

# Psychocorporeal Awareness

## Meaning of awareness

To exist does not mean only to be able to look at the outer world, but also to be able to know oneself as the one who can look at the world. Self-awareness is not only a subjective inner experience, but it constitutes also the basis through which we see the real world around us. By increasing self-awareness one can start to see the world and the others related to himself, instead of seeing himself related to the others.

The goal of awareness is to “stay in the present” and the only way to do it is by exerting *concentration*, which means “to go straight to the centre of the situation”; concentration is connected to *interest*, which means “to be in a situation”, and to *attention*, which means “to raise tension against an object”. After all, the three ingredients for staying in the present are: to be in a situation, to go straight to the centre of the situation and to raise tension.

## Awareness Development

Awareness is not a quality acquired once and for all. It is, first of all, an attitude of consciousness, which has to be trained and constantly improved. The first form of awareness is superficial: being aware of one’s body (with its needs), emotions, thoughts. The training of self-observation, little by little, allows to enter in a deeper awareness, or *self-consciousness*; one becomes aware of being the author of his sensations, emotions, thoughts, and he discovers that all these contents have a history, they do not appear all of a sudden. Initially born as adapting reactions to an environment perceived as hostile, they have sedimented till they have begun to build the present personality.

Nevertheless, the defenses we built once and which were functional to our life work no longer. We must become aware of them and in case we must choose to readjust them, or even to abandon them. The “history” of the defenses has crystallized in the body, creating blockages, both muscular and postural. Each blockage corresponds to particular emotions and thoughts.

## The psychocorporeal awareness work

The psychocorporeal awareness work starts in a conception of the person seen as a bio-psycho-spiritual unity, in which the psychic “contents”, like sensations, emotions, thoughts work at various levels and are conditioned one another. For example, a negative emotion affects and creates a negative thought and, vice versa, a positive thought is associated to a positive emotion; when we are happy, we feel our body more alive, vibrant and quicker too.

Very often we feel engulfed by our emotions and mood, and, since we do not know the causes, we decide, more or less consciously, to ignore or to appease them in ways that give rise to anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction and restlessness.

The main goal of the psychocorporeal awareness work is the integration and harmonization of the psychic contents or levels of experience (body, sensations, emotions, thoughts, imagination). The process of integration of a psychic content requires: 1) the content expression, or dramatization, in order for it 2) to be seen, 3) known, 4) integrated within consciousness.

Each of these steps has its characteristic evolution, but it is better to know that this is the correct sequence to be followed in the work of integration and that no one of these steps can be bypassed. For example, to apply cathartic techniques without elaborating them afterwards results in a temporary relief, which is connected to the release of energy itself. The blocked energy gets freed but, without the following awareness work, the experience cannot be fixed in consciousness, it cannot be integrated in the psychic structure, so that it cannot give rise to a permanent transformation.

The psychocorporeal awareness work makes use of expressive and introspective techniques, to be applied in an integral way. Among the expressive techniques there are: the movement, the emotional expression, the amplification, the confrontation; among the introspective ones: the relaxation, the imaginative work (like the guided awake dreaming, the creative visualization), the conscious elaboration.

## **Why is it so important to know one's inner world**

We are living in a world with plenty of informations, while we are not so inclined to go deep inside of us to discover our essence, which constitutes the real knowledge. We rather prefer to stay at the surface, this plenty of informations, which most of the time we do not succeed or have no time to process. This attitude often hides the fear to go inside of us and to discover whatever obscure and shameful truths.

Running through the awareness path, one realizes that knowledge itself is fascinating, even though it could appear painful at the beginning. Self-knowledge allows us to understand:

- the main *causes of suffering*, much of them self-produced by the psychic dysfunctional structures;
- the main *causes of stress*. To this purpose, it is useful to specify that there can exist two kinds of stress, only one of which, the so called *distress*, causing suffering to the person; the other kind of stress, the so called *eustress*, is beneficial, keeps the interest for life alive and activates the energy needed for action;
- the *daily restlessness*. This is a state derived primarily from a widespread dissatisfaction, from living without purpose, it is a widespread ignorance of one's inner world, a state of distance from one's deepest needs and from one's closest motivations, as well as unconsciousness and passiveness towards life, rooted on a lack of courage and on attachment to one's safety.

## **Benefits of the psychocorporeal awareness work**

The effects of the psychocorporeal awareness work can be the following:

- *increasing relational skill*; to be well with oneself results in being well with the others. Diminishing projections, which pollute relationships, results in seeing the others more objectively and in being more authentic; so, one is accepted and accepts more;
- *increasing assertiveness*, that is ability to assert strongly one's truths, without hurting the other while respecting his opinions;

- *increasing self-esteem.* Knowing oneself better results in a clearer vision of one's limits and potentialities; therefore, one can self-esteem for what he is and this produces a constant happiness and a sense of power and efficacy. Besides, having improved relationships, the positive feedback from the others strengthens one's self-esteem;
- *increasing stress tolerance.* Having achieved a better knowledge of the meaning of the stress, as well as of one's true possibilities, one chooses activities and lifestyles which preserve his vital energy, without scattering it in unuseful activities and occupations. Thus, one is also ready to face stressing events and to transform events once considered as stressing in opportunities and challenges for his growth and creativity.