

Staying Awake

Look closely at this picture. Look closely at the diagram for a few seconds. Do you see the purple dot? Do you see the green dots disappear? This is a famous illusion called the illusion Lilac Chaser.

How do our senses fool us? How do they make us see something which is not there in reality?

These illusions are optical illusions. The question for today relates to illusions of another kind, about how in real life we see things that are not real. So for example, how we can have an idea that another person does not like us or an idea about our-self that we are not good enough.

To answer the question, we must describe the 3 main states of consciousness experienced in ordinary life.

The first is deep sleep. Even in deep sleep even there is some consciousness. For example when we wake from deep sleep we know that we have slept well. Equally we awaken to the cry of a child, to the smell of smoke or to somebody calling our name. All this suggests that something is awake, is conscious within us.

When we awaken from deep sleep, we move to a different level of consciousness, which brings broadening experience and awareness. We become conscious of the world around us. This state we called the waking state.

Between deep sleep and waking there is another level of consciousness, this is where sleep is dominated by dreams. These dreams are related to the world we perceive in the waking state, but are often distortions of it.

These dreams do not stop when we wake up. We do not always know this, but in fact we spend much of our day dreaming, recalling the past or imagining about tomorrow.

So for example we can get up in the morning, wash ourselves and have our breakfast before we begin to notice our surroundings. Rarely are we wholly in the present.

The images in such dreams can often be pleasant or when out of control they can be very unpleasant. For example dreaming about what to do at the weekend can be pleasant or thinking about exams can be unpleasant.

Such dreams interfere with everything, from study to peaceful sleep. They take us away from the present reality of the current situation and not only cause tension and anxiety but consume vital energy.

To help us move from this dream stage to the waking state we have meditation. The meditation helps us move from the dream state of circling ideas to the waking state which is conscious and full of presence. The meditation helps us move to the waking state where there is real creativity, satisfaction, freedom and joy, and where we see things as they really are.

And so the challenge for this week is to ask yourself the question:

Are you awake?