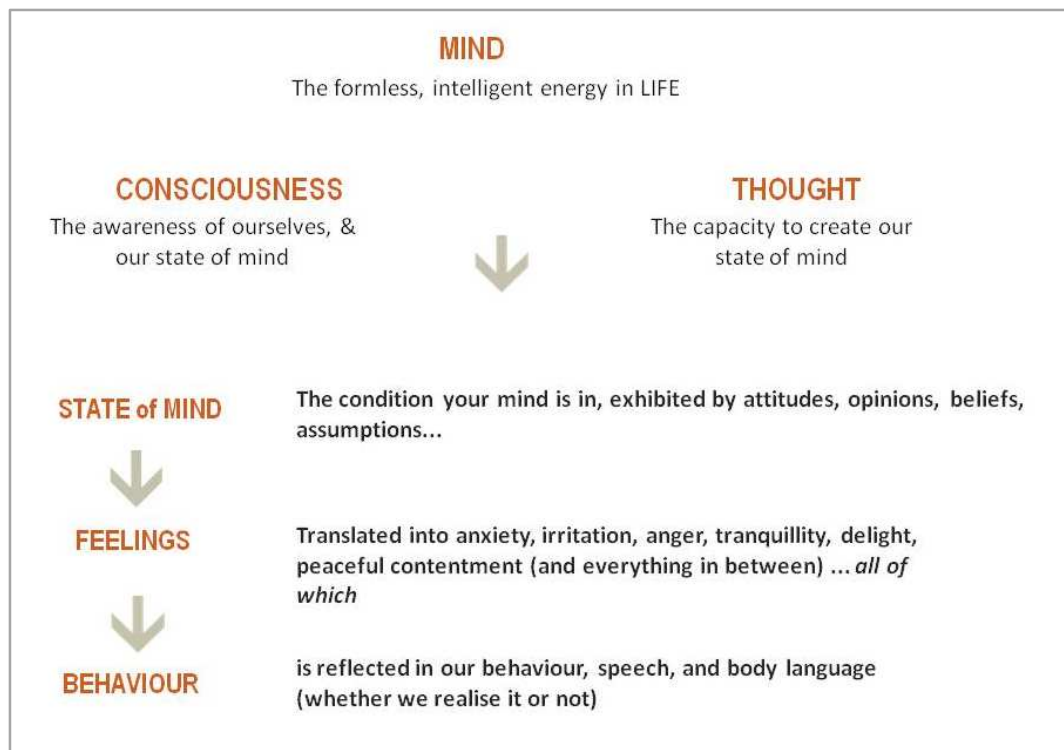


The Unsettled Mind

Everyone has an unsettled mind from time to time, some of us more often than we would like to think. Before we talk about the unsettled mind, it might be helpful to explore what we mean by it. To have an unsettled mind does not mean that we are mad or crazy. Generally, it means that our minds are agitated or preoccupied with many thoughts; or a thought that consumes our attention. To describe an unsettled mind we might use words such as uncertain, confused, disorganised, vexed, unsteady or erratic. When our minds are in any of those states we experience life with anxiety, worry, fear, jealousy, envy, anger and others forms of distress. The Figure below outlines three Principles, working in partnership, that create our human experience...



Our human experience, or in this case, our feelings, have a direct cause and effect relationship with STATE of MIND. Thus, any feeling (such as irritation) is directly correlated to the type of thinking that is going on in our minds in that moment. Likewise, if we are feeling on top of things our thinking is clear and focused - our STATE of MIND is secure or settled.

Like a barometer which measures the rise and fall of temperature, our feelings measure the settled or unsettled nature of our minds in any given moment. If our minds are scatty, confused, busy jumping from one idea to the next, thinking too far ahead - our feelings reflect this via irritation, anxiousness, anger or even violent outburst.

Similarly, when we are focused, clear-minded and reflective, our feelings will be calm - we feel 'on the ball' and able to meet demanding circumstances with a level-headedness that gets the job done.

Often, we realise in hindsight that our thinking was way off - we have worried for nothing, and our behaviour was way out of line. Feelings tell us that our state of mind or thinking is not working for us. Moreover, they provide an opportunity to find a level of calmness, perspective and commonsense.

Signposts on the Road

Our world has so much information via signage: “Slippery when wet”, “Keep kitchen clean”, “No Standing Area”, on and on... is it any wonder that we sometimes fail to read the signs! Driving along, our minds elsewhere, Stop Signs go unheeded - and without the wake up of an accident we continue, oblivious. Or we might (as I did recently) find ourselves fighting a door, only to realise that we are pulling instead of pushing - the sign on the handle clearly indicating "Push".

Likewise, feelings function as signposts, and we can so easily and habitually overlook the importance of them, not recognising that our state of mind is far from settled. When we fail to give due respect to the feelings that reflect our state of mind, this prevents us from taking different actions. We are "pulling" instead of "pushing". Moreover, ignoring our unsettled mind prevents us from being more available to our commonsense, our intuition and sound judgment. Hence, we are less responsive to the circumstances that come our way.

Feelings: our very Experience of Life

Ignoring our feelings always has consequences, and we ignore them at our peril. They are at work in every decision we make, every action we take, in the way we relate to others... they are our very experience of Life.

Feelings are not only a barometer but a gift, and in appreciating our inner signposts, we are provided with an opportunity to quieten, and become more self-aware. In that conscious state, we have created the space in our minds to listen more deeply to our unlimited wisdom. ■ ■

Ignoring our feelings always has consequences... they are at work in every decision we make, every action we take, in the way we relate to others... they are our very experience of Life.