

ARE YOU A HUMAN BEING ... OR A HUMAN DOING?

By Robert Silverstone

When the call came in, I was expecting the usual calm, relaxed, collected voice at the other end of the phone. For several months it had become increasingly so, and when I heard the frantic, high pitched, deluge of verbal scatter, it came as something of a jolt. "Take a breath" I said, "and let's start from the beginning, slowly." We began again, and my client told me of an impending lawsuit that could potentially destroy her and her family's finances and future security. Cause for alarm, indeed.

As usual, in coaching situations, I'm not too interested in the details. Those are left up to the experts; the lawyers, accountants, doctors and therapists. What interests me is how my client is managing their energy as they address their issues. "How are you being?" I asked. "How am I being? - I'm terrified!" she responded, her voice pitch rising once again. I inquired, "Can you choose to be something other than terrified?" She knew where I was going. We'd done this kind of work many times, although not for a while. In the early days of our coaching relationship, fear and panic were much more prevalent than they were now. "What's the opposite of terrified?" I asked. After a few moments of thought, she said "Safe." "Great! Now what if you are safe, right now? Breathe in that state of being and tell me when you feel it." A few more moments passed and she said, "I am safe." Her voice pitch was lower and her speech slower and more controlled. "Now that you are safe," I said, "Tell me what needs to be done with the information that you have."

The session continued with her calmly describing the action steps that needed to be taken and specifically what she needed to do immediately following our call. By the end of the call she was laughing and joking with me, delighted with the relative ease with which she was now managing a major challenge. In the past, she found such stress to be debilitating, impacting her state of health and her relationships with her family, friends and employees.

How much of this scenario sounds familiar to you? Are you conscious of your own state of being? Does your state of being have dominion over you, or can you master and control your state of being, no matter what you are doing, or what outside circumstances or conditions are impacting you?

We may have been told, several times, that we are human beings, not human doings. Yet, we go through our days and activities with "to do" lists, giving little or no attention to our "to be" lists. What do you think happens when we actually choose our state of being for the day ... or for the moment?

Think about your current state of being. Are you tense, or relaxed? Do you feel anxious or calm? How is your patience? Are you impatient or patient? These are all states of being. Some positive, some negative. Do you choose a negative state of being? Or does that state choose you? This is where awareness begins.

When we become aware of our state of being, we have the power to do something to change it. Without this awareness we tend to be powerless and fall victim to the impact of these negative emotions, feelings and mind sets. Once we establish the states of being that better serve our physical health and emotional wellness, we take another step forward along the path of self-discovery towards our destination ... self realization or self-mastery.

There are as many positive states of being as there are negative. When we become aware of a negative state of being, we can explore the positive alternatives, or opposites.

For example, a client once described her state of being as "fearful." As we explored the positive alternatives, she came up with "hopeful," "optimistic" and "fearless." While all these were certainly better alternatives to "fearful" I could not hear any real excitement or enthusiasm when she stated them. They were presented more as questions than statements of fact. So, we explored further and then it happened. "Confident!" When she said this there was a determination in her voice that I hadn't heard with the other choices. When she framed it as a "being" statement, she said "I am confident." We then explored what that statement made her feel. She first noticed that she felt "better."

Upon further exploration, she noticed that she was standing up a little straighter and her breathing had become slower and deeper. When carrying this state of being into her daily activities, we explored how "being confident" would show up in her interactions. She described walking more assuredly, with her chin up, shoulders back and spine more erect. When talking to people she would make more eye contact and speak more deliberately. This was just the beginning, and for her, it was the first time in her life that she had become aware of her state of being and that element of conscious choice that we all have.

Of course, our state of being is a moment-to-moment experience. We get a phone call and someone has just blamed or criticized us, and we might feel a resentment that was not there before the phone rang. We can choose to feel relaxed by breathing the resentment away and being "relaxed" or perhaps "forgiving." When this is challenging we simply repeat the process as often as necessary or until the desired objective has been achieved.

So, how do we raise our awareness and cause that conscious shift in our state of being?

Before we begin, we must be aware if our current state of being is positive or negative. Is it self-empowering or self-defeating? Is it constructive or destructive? Is the feeling "up" or "down?"

Awareness

Close your eyes, take a deep breath and become aware of the present moment. Pay attention to the seat upon which you are seated, to the various sounds that you can hear and to the flow of your breath in and out. Ask yourself "what am I feeling?" Is it fear, nervousness, frustration, disappointment, anger or any other negative emotion? Identify and name it in one word. This is your current state of being. Now decide, is this state of being one of choice, or has it landed on you, unconsciously? It is unusual for us to "choose" a negative state of being, so it is more likely that it "chose" you.

How to change your state of being.

Once you have identified your unconscious state of being, you are better equipped to make changes. It is usually best to start by considering what would be the opposite to your current state of being. If you are angry, what would be the opposite of anger to you? The only correct answer is what resonates for you. For me, the

opposite of anger is love. When I am being love, or loving, it is impossible for me to be angry, and vice versa.

What are you open to being?

As a guide, you will find the chart below provides positive states of being aligned with possible negatives. If you prefer to use another word in either column that better describes that state of being for you, write it alongside. Remember, this is offered only as a guide. You must choose those words or states of being that work best for you.

STATES OF BEING

Positive	Negative
Centered	Agitated
Loving	Angry
Humble	Arrogant
Non-attached	Attached
Open	Closed
Clear	Confused
Truthful	Deceitful
Respectful	Disrespectful
Present	Distant
Mindful	Distracted
Confident	Doubtful
Fun	Dull
Grounded	Edgy
Fearless	Fearful
Wise	Foolish
Powerful	Helpless
Patient	Impatient
Tolerant	Intolerant
Calm	Irritable
Joyful	Miserable
Mellow	Nervous
Grounded	Overwhelmed
Non-reactive	Reactive
Forgiving	Resentful
Peaceful	Restless
Focused	Scattered
Serviceful	Self-centered
Compassionate	Selfish
Grateful	Blaming
Happy	Sad
Kind	Mean
Relaxed	Worried

Exercise #1 – An event-appropriate state of being

From this chart you can begin choosing those states of being that best serve any particular issue, challenge or situation at any time. For example, if you know you have an important meeting coming up, what would be the ideal state of being to embody? Would it be relaxed, focused, humble? Find the state or states of being that resonate for you and consciously embody that or those states. Before the event occurs, take a few moments to "feel" that state, and then consciously be that for the duration of the event.

Exercise #2 – A state of being for the day

Another valuable use for this chart is to begin each day by choosing a positive state of being for the day. As the events of the day unfold and you find some negative states of being showing up, remind yourself of the "being-for-the-day" and slip right back to that state. The next day, choose another positive state of being and work your way through the list. By practicing this exercise you will become more intimately aware of how each state of being feels, making that state far more accessible than it may have been before.

Exercise #3 – The alternative state of being

When you notice that you are feeling or being something negative; agitated, restless, nervous, etc., refer to the chart and choose an alternative state of being from the left-hand column. Tell yourself "I am (that state)" and close your eyes, breath in that state of being and repeat the statement with your exhale. Like magic, you will likely find yourself feeling better and more like the state of being you have chosen.

As you become familiar with these states of being, you will find that the list can be expanded significantly. Add to this list as you find other identifiable positive or negative states. Then choose an opposite to add to the other column.

Like any other exercise, the "state of being" is like a muscle. The more you use it, the more you flex it, the stronger and more useful it becomes.

If you be who you really are while doing what do it is more likely that you will have the life you really want!

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