



Introduction to Intentional Presence

Helpful Terms to Understand For Newcomers to Intentional Presence

As you begin private sessions or classes in intentional presence, the following terms—and the experiences they point to—will be helpful to understand:

1. Mindfulness: During sessions and classes, you'll learn to consciously shift into a state of consciousness that we call mindfulness. Mindfulness is a state of calm, slow, spacious, detached, relaxed and non-judgmental observation with no feeling of push or pull to try to change or fix anything. Because it's so calm and relaxed, mindfulness allows you to gently observe and be with whatever is present, even if it's an intense emotion like anger, fear or shame. Scientists have found that cultivating mindfulness helps you to build your prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that allows you to act more consciously and intentionally.

2. Observing awareness: When you're in mindfulness, your observing awareness dominates your awareness and drives your actions. Observing awareness is a field of energy characterized by qualities like calm, relaxation, spaciousness, non-judgment and lack of agenda. The role of your observing awareness is to help you observe your inner and outer experiences calmly and dispassionately. The Sanskrit word for mindfulness—*vairagya*—literally means “away” (*vai*) “from the passions” (*ragya*).

3. Activation: Activation is the state of consciousness that arises as you react to anything or anyone, including yourself. The reactions you experience during activation communicate inner information including emotions, opinions, needs, desires and/or memories of past events. Activation sometimes causes you to say and do things that you don't consciously intend. During activation, your limbic brain and/or your reptilian brain lead your actions.

4. Reactive awareness: During activation, your reactive awareness dominates your awareness and drives your actions. One important function of your reactive awareness is to let you know what you need and want to ensure your safety and wellbeing. Because

Qualities of Mindfulness

The state we're in when our observing awareness is leading our actions

Calm
Slowness
Quietness
Relaxation
Spaciousness
Openness
Detachment
Acceptance
Non-judgment
Lack of agenda

reactive awareness is an extremely creative, emotionally charged, and forward-moving energy, it often feels tense, driven, excited, agitated, pushy, uncomfortable or intense.

5. Parts: We often experience our emotional reactions as different “parts” of ourselves with different feelings and viewpoints about a given situation and different needs and desires. For example, a part of you with a need for creativity might want to find a new job while another part of you with a need for stability is afraid of losing the comfort and security of your current job. In addition to emotions needs, and desires, different parts of our reactive awareness can also display unique qualities, including courage, endurance, strength, determination, loyalty, forgiveness, focus, devotion and commitment. In intentional presence sessions and classes, you’ll spend a lot of time getting to know different parts of your reactive awareness and how they drive your behavior.

6. Getting taken over by a part: During activation, different parts of your reactive awareness can independently drive you to say and do things that you don’t consciously intend. We call this “getting taken over by a part.” When this happens, your perspective narrows as intense emotions, needs and beliefs flood your awareness, and you’re not in the best state for decision-making, conscious action, or compassionate, connected communication. One reason parts take over is because we haven’t listened to the information they’re communicating and haven’t addressed their needs, desires, or limiting beliefs. When you notice that a part has taken you over, it’s a signal to find time for self-connection and inner listening to help you get clear on the needs, desires, and beliefs that different parts of you are communicating.

Qualities of Activation

The state we’re in when different parts of our reactive awareness are leading our actions

Focus
Determination
Persistence
Strength
Endurance
Courage
Forgiveness
Devotion
Commitment
Passion
Enthusiasm
Excitement

us

7. Getting separate from a part: When different parts of your reactive awareness are activated, it often feels as if your calm, detached observing awareness is nowhere to be found. When this happens, it’s helpful to “reach for” your observing awareness by remembering that it exists and consciously moving your attention toward it. As you do this, you suddenly experience *two* separate fields of awareness inside of you: your observing awareness (a calm, detached energy that can calmly watch your experiences) and the different parts of your reactive awareness that you’re observing. Once you make this shift and start to experience your observing awareness as “separate” from your reactive awareness, you can work with your emotional reactions in a much more conscious and skillful way.

8. Anchoring: Anchoring is the conscious shift into mindfulness from less conscious states like activation or automatic awareness. (Automatic awareness is the state in

which your subconscious mind leads your actions for you, a state that scientists estimate we're in 98% of the time!) When you shift from activation to mindfulness, you feel anchored in a sea of calm, detached spacious awareness, even when intense emotions and needs are activated. Anchoring is a central skill for conscious living, and we spend a lot of time practicing it in our sessions and classes. The more you practice anchoring, the more you strengthen the neural circuits in your pre-frontal cortex. Strengthening these circuits allows us to access qualities like calm, non-judgment, openness, acceptance, and spaciousness more frequently, consistently and reliably.

9. Activating parts (and the inner information they communicate): During sessions and classes in intentional presence, you'll learn techniques for activating various parts of your reactive awareness and identifying their unseen emotions, needs, desires and beliefs. Because this inner information silently shapes your behavior, learning to work with it more skillfully is an important key to breaking free of stuck points in your life.

10. Presence: Presence is a state of consciousness characterized by qualities like warmth, compassion, a feeling of connectedness, holistic perspective and care for the whole. While mindfulness feels cool and detached, presence feels warm, connected and openhearted. Presence is ideal for communicating with others, but it takes discipline and training to learn how to intentionally shift into this openhearted state.

11. Connecting awareness: We call the awareness that leads your actions during presence your connecting awareness, because one of its main functions is allowing you to connect with yourself and others in a warm, appreciative, compassionate way.

12. Felt shifts: Welcoming in parts of your inner self that you tend to push away feels good inside because it's moving you towards greater awareness and growth. So as you intentionally activate parts and listen to the information they're communicating, you're likely to experience a feeling of relief or relaxation in your body. We call these changes felt shifts. Felt shifts can include anything from deep breaths or sighs to relaxation of tight muscles, a flood of qualities like compassion or appreciation, increased energy, or relief from physical symptoms like headaches, pain, or high blood pressure. Felt shifts are like a trail of breadcrumbs the body leaves to let you know that you're moving in the direction of healing and growth.

Qualities of Presence

The state we're in when our connecting awareness is driving our actions

Appreciation
Care for the whole
Compassion
Connectedness
Contentment
Curiosity
Gratitude
Holistic perspective
Humility
Unconditional love
Warmth