

Realizing the Deep "I" by Eckhart Tolle:

There are two dimensions to who you are. The first is what I sometimes call the "surface I"—the person with a past and a future. This is your historical identity, which is relatively fragile because the past and future only exist as thought forms or concepts in the mind. Most people on the planet are completely identified with the "surface I."

The second dimension to who you are is what I like to call the "Deep I." The most vital realization in your lifetime is to see that in addition to being a historical person or a "surface I," you are more fundamentally the "Deep I." This realization frees you from looking only to the "surface I" for your ultimate sense of identity—where it can never be found. It frees you from the frustrating sense that there's always something missing or not quite right in life.

So, how do you realize it? You realize it in the gap between two thoughts, the space in which the historical person of the "surface I" momentarily subsides and disappears. What's left of you is nothing that you could talk about or even understand conceptually. All you know is there is an underlying sense of presence, of being-ness, that is at once still, alert, and vitally alive. This is what it means to become aware of awareness. The practice is to invite moments of presence into your daily life so that you don't spend your entire day dragged along by the stream of thought in the mind.

It's important to recognize that the "surface I" and the "Deep I" are ultimately not separate. The "surface I" is a manifestation of consciousness in the same way that the ripple on the surface of the ocean is a manifestation of the ocean. It's only when the ripple is unaware that it is the ocean that a sense of separateness arises—which of course is an illusion.

This realization of yourself as the "Deep I" is so freeing, so liberating, because you're being liberated from the burden of knowing yourself only as the "surface I" and its so-called "drama." When you realize yourself as the "Deep I," it enables you to have a compassionate attitude toward everything that makes up the "surface I"—your physical form, your personal identity (or the historical person), the thoughts and emotions you experience, and so on. It also gives you access to true creativity and true intelligence—both of which are rooted in the formless dimension.

So, welcome moments of quiet and stillness into your life whenever you can. It doesn't have to be for an hour; even a few minutes throughout the day to step out of thinking and sense yourself as the "Deep I" is enough. Over time you will live more and more continuously with an awareness of the "Deep I" in the background of your life, so to speak. And you will find it easier to maintain this awareness even when challenges arise.