

# CONSCIOUSNESS, ENERGY AND FOCUS



Andrew Marshall  
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When we focus our consciousness, our energy is also focused. In this article we will look at the effects, both good and bad, of this natural phenomenon and how we may make the best use of it..

Everyone in business or involved in any organisation knows that for any progress to be made it is necessary to have objectives. Objectives are normally defined aims, targets or principles together with the methods for achieving or maintaining them. They are the love of managers and the bane of those who work under their direction; nevertheless, their purpose is to focus the consciousness and energy of the organisation along certain lines of thought and action.

Goals set by individuals in their private lives are usually less formal but no less effective. For example, a few weeks ago tens of thousands of people ran through the streets of London for over twenty six miles. Every single one of them had focused his or her individual consciousness on the goal of running in, and completing, the marathon. Only through focusing the mind – and therefore the consciousness – over many weeks and months were those remarkable participants able to achieve what they did. The same principle applies to study, playing a musical instrument, learning a foreign language and all the other goals that millions upon millions of people set themselves and pursue, week in, week out.

That sustained mental focus or intent on a specific objective can achieve great things is unarguable. What is particularly interesting is

the demonstration it provides of the connection between mind, consciousness and the physical world. “Energy follows thought” is an old maxim but for those who assert that the only real world is the one we detect through the senses, the fact that something as ephemeral as thought can affect physical energy must be something they prefer not to think about. Nevertheless, our bodies provide very clear evidence that the mental affects the physical. The biochemistry of the body is immediately affected when the mental and emotional states change. One of anger or loathing will produce changes that can be harmful to the body if sustained whereas feelings of happiness, love and compassion tend to reduce the stressful responses. We know, too, from direct experience that there are physical changes in the body as different moods and emotions come and go – alterations in heart rate, blood pressure, respiration and saliva production are things everyone experiences from time to time.

In a way, it could be said that some of these energetic changes are the result of accidental states of consciousness – accidental in the sense that they are not planned or deliberate. No-one would normally want to be fearful or angry and, although the causes of such feelings may sometimes be traced to some historical event, they usually occur as a result of some trigger that often doesn’t make a great deal of sense; emotions are, after all, rarely rational.

Many accidental states of consciousness are not beneficial because they arise from outside the intended state and are due to the awareness having wandered. They are sidetracks. Just as the marathon runner will not succeed if on the route he keeps popping into shops or going down interesting-looking side streets, our role in life – whatever that may be – will not be achieved by just allowing

the mind, and therefore our consciousness, to wander and drift willy-nilly.

T'ai chi can demonstrate wonderfully how consciousness affects the body's energy and how it may be channelled in a positive way. T'ai chi may appear to an observer to be little more than a sequence of moves that are practised slowly. An observer who is a little better informed might also be aware that it is a martial art and that the moves also have self-defence applications. What no observer can be aware of is what the practitioner is experiencing because there are many stages in the development of the art, many of which are internal and therefore subjective. As the practitioner's mind, awareness and intent become more focused, so the flow of the body's vital energy, chi, is altered. It is only once this phenomenon becomes known that the very long process of cultivating increasingly subtle states of awareness and sensitivity begins, so allowing greater involvement with, and control of, one's chi. To the observer, none of this is known as the appearance of one who has acquired some skill in learning just the moves may be indistinguishable from someone who has additionally acquired much of the internal skill. Like the wind, energy cannot be seen; only its effects can be felt.

Meditation is another field where consciousness is deliberately focused and a common by-product of regular practice of meditation is greater levels of energy. As a person begins meditation, the awareness is drawn inwards. Normally the awareness is directed more onto external objects through what Buddhists call the sense consciousnesses. As those who have more than a little experience in t'ai chi know, the body's energy or chi tends to follow the awareness and in meditation the awareness is shepherded away from external objects. There are many types of meditation but all

generally require the mind to be directed inwards. As the consciousness gradually becomes less disturbed and less distracted, the body's energy also settles. This really is energy conservation in progress. Once emerged from meditation, the practitioner has more energy available as thoughts and actions become clearer, more coherent and less wasteful.

T'ai chi and meditation are only given as examples; there are other disciplines that no doubt give excellent results but the key factor is the extent to which the consciousness is settled and clear. If we have a butterfly mind or if the mind is agitated, there is a greater expenditure of energy and if the mind is chaotic, the body's energy reflects this. So if we come to the conclusion that our consciousness is not settled, clear and undistracted, it will pay us great dividends to do some type of practice that encourages this.

In this current age we are favoured with great technological advances and material benefits that were not even dreamt of fifty years ago. Even so, the human race as a whole is growing up but slowly. In evolutionary terms, it is in the midst of childhood and the lid of the toy box is well and truly off at the moment! Humanity has yet to learn to behave responsibly. The diversity of distractions in our world is quite extraordinary and, unless we are to cut ourselves off from society, it is extremely difficult to avoid being bombarded with all sorts of stimuli that disturb our natural equanimity. It is like living in a three-dimensional kaleidoscope where the attention is continually being drawn this way and that. We are encouraged to think about trivia, to long for the unattainable, to judge the actions of others, to communicate in an endless chatter of electronic messages, to want to be entertained and, in short, never to be satisfied with what we have. Unsurprisingly, consciousness is disturbed, energy is

dissipated and contentment is in short supply. What can we do?

We have to guard our consciousness and we do that by guarding the mind. By focusing the mind on things that really matter, our energy will be directed towards them. If we think that ethical behaviour is most important, then our energy will flow in that direction; similarly, if caring attention is focused towards a loved one, that is where our energy will naturally and easily pour. Paying attention to our consciousness channels our energy and it would seem that there is therefore no limit to what might be achieved. It was on that principle that in the last century there was an upsurge in books and other materials on positive thinking and, in the last twenty years or so in particular, there has been much material on so-called energy work. Some of this is very good, some is harmless but a great deal needs to be treated with caution because the danger we have to be aware of is creating imbalance.

Remember that however the consciousness is, however we are focused, governs the state of our energy. If we focus very intently on a goal, our energy will also become intense – and there lies the problem. If the consciousness is unfocused and merely drifts, our energy will be weak; if it is too strongly focused, the energy will become too intense. In energy terms, continued intensity can cause what is known as congestion – a build-up of energy in one place – and congestion adversely affects health. We quickly become out of balance and balance, as we should know but sometimes forget, is absolutely necessary for health and for our mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Imbalance is alien to our natural state. The nature of consciousness is pure; it is whole, clear, simple and innocent. It is also selfless and expansive. Whilst we continue to avoid

wholesome states, we deny our true nature and deprive ourselves of a full life. A full life is not determined by the quantity of what we do but by the quality of our consciousness. We can protect our consciousness by bringing our full awareness into every action we undertake and rejecting unnecessary distractions. The modern tendency of bombarding one's every friend and acquaintance with trivia is not conducive to a healthy state of consciousness and it is better for everyone if we eschew it by not sending trivia and ignoring that which arrives. Enjoying wholesome activity and speech, manifesting kindness and goodwill and rejecting partiality and discrimination towards others, including idle gossip, will generate a stronger, clearer and more settled state of consciousness. Then we will have more energy and be more valuable to the world in which we live and may eventually become a powerhouse of goodness. When we reflect, it will be for the good of all and our actions, too, will become more and more selfless, motivated by loving kindness and a compassion that wells up from inside. We will know when to speak and when to remain silent, when to act and when to be still. Our head and heart will work in unison and we will experience a greater sense of completeness. Then we will be fulfilling our life purpose and our energy will be good – very good.

*Andrew Marshall*

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Andrew Marshall is the author of a number of articles that are published on [www.joyousness.org](http://www.joyousness.org) (which also gives details of courses and workshops) and [www.fierlyheart.org](http://www.fierlyheart.org). The articles may be copied for private use provided they are copied in their entirety and that no charge whatsoever is made for them. Details of his first book are to be found at [www.thegreatlittlebookofhappiness.com](http://www.thegreatlittlebookofhappiness.com)

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