



***Awakening
What's Next***

What Do I Want, What Do I Need

This practice aims to help you attend to your internal experience in order to clarify what you want/need. While there are people who attend to desires in the extreme, many of us pay too little attention to our own desires. Generally this begins with the injunctions, or “shoulds,” that we learn as children. While we certainly need direction, too often we are taught to adhere to a set of rules that don’t allow us to act on our own behalf. We grow up feeling like our needs and wants are selfish or that we can’t let others know them for fear of being vulnerable. Having clarity about what you need and want does not mean that you become a self-centered individual, rather this clarity supports clearer communication, better self care and paradoxically, an increased capacity to care for others. It will also help you stop automatic behavior that you do to fulfill a need that is not fully conscious, for example reaching for a cup of coffee when your energy lags rather than fully experiencing the fatigue and choosing a short nap.

Practice: Twice each day do a full body scan. The scan begins by sitting or standing quietly and turning your attention within. Take two or three deep breaths and then starting at the top of your head, simply let your attention move downward through your body paying attention to any sensations as you move toward your feet. Examples might be tightness across the forehead, tension in the shoulders or a satisfying fullness in the stomach. With each sensation, gently pause to see if there is an emotion that is associated with the sensation. Once you’ve finished the scan, gently ask yourself the question, “what do I want or need” and listen for the answer. Take your time. If you aren’t used to asking, it may take awhile for an answer to emerge. You don’t necessarily have to attend to the want/need once you’ve heard it, for now it is enough to simply learn to recognize your internal signals.

Contemplate these questions at the end of your day using a journal if you like:

- What is it like to attend to your desires consciously?
- Did any old beliefs or assumptions arise to hijack the process?
- How do you imagine this practice could help shift your behavior?