also be done informally.

METHODS FOR EXPERIENCING DIRECT REVELATION

There are many methods to experience direct revelation, including cultivating intuition, inspiration and receptivity.

METHODS FOR DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS

Silence creates an inner spaciousness to become aware of one's own consciousness, to experience the rise and fall of thoughts and feelings without attachment or judgment. It invites us to become comfortable within our own body/mind, to release distractions so that self-awareness has space to grow.

Spiritual coaching is working with a professionally Licensed Practitioner to assist in examining one's life in the light of spiritual principles, becoming aware of one's inner states, hidden beliefs and patterns of thought. There are many other methods for practicing self-awareness, which can be done alone or guided by another, including but not limited to guided imagery, journaling and therapy.

METHODS FOR DEVELOPING GRATITUDE

Journaling is a powerful way to practice gratitude on a regular or daily basis. There are many other methods for practicing gratitude.

METHODS FOR DEVELOPING COMPASSION

Forgiveness is a significant way to practice compassion; the process of releasing hurts, judgments or grievances allows us to see the Universal Spirit in everyone.

Sacred service is a way to practice compassion by actively serving others, as well as seeking to bring about the CSL Global Vision of a world that works for everyone.

METHODS FOR INTENTIONAL MANIFESTATION

Spiritual mind treatment is our primary and most significant methodology for intentional manifestation, creating the bridge between spiritual truth and manifested reality, transforming creation into a reflection of spiritual truth.

Affirmation and visualization are methods for intentional manifestation. Affirmations and visualizations create a new causal idea and a deeper acceptance within us of the reality of the idea, which then becomes the seed for the new manifestation.

Giving and receiving are ways to practice conscious participation in the circulation of universal good in all of its forms.

METHODS OF SACRED STUDY

Contemplation is a tool for the practice of sacred study. It expands our conscious awareness and embodiment of a spiritual principle or idea. Reading and discussing sacred writing, contemporary books and materials of a spiritual nature, and one's engagement with the ideas presented, invite exploration, discernment and alignment with Science of Mind principles and universal spiritual truth.



OTHER METHODS TO FURTHER EMBODY THE PRINCIPLES

There are many methods to practice and apply the spiritual principles in everyday life. Ongoing proficiency and expansion of spiritual practices nurture the application and embodiment of our spiritual principles.

Exploring additional methods to deepen our understanding and practice that are in alignment with our spiritual principles is valued and encouraged. ✨