

Letting the Subconscious Loose

During May's Pagan Forum, the guest speaker, Di Gramp – a clinical psychologist, gave information on the areas and functions of the brain. For Pagans, the most interesting part of the brain is the Ancestral Mind. This part of the brain is the older, pre-verbal, emotional mind that has more to do with the feelings and intuition.

The following exercises have been presented by Di Gramp, so that we can better understand the various states of relaxation that the mind is capable of, and so that we can more easily connect with the Ancestral Mind.



Opening the Door to the Ancestral Mind by Di Gramp

THE BODY HAS TWO MINDS – one deals with words and one with feelings. The thinking mind is tyrannical and prevents experience and feeling. The experience of the Ancestral Mind is opened by the Relaxation Response. It is a state where your brain activity slows from the fast 'beta' state to the slower 'alpha' state.

Before you begin the relaxation techniques, the following conditioning exercises should be practised until you feel comfortable with both of them.

Exercise One

Sit in a comfortable chair and face straight ahead, roll your eyes upwards as far as you can. This may be uncomfortable initially. However, it is important to hold your eyes in the upward position for as long as you can. When the strain is more than you wish to continue enduring, close your eyes and let your eyes return to their normal resting position. Continue to sit comfortably with your eyes closed for a minute or two relaxing, breathing deeply and allowing your mind to be as blank as you can. The benefit will be that you have forced yourself into a very light level of the alpha stage. When the eyes roll upwards, this can be a trigger for alpha brainwaves. Since alpha is necessary for deep relaxation, this exercise will begin to train your mind for entering your alpha state at will.

Exercise Two

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Visualise the letters of your name slowly, one letter at a time. Then visualise your entire name all at once. Then erase your name in your mind and open your eyes. This simple exercise will help you develop your ability to visualise. Visualisation is one of the keys to successful relaxation and is the beginning that allows you to then go beyond deep relaxation into a deeper psychological state. For many, beginning visualisation is a difficult process. Do not be discouraged if you have difficulties in the early stages. For example, if the first letter of your name is 'D', and you are not able to visualise it, then mentally describe it to yourself. A 'D' has one straight vertical bar with a half circle curve joined on the right. Now tell your conscious mind or intellect that the 'D' is there and with practice

you will learn to visualise it. As with any worthwhile skill, practice and more practice makes the task easier. This is true for all mind training.

Relaxation Techniques

To achieve the relaxation response, it is important to practice the following five behaviours until you feel comfortable doing them in any situation.

1. Make sure you are warm. Use a rug if available, or have a warm bath or shower. Your hands placed flat on your stomach can induce a feeling of warmth and calm.
2. Increase the intake of oxygen by deepening your breathing. This is most simply done by taking a deeper breath and holding it longer than usual before release.
3. Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation, and synchronise with your breathing. Start with your toes. Tense and hold for 5 seconds - relax. Calves and knees – tense-hold for 5 seconds - relax. Thighs and buttocks – tense – hold for 5 seconds – relax. Continue this to the top of your head.
4. Try and shut down your sensory input as much as possible (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, skin, etc) eg, close your eyes, reduce noise, do not chew or talk, wear comfortable clothing.
5. Increase your internal focus and try not to think about things external to your own body. Practice ‘looking behind’ your eyes inside your head and either listen to a ‘visualisation’ tape or make up your own tapes to fit your individual situation.

Summary

Before words, we had images. Images affect body physiology and therefore emotions. Images evoke the Relaxation Response and open the Ancestral Mind. Feelings are equally as trustworthy as rational thought and NOT less than.



Deep Psychological Relaxation... What is it Exactly?

Deep psychological relaxation is very similar to daydreaming. When you daydream, your state of consciousness or activity changes in your brain from the very busy Beta to the quieter, slower Alpha frequency. In a state of deep relaxation or Alpha, your conscious mind will become quiet or passive. Once this is achieved, it allows your Ancestral mind to make suggestions in the subconscious part of your mind, which is more effective and longer lasting than making the same suggestions into your conscious mind.

Your brain operates in measurable frequency cycles and each frequency corresponds with a certain type of brain activity. As early as 1929, a man by the name of Hans Berger, used an EEG machine and discovered that when your eyes are closed, the brain generates regular waves in cycles of eight to twelve per second. He called these brainwaves, “alphawaves”. Subsequent to this discovery, with more monitoring,

other types of brainwaves were discovered, and they have labels such as ‘Theta’, ‘Beta’, ‘Delta’. These distinct brainwave patterns, we now know, correlate to various mental functions, including what we call deep relaxation and other psychological experiences.

Now let’s look at the different brain frequency ranges and their functions.

Beta

The most common one is ‘Beta’.

This is commonly called ‘consciousness’ or your ‘conscious mind region’ and has a regular brainwave frequency in the range from fourteen cycles per second to approximately twenty cycles per second. It is the state that we are most used to. It is where we conduct our day to day reasoning and most of our waking affairs. When we sleep, the brain automatically cycles down from the beta range into alpha, and then for a very brief cyclic period it goes into theta and occasionally delta. Most of your sleep however, is in the second stage that we call alpha, and this is where deep relaxation also takes place. The difference with deep relaxation is that the brain cycles down into alpha without you actually going to sleep. That is when we believe our subconscious mind is operating and is open to suggestive input. The conscious mind or beta state however, is not very good at taking suggestions. It is most useful for thinking, reasoning, putting things into action and responding to all of the demands of the body, and the body’s reactions to the environment on a day to day, minute to minute basis.

Alpha

Alpha is what is known as the subconscious mind region or the ‘subconscious’ and it generates a regular frequency range from approximately seven to fourteen cycles per second. This is where dreaming takes place when we are sleeping. It is where we daydream, and where nearly all deep relaxation takes place. When you meditate, it is most likely that your brain is cycling in the alpha range. Sometimes, what we generally call unusual psychological experiences also take place in alpha. It is particularly so where deep relaxation is concerned. (This is unlike beta in the conscious mind which can only act on what it already knows). The subconscious mind is willing to accept new suggestions and then cause them to become a reality in our conscious life. In part, the subconscious mind informs the conscious mind that there is some new information to be acted upon and this can be extremely useful to us in changing our experience and beliefs and/or behaviour.

Theta

Theta is also a part of the subconscious range, and deep relaxation can sometimes take place here as well. A lot of our very strong emotional experiences to life appear to be recorded in a theta state. It is a very special range of approximately four to seven regular brainwaves per second, and it opens the door beyond deep relaxation and the subconscious, into the world of psychic phenomena. Theta is the range where psychic experience is most likely to occur. Delta and Theta Metronome tapes and CD’s can assist in reaching this state.

Delta

The final stage we call Delta. The frequency range of brain activity in the Delta is from zero to four cycles per second. We call this state, 'total unconsciousness'. Very little is known about what the brain is doing in the Delta range, although there are many cases reported where the brain has been generating Delta brainwaves for years and the client returns to consciousness and the beta state with total memory loss of the intervening weeks, months or years of unconsciousness. At most, they are able to report that they were aware of something pulling them back to consciousness.

There is no trick or magic to deep relaxation or meditation. Any human being can master the skill of using suggestions to bring about powerful desired results. However, it is good to remember:

- Deep relaxation is not a matter of the strength of your mind. You are aware and awake at all times, you are simply focussing your attention internally rather than externally.
- Under the deep relaxation state, you will always be aware of where you are and what is happening. You will hear everything, but it will be more in a dreamlike state of deep relaxation.
- Sometimes you may have numbness throughout your body, or no real awareness of having your body.
- It is possible to deeply relax yourself, and many people practice this every day to allow the Ancestral Mind to make constructive deep suggestions.
- It is possible to learn how to relax yourself, and it can speed up the process of healing in your life. If possible, it is best to tape your deep relaxation inductions so that you can play them to yourself over and over again, and get more and more practice in reaching the alpha state.



Meditation and visualisation are two of the most important tools of Magick. By understanding the science of the brain, and by being aware of how to achieve these different levels of consciousness, your inner power can develop more quickly and more effectively.