

## **Focus Is More than Concentration**

**by Stewart Blackburn**

When we think of focusing we usually imagine a fine concentration, one that is mostly unwavering and pointed toward a particular subject. That's an excellent way of looking at focus, but there's more to focusing than that. It might be like looking through a pair of binoculars where we point the binoculars in our desired direction and then turn the little wheel until our object of interest becomes very clear. However, what we are pointing our binoculars at is what becomes our reality for that moment. Our focus thus defines our truth.

Each of us lives in our own subjective reality. We each see things a little differently. We each process what we see differently, according to what we expect to see or want to see. We each choose what we will look at and what we will ignore. We place differing values on the elements of what we see. And we perceive things differently according to how we are feeling emotionally, often changing many times a day. So, in essence, we are choosing our reality based on subjective factors that are in perpetual flux.

Since we are making the choices about our reality and we can make an infinite number of subtle choices, we can choose from an infinite number of realities. Now we ordinarily seem to live in a continuous stream of experiences that we would like to think are all connected in some sort of reasonable pattern, even though there isn't much evidence that this is so. Many things seem to just "happen" to us that change our pattern; we just accept that this is the way of life and move on.

We make our choices in the context of a life we have chosen to live and there are plenty of aspects of this context that are out of bounds for changing. Growing a new limb, breathing underwater without aids, living without water are just a few of these aspects. But within the context of life there are no limits to what we can choose. The key to making the choices for what we desire is focus.

If what we are experiencing is a function of what we are focusing on, then it's obvious that if we want a different experience, then we need a different focus – preferably, a focus on what we want. And how do we shift that focus? With our thoughts and feelings.

There are several kinds of focus that we can use. One of them is identity. When we decide that we are such-and-such, we define a world-view based on our idea of that identity. If I identify as a healer, then I see problems and solutions from a healer's perspective. If I identify as a warrior, then I see problems and solutions that involve power and winning. If I identify as a teacher, I am more interested in what I can learn and hopefully teach in the problems and solutions in front of me.

Each of these focuses present us with a reality that is defined by that identity. If we move or modify that identity, our reality changes. If I say that I am a spiritual healer, the problems and solutions would be primarily defined as spiritual ones. If I am a warrior and decide that I am a spiritual warrior, then the experience of dealing with problems and solutions would be in non-physical terms. And if I decided that I wasn't just any old teacher, but rather a spiritual teacher, then I would experience my problems and solutions in terms of how these problems and solutions fit into the world-view that I am trying to convey.

Another category of focuses would be values. Each time I acknowledge that I prefer one thing over another, I help define the experiences I will be choosing from and thus how I will be experiencing life. If, for instance, I value family higher than almost anything else, that will shape the decisions I make to solve problems. If I decide that I value my children in particular, then that shapes things a little differently.

Or I could value a particular philosophy or religion above any others. That would shape my reality in major ways. If I shift it slightly and value that philosophy or religion to the point that other points of view need to be eliminated, I would be experiencing a very different life.

Or I could value living harmoniously with my environment above other perspectives of living on Earth, and that would define my experience. A change in valuing my environment to the point of being willing to die for it, would, of course, shape my continued existence (short as it may be.)

There are other styles of focuses, such as, emotional intensities and significances, degrees of responsibility for one's own life versus blaming others, and dreams of the future.

The point is that we choose realities for ourselves based on a number of deeper factors that we often overlook. Each focus defines a style of reality that we then experience. If we decide that we want to change the experiences we're having in life, then we need to change our focus. And to do that we must understand what is guiding what we're focusing on.

A small change in focus can result in a major change of life experience. To do this wisely requires the patience to see what our focus is and what we want it to be. The choice of what we are focusing on is entirely ours.

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