The Discipline of Expere

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Introducing the New Framework for Healing and Personal Transformation

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Independently published

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This is a work of nonfiction. Many of the stories shared are based on real events, including the author's personal experiences or those of others. In some cases, names and identifying details have been removed or changed to protect the privacy of individuals. Any resemblance to persons or events is either intentional or coincidental, as appropriate to the context.

Medical Disclaimer:
The practices and exercises in this book are designed to support personal growth and well-being. However, they are not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the guidance of a qualified healthcare professional if you have any questions regarding a medical condition, and never disregard or delay seeking medical advice based on something you have read in this book.

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To a lifetime of family, friends, teachers, professionals, and strangers—too many to list—but to each and every one of you who played a special part in my journey. It takes a village, and none of this would have been possible without the insights, support, and patience so many of you offered along the way.

From my heart to yours, thank you.

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Introduction

In today's world, where the pressures of daily life often disconnect us from the inner world of our mind and body, *The Discipline of Expere* offers a timely and transformative solution. Whether you're struggling with stress, feeling disconnected, suffering through mental or physical challenges, or seeking a deeper sense of purpose, this book provides practical tools to help you reclaim control of your mind, body, and reality.

In a world that constantly pulls us outward, the need to cultivate inner practices of healing, growth, and transformation has never been greater. *The Discipline of Expere* introduces a groundbreaking framework for engaging the multidimensional aspects of our being—our psyche, biology, energy, and environment. Drawing from ancient wisdom, cutting-edge science, and modern personal development practices, this book offers a comprehensive system to help you unlock your potential for deep inner evolution.

As you move through the pages and practices of *The Discipline of Expere*, you'll begin to notice meaningful changes in your life. Your mind will sharpen, improving focus and concentration, while techniques for overcoming emotional blockages will bring clarity, resilience, and confidence. You'll learn how to activate, stimulate, and regulate your body using the power of your mind, enhancing your ability to support self-healing for physical, biological, and mental challenges. Practical exercises will strengthen the impact of your intentions, while energy-harnessing strategies will help you manifest your dreams and desires. This journey is about the continual integration of these principles into your daily life, guiding you toward lasting personal transformation, and resulting in a deep sense of love and fulfillment that continually unfolds and blossoms throughout the rest of your life.

At its core, the Expere framework provides practical tools and techniques designed to harmonize the different dimensions of your life. By focusing on the connection between your inner and outer worlds, this framework bridges the gap between where you are and where you aspire to be. Each chapter empowers you to become an active participant in your own transformation, offering both scientific insights and actionable exercises. Whether you are beginning your journey of self-discovery or looking for deeper methods to advance your healing and personal transformation practices, this book will serve as a guide. As you work through the principles and exercises within, the invitation is to develop a greater awareness of the profound interconnectedness of your mental, physical, energetic, and environmental states.

The Discipline of Expere is an invitation to step into a new way of being—one that is conscious, intentional, loving, and transformative.

Core Themes and Fundamental Truths

The Expere framework builds on four main training areas: Cognitive, Somatic, Energy, and Field Modules, each offering unique science, techniques, exercises, and methods. This structured approach helps readers unlock their full potential by engaging in training at both a theoretical and practical level.

At the heart of Expere is the belief that human beings are interconnected systems—psychologically, biologically, energetically, and environmentally. Our experiences shape our evolution, and by aligning these dimensions through conscious practices, we can catalyze personal growth. Expere provides the tools to intentionally shape not just who we are, but how we interact with the world around us.

One of the core truths the book introduces is that real transformation comes from harmonizing both our inner world (mind, body, energy) and our external environment. The methods in this book are designed to

enhance mind-body awareness, provide healing from past conditioning, and offer ways to manifest new realities.

Expere introduces a paradigm shift in how we approach self-development, emphasizing that true evolution requires the integration and reinforcement of these elements into our everyday experiences. The Expere framework places great importance on experiential training. "It is all theory until it is experienced," highlighting that real growth comes not just from understanding concepts but from actively engaging with them.

Structure and Flow of the Book

Whether you're a seasoned practitioner of mindfulness or just beginning to explore the path of personal growth, *The Discipline of Expere* offers a practical, step-by-step guide that meets you where you are. Each module is designed to be integrated into your daily routine, making the journey toward self-mastery achievable for everyone.

The layout of *The Discipline of Expere* flows logically, advancing from cognitive training to energy training. It begins with Cognitive Training Modules, focusing on mental practices that train the psyche, followed by Somatic Training Modules that engage the body through techniques that enhance awareness and control of physiological processes. The next set of chapters explores Energy Training Modules, which delve into practices for sensing and managing one's energetic systems. Finally, the book concludes with Field Training Modules, encouraging readers to extend their practices into the external world and align their environment with their internal evolution.

Each chapter builds on the previous one, advancing from theory to practical exercises. For example, the book starts with theory and exercises related to Cognitive Training, teaching techniques like mindful attention and focus, which then seamlessly transition into Somatic Training, where readers learn to embody this focus physically. From there, Energy Training Modules guide readers in mastering their energetic states,

followed by the final chapters on Field Training, which bring these internal practices into alignment with the broader external reality.

Key Concepts: Modules, Techniques, Exercises, and Methods

Transformation is a journey, and like any journey, there will be challenges along the way. *The Discipline of Expere* serves not just as a guide, but as a source of support and encouragement. You'll find strength in the practical exercises and comfort in the knowledge that every step you take brings you closer to becoming the master of your mind, body, and reality.

To navigate through this transformative process, it's essential to understand how the book uses specific terms like Module, Technique, Exercise, and Method:

Modules: Modules refer to broad sections within the Expere system that cover a specific domain of practice—cognitive, somatic, energetic, or environmental. Each module introduces a set of related techniques and methods, designed to be integrated into the reader's daily life.

Techniques: These are focused practices that guide the reader in achieving specific outcomes. For example, the technique 'Bmotive Awareness' helps readers engage their bodily systems to enhance awareness, while another technique known as 'Amotive Focus' is used for targeting mental attention on specific areas of the body.

Exercises: These are practical applications of the techniques. Exercises might involve visualization, movement, or breathwork designed to bring techniques to life. Each exercise builds in complexity, offering both beginners and advanced practitioners valuable experiences.

Methods: A method is a more comprehensive approach or strategy. For instance, the Reframing Method is a structured process that helps readers confront and shift limiting beliefs, offering a step-by-step approach to rewiring psychological patterns.

Through the careful integration of these concepts, the book enables readers to build mastery gradually, starting with basic cognitive exercises and advancing toward more intricate energy and environment-based methods.

Cognitive, Somatic, Energy, and Field Training: An Overview

Cognitive Training Modules: These chapters focus on the mental and psychological realm, introducing readers to practices that help sharpen focus, enhance awareness, and overcome limiting beliefs. The techniques in these modules prepare readers to develop resilience and mental clarity, essential for all further modules.

Somatic Training Modules: Transitioning to our biology, these chapters guide readers in developing deep bodily awareness. Techniques and methods enable practitioners to consciously influence bodily systems for healing, stress reduction, and performance optimization.

Energy Training Modules: These chapters delve into energy sensing, managing, grounding, and alignment practices. Readers learn to activate, regulate and synchronize their internal energy fields, mastering techniques like coherence, entrainment and energy flow management.

Field Training Modules: In the final chapters, the practices become externalized, as readers are encouraged to engage with their environment and reality. Techniques like Transceiving teach how to interact with external systems, harmonizing one's surroundings with personal intentions.

This book aims to educate readers on the science underpinning our experiences while providing an array of tools and techniques that are both accessible and relevant in various life scenarios. The onus is on each individual to identify which technique, module, or exercise aligns best with their personal journey. Although this book offers guidance, it's important to remember that there is no universal standard for healthy living. Health and wellness hold different meanings for different people.

Commitment to Safety and Support

As you engage with *The Discipline of Expere*, know that you are part of a growing community of individuals who are also on this transformative journey. Together, we are creating a collective shift toward mindfulness, intentional living, and personal empowerment.

Before starting this training, our first commitment to ourselves and our community is that we must ensure our safety and support. Creating a secure environment is essential—one where we can identify the support systems and individuals we can rely on during difficult times. It's equally important to inform our chosen support network about the personal development work we are undertaking so they are aware of our journey and prepared to offer help when needed.

As we prepare to fully engage in this work, we must acknowledge that resistance may arise—whether from limiting beliefs we have about ourselves, the unique challenges we face, or from revisiting painful memories. Despite this, we stand firm in our decision to proceed safely and honor our own pace as we move forward.

If at any point we find it difficult to maintain our commitment to healing and transformation, we must reassess the strength of our safety and support systems. If they remain strong, this is a call to reach out, ask for help, and reinforce our dedication to the process.

As you begin this journey of transformation, know this: you've already taken the first step toward healing and growth. The path is yours, and as you move forward, you'll discover that your intuition knows what's best for you. Set your intentions, care for your body, keep an open mind, and trust your instincts. You will undoubtedly uncover something profound along the way. Welcome to the journey.

PART 1

THE COGNITIVE TRAINING MODULES

Chapter 1
The Psyche and Cognition

I. The Dual Nature of Consciousness and the Psyche

"As the window opened, a black-and-white landscape stretched before my eyes. The sky, initially gray, gradually transformed as I looked out. The landscape began shifting from left to right. As it moved, it was as if someone had turned up the saturation of a photo, and the landscape became vibrant with colors, turning into a breathtaking view. I felt as if I were sitting behind the window of a white board-and-batten house, overlooking rolling hills that extended into the distant ocean.

However, the shifting landscape continued, and my consciousness began floating out the window, traversing along the rolling hills. Suddenly, my focus narrowed to the water, and all I could see was the ocean. Bathed in sunlight, the ocean's waves crashed in a symphony of motion. The water was a brilliant shade of blue, reminiscent of scenes found on white-sand beach postcards.

At that moment, I sensed that I had reached an inner space within myself, a place of great significance. As I continued to observe the water, I gradually merged with it, yet retained a sense of my individuality. But not in the way I identified as human—no, the concept of 'human' or 'humanity' had no meaning to me at that moment. It was more that I still had awareness and knew what was happening to me, even though I had no physical body or being.

As I became one with the ocean, I was filled with overwhelming emotions of love, interconnectedness, and awe. I felt the lives of many within this vast ocean. I had merged with the very essence of life!

At one point, I had the familiar feeling that this was my existence before my birth. I had even felt this sensation before in my life; I had experienced these feelings as a baby in a dream once. In that dream, I felt the same rush of intense love and acceptance for my existence.

Words cannot describe the level of excitement I felt; it was as if I had finally returned home, where everything was in perfect harmony. It felt like I was experiencing the purest form of my being. I awoke from this profound meditative experience, radiating with joy from head to toe. I was so grateful for what I had just experienced. It truly transformed me. The feelings I experienced that day have remained an integral part of my core identity and outlook on life to this day."
- Graeme Raymond Davis

As we embark on a journey into the depths of our psyche, we are not just exploring a component of our being; we are venturing into a realm that is as mysterious as it is fundamental to our existence. This chapter aims to unravel the intricacies of one aspect of our existential experience—our psyche—offering insights into its nature, and the profound impact it has on our daily lives.

The inner realm of our psyche is not a mere bystander in our experiences; it actively shapes both how we perceive our world, and how our world interacts with us. To use an analogy, the psyche is both the canvas upon which our thoughts, emotions, and dreams are painted and the ever-evolving landscape within the painting. The canvas can be stretched and altered, influenced by the world around it, while the inner landscape presents vibrant colors and expressions that evoke emotions and feelings in its admirers. Thus, the painting, like the psyche, is shaped by the outer world and, in turn, influences it.

The realm of the psyche is often synonymous with the larger, encompassing term *consciousness*. Contemporary philosophy often defines consciousness as the ‘state of being aware’, meaning we are perceptive of our surroundings, thoughts, feelings, and sensations. It is commonly regarded as a subjective experience. 'I am aware of my thoughts'—this being a deeply personal experience, unique to me alone.

However, consciousness can also be conceptualized as a noun–an entity that you can *have* or *are*. For example, you either have consciousness or are consciousness. It is not necessary something you only *do,* but something you also are.

Thus, when talking about consciousness, we typically conceptualize it as both a state of *being* or *having*, as well as an underlying thing we are *doing*.

We will revisit the topic of consciousness in greater detail in Chapter 8. However, to bring this discussion back to the psyche, there is a fundamental insight that we can derive from the dual nature of consciousness: it is both a state of being and a state of awareness, both the canvas and the painting, something we possess and something we actively engage in, especially when referring to the realm of the psyche.

To illustrate this dual nature of the psyche, consider another analogy of the ocean and a wave. The ocean represents the psyche as a broad, all-encompassing entity. Just as the ocean is vast and contains everything within it, the psyche is expansive that encompasses all thoughts, feelings, and sensations we have ever had, and ever will experience.

On the other hand, a wave in this ocean can be seen as an individual experience or moment of awareness. Each wave, with its unique size, shape, and trajectory, symbolizes a specific thought, feeling, or sensation. The waves are part of the ocean yet distinct in their form and momentary existence, much like how an individual thoughts or feelings are part of our greater psychological experience but are unique and distinct in themselves. So, the psyche can be understood both as the vast, all-inclusive ocean (the

state of being) and the individual waves (the specific experiences, thoughts, feelings, sensations, or moments).

When we delve into the realm of the psyche, such as learning the techniques and modules within the Expere framework, understanding the distinction between an ocean and a wave, or between a state of being and an experience, can guide our personal transformational journey.

For instance, your current identity and self-perception constitute a large part of your state of being. We can differentiate between the thoughts you think, the beliefs you hold, and the emotions you feel, and the general state of your being. Like in the ocean analogy, if you believe that your mindset can affect something such as your immune system, while another person chooses not to believe that mindfulness has any measurable effect on one's immunology, then the state of being for each individual will inevitably differ. The way each person navigates through their lives will be different to some extent, and it is this difference that underscores how our beliefs and perceptions shape our overall state of our psyche (much like how different waves contribute to the overall state of the ocean).

The goal of our work is to become more aware–more conscious–of the individual waves (our experiences) so we can influence the whole of the ocean (our state of being or psyche). Your self-perception shapes your individuality and defines your present state of being. As we explore the realm of the psyche, it's important for us to recognize that *experiencing* is an inherent, and powerful quality that we all possess and can actively engage with in an intentional way.

Let’s explore this point further. In the field of neuroscience, an experience is considered to be the result of complex processes within the brain and nervous system. An experience is the culmination of different cells and organs receiving stimuli and transforming this information through various operational networks. This has led many modern-day sciences to believe that the way we’re wired gives rise to the experiences we have.

Emergentism, also known as 'emergent property theory,' is a perspective on the psyche that views it as a complex, high-level phenomenon arising from simpler, lower-level processes in the brain. According to this theory, individual neurons or brain regions may not be conscious on their own, but consciousness emerges from the intricate interactions within the brain's complex structure.[1]

We, as the experiencers, receive the output of these networks as psychological outcomes. We “sense”, “know” or “understand” something. This process of sensing, knowing and understanding is integral to our human experience and forms a crucial part of our individual conscious experience.

In this framework, psychological experiences are believed to be rooted in the brain and body's biological mechanisms, suggesting that the brain is the primary generator of our conscious experience. Experience is seen as an emergent property, a result of the complex operations of our nervous system, akin to the 'gears and cogs' of a machine.

Referring to our ocean and wave analogy, the outcome of the ocean (psyche) is determined by its waves (components). The components include the H_2O molecules in the water, ocean currents, weather, gravitational forces, and other environmental factors. Just as these physical elements and forces come together to shape each wave's complex formation and movement, the physical and biological elements of our brain and body interact to create the unique aspects of our psyche and experiences.

However, there are large existential implications to emergentism. For one, it would suggest that our psyche and existence resemble a sophisticated computer. In this light, free will is more of an illusion created by the wiring of our 'circuits.' Our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviors are merely the result of how we are wired, nothing more. This view challenges the notion of personal agency, proposing that our lives, decisions, and actions are responses to information processed by our 'biological computer' we call our body and nervous system.

For some of us, this idea can be unsettling, as it reduces our psychological experiences to mere reactions to external stimuli and past memory. Our destiny is predetermined based on the cards we are dealt. Even the concept of psychological evolution, transcendence or transformation is devoid of true autonomy. We either have the 'right stuff' to transform ourselves, or we don't.

Now, let's introduce the 'hard problem of consciousness'. The hard problem of consciousness refers to the challenge of explaining how and why subjective experiences arise from physical processes in the brain, when there are scientifically documented events that challenge the idea of consciousness and our psyche being solely rooted in brain function. A notable example is patients in comas who lose the majority of brain functioning, some being declared clinically dead, yet report active conscious experiences upon revival.

One well documented case that underscores the complexities of our psychological experiences is that of neurosurgeon Dr. Eben Alexander. [2] In 2008, Dr. Alexander fell into a coma due to a severe case of bacterial meningitis. Hospitalized, doctors we're unsure he would make it as his symptoms progressed hour-by-hour.

During his coma, his neocortex—the part of the brain associated with higher-order functions like sensory perception, cognition, spatial reasoning, conscious thought, and language—was inactive. The neocortex is typically linked with awareness, and his showed minimal brain activity, suggesting he was unconscious. He was hanging on for his life, believed to be dying.

Remarkably, he awoke from his coma within a week and described his experience as the opposite of an unconscious one. He recounted a vivid, hyper-realistic journey involving dimensional landscapes and worlds, interacting with 'heavenly' beings, and hearing auditory symphonies, making Dr. Alexander's detailed and profound experience all the more intriguing.

Experiences like his raise questions about the nature of psychological experiences, especially given his compromised brain function while undergoing a vivid inner experience. This led him to dedicate his life to studying consciousness and the afterlife, challenging traditional scientific perspectives on the correlation between brain activity and conscious experiences.

For us to change our state of being and psyche, it is essential that we believe in our own capacity for transformation. However, this belief must be consistent with how we perceive ourselves. If we view all of our experiences as solely the result of intricately wired circuits and neurons, we may subconsciously adopt the belief that we lack control over our lives. Such a view implies that our potential to experience something truly new, to transform, is limited by the wiring of our neural circuits. This perspective can inadvertently create a mindset where we see ourselves as passive products of our biology, rather than as active agents capable of the new, the novel, and change; an inherent ability to evolve.

To foster genuine transformation, we must first recognize that our fundamental nature—our psychological experiences and consciousness—are more than just a byproduct of neural activity. Yet, there is a mutual influence between our psyche and the rest of our human experience, such as our biology. While we are certainly influenced by our biology, the relationship between our psyche and our biology is not one-sided. It is, as we are about to explore, interconnected and interdependent. Our interconnected and interdependent nature is a foundational principle in our transformational process.

II. Interconnectedness and Interdependence

"At 4:30 a.m. on Nov. 10, 2008, I suddenly became very ill with acute bacterial meningoencephalitis. Within four hours, I was deep in coma; I spent the next seven days comatose, on a ventilator.

Bacterial meningitis with such a rapid decline in neurologic function conferred a 90 percent mortality rate, as assessed at the time of my initial ER evaluation, but my prospects for survival rapidly worsened…

On the seventh day of my coma, to everyone's surprise, I opened my eyes and started to come back. I was rapidly extubated by the shocked intensivist. A family friend who was there could not get over how my amazed expression looked more like the astonished gaze of an infant, not like what one would expect from an adult returning from an unconscious state.

My meningoencephalitis had been so severe that my original memories from within coma did not include any recollections whatsoever from my life before coma, including language and any knowledge of humans or this universe. That "scorched earth" intensity was the setting for a profound spiritual experience that took me beyond space and time to what seemed like the origin of all existence.

Those memories began in a primitive, coarse, unresponsive realm (the "Earthworm's Eye View" or EEV) from which I was rescued by a slowly spinning clear white light associated with a musical melody, that served as a portal up into rich and ultra real realms. The Gateway Valley was filled with many earth-like and spiritual features: vibrant and dynamic plant life, with flowers and buds blossoming richly and no signs of death or decay, waterfalls into sparkling crystal pools, thousands of beings dancing below with great joy and festivity, all fueled by swooping golden orbs in the sky above, angelic choirs emanating chants and anthems that thundered through my awareness, and a lovely girl on a butterfly wing who proved months later to be central to my understanding of the reality of the experience.

The chants and hymns thundering down from those angelic choirs provided yet another portal to higher realms, eventually ushering

my awareness into the Core, an unending inky blackness filled to overflowing with the infinite healing power of the all-loving deity at the source, whom many might label as God (or Allah, Vishnu, Jehovah, Yahweh – the names get in the way, and the conflicting details of orthodox religions obscure the reality of such an infinitely loving and creative source)."
- Dr. Eben Alexander[3]

Cases like that of Dr. Eben Alexander raise profound questions about the nature of our psyche and the extent to which it relies solely on brain function. As we explore this topic further throughout the book, we will examine the latest scientific research suggesting that our psyche is not solely produced by the brain and body. Instead, it is a fundamental aspect of existence, and it manifests based on the principles of an *interconnected*[i] and *interdependent*[ii] relationship between the mind, body, energy, and environment.

To understand interconnectedness, consider the analogy of a spider web. Just as a vibration on one thread of the web affects the entire structure, our thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations are interconnected, influencing our overall state of being. For instance, a particular thought can trigger a specific bodily response, setting off a series of biochemical and physiological reactions.

Like the spider web, the interconnections of our psyche extend beyond our biological state to also influence our environment's state. For instance, our psychological state, such as experiencing stress in the morning, can affect our physical state, like causing a headache, which in turn can impact our social interactions, such as the way we communicate with others.

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[i] **Interconnected** refers to the state of being connected or linked together. Interconnectedness suggests that there is a flow of information, energy, or influence between the interconnected parts, and changes or actions in one part can have repercussions or effects on other parts of the system.

[ii] **Interdependent** refers to a state or condition in which two or more things or entities rely on each other for support, cooperation, or mutual benefit. Interdependence implies that the involved entities cannot operate or function independently or in isolation, but rather their well-being, success, or functionality is intertwined with the well-being or actions of others.

Let’s use the example of Sarah, an engineer, who starts her day with an urgent email from her boss about a sudden project deadline. This email immediately triggers stress within Sarah, affecting the thoughts and emotions within her psyche. As her mind races with more and more thoughts regarding the workload ahead, Sarah experiences a spike in her anxiety levels.

As Sarah skips breakfast to dive into work, her stress begins to manifest physically. By mid-morning, the stress in her mind translates into a tension headache. The pain is a direct physical response to her psychological state, a clear sign of her body reacting to the mental stress.

Despite the headache, Sarah pushes through her work. However, her physical discomfort affects her focus and productivity. She becomes irritable and less patient in her interactions with colleagues. During a team meeting, she snaps at a coworker over a minor issue, which is out of character for her usually collaborative nature.

This reaction strains her social interactions. Her coworkers, taken aback by her uncharacteristic behavior, respond with a mix of concern and annoyance. The social atmosphere in the team becomes tense, affecting not only Sarah but also her colleagues' work experiences.

In this example, we can clearly see how psychological experiences are intertwined with biological and environmental outcomes. Central to the Expere framework is the examination of how experiences within our mind, body, energy and environment are interconnected. There is a constant exchange of information among the four, each influencing and responding as a result of constant interactions.

In Sarah's case, the interplay between mind, body, energy, and environment is bidirectional, meaning she can actively change an aspect of one of these four in order to change the outcome of the others. For instance, suppose Sarah reflects on her previous day and realizes the cascade of effects originating from her initial morning stress. Her

psychological state in the morning not only influenced her physical well-being but also impacted her social interactions. This introspection prompts her to consider strategies for improved stress management. The following week, when faced with similar work conditions, she applies new stress management strategies and experiences a markedly different outcome.

This concept, where Sarah is not merely reacting to experiences in her environment but also has the ability to influence her internal psyche, thereby influencing her social atmosphere, epitomizes the principle of interdependence.

Interdependence is about mutual reliance. It posits that the various facets of our existence, such as our mental and physical states, depend on each other. There are many ways our body is reliant on our psyche, just as there are many ways our psyche is reliant on our body. This mutual reliance is an active interplay where each aspect can both influence and be influenced by the other. For example, Sarah's psychological state is also interdependent on her physical health, such as how much sleep and exercise she is getting. Equally so, the health of her body can impact or be impacted by her mental well-being, such as how happy or sad she is.

Recognizing the interdependent relationships between our mind, body, energy and environment empowers individuals to make informed choices that can positively affect different areas of their life. It also implies that personal transformation, such as psychological healing from a difficult experience, is intertwined with the health of one’s physical body and external environment. This concept emphasizes the significance of attending to each aspect of our existence, recognizing that neglecting one area can inadvertently impact the others.

III. The Layer of Our Psyche

As we progress through the material together, we will treat the mind, body, energy and environment as distinct entities while emphasizing the

principle of interconnectedness and interdependence. Anything that occurs in one can impact the others, and vice versa.

For instance, imagine a situation where we change our mindset, experiencing feelings of elation and excitement. This shift in our mental state triggers a series of biochemical reactions in the body and also alters how we interact with others in our environment. This simple example demonstrates how an experience originating in the mind can impact both our internal biology and external environment.

Expanding on this last point, when we talk about the human experience, we can describe it in four ways, otherwise known as the *four layers of human experience*. These include:

1. Energy
2. Biology
3. Psyche
4. Environment

When it comes to describing a human experience, we can discuss it in relation to various realms: our energy, our biology, our mental psyche, and our environment. To further illustrate this, let's revisit the psychological experience of elation and excitement. In the layer of the psyche, we experience and express thoughts, memories, and emotions associated with the feeling of being elated. We *feel* elated, and as a result, our cognitive response aligns with this inner sensation.

Emotions in this respect can be likened to weather patterns in a climate system. Just as weather patterns like storms or sunshine affect the environment, our emotions create different "climates" in our mind and body, influencing our thoughts and behaviors.

Now, consider the emotions of elation and excitement at the biological layer. When we feel elated, our nervous and endocrine systems undergo various processes, including the release of specific proteins, hormones, and neurotransmitters. Other changes in our biology take effect as our

digestive system tones down as our heart and breathing rates begin to increase.

Within the layer of our energy, the experience of emotional elation and excitement involves the interplay of various types of energy within and around our body. These include energy transfer mechanics, converting stored chemical energy into usable forms such as electromagnetic and kinetic energy, as neurons along our nerves become active, firing and wiring.

Now, from an environmental standpoint, the experience of elation and excitement can have dynamic effects on physical reality and social relationships. Our positive emotions ripple out and contribute to a more harmonious social atmosphere, fostering cooperation and positive interactions within our social networks.

In this example, you can see how the experience of elation and excitement can be described at each of the different energy, biology, psyche and environmental layers. As we progress through the content in this book, we will continuously refer to one or more of these four layers in relation to the specific content we are learning or the exercises we are practicing.

IV. The Dynamic Nature of Awareness in Our Psyche

So, what other qualities or features can we attribute to the interconnected and interdependent principles of our psyche? Let's explore again the attribute of awareness. As humans, we have a natural ability to be aware of our inner world, and the world around us.

Let's try a simple thought experiment to understand this better. Wherever you are, think back to what you had for dinner last night. Next, name three items or objects you can see in your immediate environment. And can you now imagine what you might want for dinner tonight, and how that experience might feel?

This simple thought-experiment exhibits a rather complex concept, which is that our awareness is dynamic in nature. It is characterized by constant activity and can progress from one experience to the next. For example, you are capable of recalling memories, noticing objects in our present environment, and planning for the future, all within seconds of each other. It is as if your awareness was like a spotlight, and you shined it on three entirely different experiences within your psyche.

Being aware of something is not merely a passive observation of memories, thoughts, and stimuli. Awareness can also serve as a tool or mechanism to exert influence in our lives.

Let's return back to our spider web analogy. Imagine all the different types of experiences we can be aware of as threads in our spider web. These threads represent the array of thoughts, memories, emotions, feelings, and sensations that we can experience.

Our awareness doesn't just illuminate specific threads, such as illuminating an old memory in our imagination, but it also acts like a force touching one of these threads and physically interacting with it, such as initiating the firing of neural networks when we revisit the memory.

When we focus on a part of the web, we engage with a specific type of experience, such as a memory. These actions can affect not only the depth of our engagement with the memory but also, based on the principles of interconnection and interdependence, ripple out to influence our biological and physiological responses.

For instance, focusing on a stressful memory can ripple across our web of experience, affecting other threads like our digestion, our blood pressure, our metabolism, and our respiratory rate. By awareness alone, we might engage in a memory that causes a stress response in the body. The impact demonstrates how our awareness is not merely a spotlight that we shine on different experiences, but also a force that can alter the state of our broader psyche, biology, energy, and environment. By understanding this, we can

begin to see how deliberately directing our awareness can have profound effects on other aspects of our lives.

Herein lies the essence of an important principle within the Expere framework: our cognitive experiences, such as our psychological capacity for awareness, play a crucial role in our wellness and transformation processes. This concept emphasizes that the way we direct our awareness, engage with our thoughts, and process our experiences significantly impacts our biological operations. It suggests that by cultivating and managing our awareness, we can influence not only our mental states but also our biological, energetic, and environmental health and balance.

V. Our Awareness as a Skill to Be Trained and Developed

"*I began my protocol which involved spending 15 to 20 minutes each day meditating, either seated or lying down, with my attention on the area around my abdomen in order to see if I could stimulate nerve regeneration with my mind. I was traveling a lot during that time, so I allowed myself to skip a day when I needed to, but I tried my best not to skip two back-to-back days.*

I would start my sessions with simple centering exercises, focusing on my breathing and gradually taking deeper, slower breaths. When I felt relaxed enough, I would then shift my awareness to the area around the nerve damage. My initial practice was becoming aware of it while maintaining my concentration on the area. I would try to discern different sensations from the area, such as any specific pain or discomfort. Over time, I got better at holding my concentration, and I felt like I could even 'feel out' more localized areas within my abdomen.

At some point in the meditation, I would introduce an intention for healing and regeneration. This took a couple of different forms. When I felt capable of maintaining awareness of the nerve damage,

I would evoke feelings of healing in this area, asking myself, 'what would healing feel like in this area?' It was an intuitive experience, but I would try to imagine 'feeling' blood flow increasing to this area of my body, carrying various repair proteins and nutrients. I would imagine what it would feel like for the inflammation to increase based on my body's immune response. My aim was to feel like I was directing all my energy to the health and recovery of this area.

After several minutes of 'feeding' nourishment to my abdomen, I would finish the meditation with different visualizations related to a future time where healing had occurred. The key was to feel as if that future had already happened, creating a blueprint for my brain and body to understand what health and healing would feel like. The visualizations varied, sometimes imagining all the nerves functioning properly, other times visualizing myself living normally post-healing.

It was challenging. There were days when I felt like I wasn't making progress and became frustrated. However, over time, I began to notice signs of change. After meditating, I'd wake up the next day with my abdomen inflamed and painful. This became a repeatable experience: after a session, my body would experience inflammation. It was incredibly motivating! Just using my mind and awareness for about 15 minutes was having measurable effects on my body's responses. Within six months of regular practice, I experienced nerve functioning again for the first time in two and a half years. I would continue this practice for another year or so, and over time, more and more functioning returned."
- Graeme Raymond Davis

As we begin to understand the simple act of being aware as something more than just passively observing our environment, and more as a force or activity that can exert influence on different aspects of our lives, we start to see awareness as a skill that can be trained and developed.

Consider the analogy of learning to play the piano. When a beginner starts learning, they realize that there are various procedures and techniques to practice. Different schools of thought exist on the best methods for developing these skills, and research indicates that some learning habits are more effective than others.

Similarly, developing our awareness from humble, amateur beginnings to a professional level has parallels. What distinguishes an amateur from a professional in this context? We gauge a pianist's professionalism by their mastery of music, using the piano's instruments. Likewise, we measure the mastery of an aware individual by their ability to skillfully navigate and influence their experiences using the instruments of their mind and body. The journey from amateur to professional in awareness involves refining our ability to consciously perceive, interact with, and influence our internal and external environments.

Mastery over awareness can manifest in remarkable ways, some of which might seem almost extraordinary. For instance, individuals who have honed their awareness skills can consciously regulate their physiological responses. They can slow down or speed up their heart rates simply through focused thought, breathing and feeling. These masters can also control their body's stress response, reducing anxiety or tension without physical intervention.[4] Beyond managing their immediate bodily stress, they can improve their body’s immune responses,[5] reducing physiological symptoms in cases when they are dealing with a disease like cancer.[6] Their refined awareness extends to transforming their internal energy states, which can have profound impacts on their ability to “see” and “know” things moments before their direct experience.[7] Moreover, by being acutely in tune with their own body and mind, they can seemingly affect the biophysical experience of others.[8]

At first glance, the extent of development some masters have claimed to achieve can seem almost incomprehensible. It's akin to witnessing the young Mozart play the piano for the first time. His extraordinary talent initially sparked skepticism, as it seemed almost unbelievable that a child

could possess such advanced musical abilities.[iii] In a similar vein, observing someone who is completely blindfolded, yet able to read from a random page in a book, might appear equally unbelievable or, at the very least, highly questionable.[iv]

But how credible are these anecdotal reports and alternative practices? To what extent can we assert with certainty that they are real, and moreover, that we too can experience something similar?

Consider, for instance, the light and color you see in your room. This visual experience involves photons striking your retinas and being processed by your brain. As you focus on these colors, you're actively aware of the light. However, when you close your eyes, your perception of color changes – it either disappears, transforms into a mental after-image, or becomes a memory of the color.

The question of whether you can continue to visually “see” color with your eyes closed opens up a realm of inquiry into the nature of perception and our mind. It would challenge the conventional understanding of sight and encourage exploration into the potential capabilities of the human mind beyond traditional sensory experiences.

Some people who are blind have been documented to use echolocation – a method of using sound to navigate the environment – to 'see' in a non-visual sense.[9] This involves creating sounds, such as foot taps, cane taps, or finger snaps, and listening to the echoes that bounce back from nearby objects. By interpreting these echoes, individuals who are blind can gain

[iii] In Mozart: A Life" by Maynard Solomon, the author talks about how Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a child prodigy, toured Europe with his family, performing in various royal courts and public concerts from a very young age. The book also touches upon the reactions of audiences and contemporaries to Mozart's extraordinary talents, which were sometimes met with skepticism due to his young age.

[iv] There are many documented cases of people learning to see without the use of their eyes. Kuda Bux was a well-known Pakistani mystic and magician, famous for his performance of a feat known as "fire walking" and his apparent ability to see without using his eyes. In 1926 Leila Heyn, an American woman born blind, reportedly gained the ability to 'see' without her eyes after eight months of training. Her experiences were documented in a book titled "Une Éducation paroptique.”

an understanding of their surroundings, including the distance, size, and texture of objects. This skill can be incredibly sophisticated; some individuals can even navigate complex environments, ride bicycles, or perform other activities that typically rely on vision.

Echolocation in blind individuals demonstrates that areas of the brain typically dedicated to visual processing can adapt to process auditory information in various ways. This adaptability and plasticity of the brain is known in neuroscience as *neuroplasticity.*[v] Over the past few decades, research in this field has painted a picture of the human brain as an organ constantly adapting, regenerating, and molding itself in response to our experiences. This concept underscores the brain's remarkable capacity to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life, significantly influenced by our interactions and activities.

So, the question we must ask ourselves is: To what extent do we have agency over our own ability to adapt, regenerate, and mold our physical organs? Similar to how individuals who are blind learn to echolocate, can we all train ourselves in extrasensory abilities, such as becoming more aware of information processed by our own bodies?

Let's try another example as we explore this question together. Think about your bladder, located in the lower part of your abdomen. Before reading this, you might not have been aware of it. But now, as you think about it, you might start assessing whether you need to use the restroom. This sudden awareness brings a previously unnoticed biological function into your conscious mind, making you aware of your body’s immediate needs.

In this case, the sensation or 'urge to urinate' acts as a form of information, similar to how photons inform your eyes about colors in a room. Simply through awareness, you are able to detect and interpret the signals from your bladder.

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[v] **Neuroplasticity** is the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life, allowing the brain to adjust in response to new experiences, learning, and changes in the environment. This adaptability enables the brain to recover from injuries, adapt to sensory changes, and enhance cognitive capabilities.

Now, think about the enzymes in your stomach. Can you direct your awareness to identify which proteins are actively involved in digesting your last meal? Perhaps not, suggesting that you are already skilled in receiving information from some bodily sensation, while others are not yet accessible to you.

These last two examples can also demonstrate how our awareness influences biological processes. It's possible that we didn't feel the need to urinate until we focused our awareness on that specific area. Once we became aware, the bladder functions might have further engaged, and we now may very well be feeling the urge progressing.

So we can ask ourselves, could it be possible that directing our awareness to a specific bodily function can affect its operation? If so, can we consciously direct for an intention response from our bodily functions?

Drawing on the principle of interdependence, we might hypothesize that not only can we become aware of the sensation of needing to use the restroom, but we might also be able to influence this region of our body with our intentions.

Consider this: as you're reading this and tuning into your bladder, feeling the sensations from your body, you glance at the clock and decide, "I want to continue reading for another 15 minutes, so I'll ask my body to delay the urge a bit longer." You might not find it so surprising that the urge diminishes as you refocus on the chapter.

This scenario is merely to demonstrate how concepts of interconnection and interdependence are at work between our mind (awareness and intentions) and our body (biological operations and functioning). Remember, under the guidance of these principles, information flows in both directions. You *received* information from your body about your bladder's state, and then you *transmitted* a directive to your body to temporarily suppress the urge, which effectively disappeared.

The exciting news is that this isn't magic; it's science, and these occurrences aren't random coincidences. We can understand the science behind interconnection and interdependence and train ourselves in techniques to consciously receive and transmit information between the mind and body.

Awareness serves as both the modality and platform for training ourselves to develop new skills, such as becoming more aware of the various types of information our body is processing at this very moment. Gaining access to—or awareness of—this information is how we learn to interact with it. We receive information, and we transmit directives in response. This innate relationship of receiving and transmitting information, which is fundamental to our awareness capabilities, is essential to how we personally transform and evolve.

Now, what about when we direct our awareness towards other things, such as the lights in our environment? Yes, we were able to suddenly be more mindful of the light in the room—perceiving information from our environment—but what does it mean to transmit information back to the light and back to our environment?

Later in our training, we will explore leading research and evidence demonstrating how our awareness and intentions impacts the state of subatomic matter within our physical environment, and even complex system like water and robots. This impact is being extensively studied, and we are continuously learning about how our awareness influences the behavior of molecules, biological systems, and ecosystems as a whole.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. For the time being, we can conclude that awareness is a fundamental quality of our psyche, guided by the principles of interconnection and interdependence, and is essential to our human experience.

VI. Our Psyche as a Complex, Dynamic System

In exploring the interconnected and interdependent relationships among the four layers of human experience — psyche, biology, energy, and environment — we introduce another important principle. This principle involves viewing each of these layers through the lens of complex, dynamic systems.

Complex, dynamic systems are characterized by their intricate structures and the constant, difficult-to-predict interactions within them. This perspective allows us to understand that each layer, be it psyche, biology, energy and environment, is not static but is continuously evolving and influencing the other layers. For example, changes in our biological state can affect our psyche, and shifts in our psychological state can, in turn, influence our physical well-being. Similarly, our interaction with the environment can affect our energy levels, and our energy levels can influence how we interact with the world around us.

We commonly experience the realm of the psyche almost every moment of every day. The psyche, in its essence, encompasses our thoughts, emotions, memories, and subconscious processes. Even as you're reading this book and assessing the language I'm presenting to you, you're engaged in your psyche as you think, feel, and act mentally. In fact, the psyche is the mental counterpart to your physical being, guiding your perceptions, behaviors, and interactions with the world.

Intriguingly, the psyche mirrors the characteristics of a complex, dynamic system.

Complex, dynamic systems are systems made up of many different parts that interact with each other in various ways. These systems are "complex" because they have many components that can be hard to understand individually and even more challenging when you try to see how they all work together. They are "dynamic" because they are constantly changing; the interactions and relationships between the parts of the system are always in flux, adapting to new conditions or information.

Think of it like a busy city: the city has many parts (like transportation, people, businesses, weather), and all these parts are constantly interacting and affecting each other. If one part changes (like if a main road closes), it can affect everything else (like causing traffic jams or impacting businesses). In this way, the city is always evolving, just like complex, dynamic systems.

Our body, for instance, is a complex and dynamic system. It is composed of various subsystems that interact with one another, such as the nervous, respiratory, cardiovascular, and digestive systems. The activity of one system can affect the functioning of another; for example, changing our breathing rate may result in an increase or decrease in our heart rhythm.

When our respiratory and cardiovascular systems undergo sudden changes, our cognitive system takes note, leading to a shift in our psyche. For example, a sudden buildup of carbon dioxide (CO_2) in our body can trigger immediate feelings of fear and stress. One such phenomenon, known as hypercapnia, occurs when there is an excess of CO_2 in the bloodstream.[10] For someone undergoing a hypercapnic episode, the experience can feel like choking on your breath, or unable to breathe in oxygen even while you inhale.

This terrifying hypercapnia experience is only physiological mind you. Biologically speaking, even with the CO_2 there is enough oxygen in the body to ever pose any danger. The experience triggers a psychological 'panic' response, despite the body not being in physical harm. This example highlights how a simple change in blood CO_2 levels can significantly affect one's psychological state.

Our experiences within the realm of the psyche mirror a complex, dynamic system that is intricately connected to other complex, dynamic systems, such as our respiration rate and CO_2 levels. A portion of our experiences are reactionary, stemming from our intimate connections with our body and environment. These responses occur almost automatically within our psychological experiences, often without conscious thought.

Due to the complexity and dynamism of these connections, our psychological experience is in a state of perpetual evolution, shaped by numerous internal and external factors. The dynamic systems approach to understanding the psyche is bolstered by extensive research in psychology. Fields such as cognitive neuroscience, behavioral psychology, and psychophysiology offer insights into how various elements of the psyche interact and influence each other. These studies highlight the importance of viewing the psyche not as a set of isolated components, but as an integrated, dynamic whole.

Viewing our psyche as a complex, dynamic system opens new avenues for understanding and influencing our mental processes. Recognizing the psyche as dynamic and changeable empowers us to approach our transformative well-being with a holistic and adaptable mindset.

However, the concept of the psyche as a system that can be adapted and changed is relatively new in Western psychology. For much of its history, many aspects of the mind were considered either fixed or beyond the scope of study. It is only in the last quarter-century that we have come to understand the realm of the psyche as transformative and capable of change.

VII. A Brief History of Modern Psychology: Studying the Unobservable

The story of modern psychology is relatively recent, beginning in the late 19th century and continuing to the present day, reflecting the evolving understanding of the human mind. The concept that psychology could be a field of study in the Western world did not emerge until the late 1800s. This shift occurred with Wilhelm Wundt, who opened the first psychology lab in 1879 in Leipzig, Germany. Wundt is often referred to as the "father of psychology" due to his pioneering work in experimental psychology, focusing on consciousness and sensations.[11]

Wilhelm Wundt's first experimental psychology laboratory marked the formal beginning of psychology as an independent field of study, separate from its philosophical and physiological roots. Wundt's approach to psychology was heavily influenced by his background in physiology and his interest in understanding the workings of the human mind. He believed that psychology's primary goal was to study consciousness, which he viewed as a combination of individual thoughts, feelings, and perceptions.

Wundt's method, known as *introspection*, involved the careful, systematic observation and reporting of conscious experiences. He trained his students to observe their own thoughts and sensations objectively and to report them in as much detail as possible. This method, though later criticized for its subjective nature, was revolutionary at the time, as it attempted to apply scientific rigor to the study of the mind.

Wundt's work in Leipzig quickly gained international recognition, attracting students from around the world who later went on to establish psychology departments and laboratories in other countries. His laboratory at Leipzig became a center for psychological research, where Wundt and his students conducted experiments on sensation and perception, reaction times, attention, feeling, and association.

As the 20th century began, a broader scientific movement towards empirical knowledge and materialism was taking shape across various disciplines such as physics and biology, which profoundly influenced the field of psychology. This era, marked by a fervent belief in materialism, held that only physical entities existed and were worthy of scientific study. Anything beyond the tangible was relegated to the realm of philosophy, religion or dismissed as unsound science. This perspective significantly impacted mainstream psychology, leading to the rise of behaviorism.

Pioneers like John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner championed the idea that only observable, measurable behaviors should be the focus of psychological study. According to this view, the intangible nature of thoughts and feelings made them inaccessible and irrelevant to scientific

inquiry. John B. Watson, in his famous 1913 paper, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," argued for the importance of studying observable behaviors over the unobservable mind. This perspective was further solidified by B.F. Skinner's work on operant conditioning, emphasizing that behavior is influenced by its consequences.[12]

Consequently, this dogma asserted that the study of the mind should be limited to what could be seen and measured, effectively excluding the internal experiences of thoughts and emotions from the scientific process. This period marked a significant shift in psychology, aligning it with the broader scientific community's emphasis on empirical, observable phenomena.

During the same period, on the other side of the spectrum, were psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, who were making significant contributions to psychology amidst considerable transformation in the field. Their work presented a stark contrast to the behaviorist movement that dominated psychology in the early 20th century.

Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist, developed psychoanalysis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His work was groundbreaking, introducing the idea that much of human behavior is influenced by unconscious processes. Freud proposed that unconscious drives, particularly those related to sexuality and aggression, play a crucial role in shaping behavior and mental disorders.[13]

Freud's theories, including the Oedipus complex, the structure of the psyche (id, ego, and superego), and defense mechanisms, provided a novel framework for understanding the human mind. While Freud's ideas were controversial and often debated, they significantly influenced the field of psychology, particularly in areas related to personality, abnormal psychology, and therapy.

Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, was initially a close collaborator of Freud. However, he later developed his own theoretical

framework known as analytical psychology. Jung's work diverged from Freud's in several key areas; he placed less emphasis on sexual drives and more on spiritual and existential factors in human behavior.

Jung introduced concepts such as the collective unconscious, archetypes, and individuation. He believed in the existence of a shared, universal level of the unconscious that contains archetypes — fundamental symbols or patterns that are common across cultures and influence individual behavior and experiences.

Freud and Jung's contributions came during a period when psychology was striving to establish itself as a scientific discipline. While behaviorists focused on observable behaviors and dismissed the study of the mind as unscientific, Freud and Jung delved deep into the complexities of the human psyche, emphasizing the importance of internal mental processes.

Fast forward to the 1950s, which marked the onset of the cognitive revolution, a response to the limitations of behaviorism and psychoanalysis. This movement, influenced by the work of Jean Piaget on cognitive development and Noam Chomsky's critique of behaviorism, shifted focus back to internal mental processes.

This movement marked a return to the exploration of internal mental processes, acknowledging that understanding human behavior required delving into the complexities of the mind. Piaget's research on cognitive development reshaped our understanding of how children think, reason, and perceive the world, introducing concepts such as schemas and stages of cognitive development.[14] Meanwhile, Chomsky's critique of behaviorism, particularly his argument for the innate capacity for language acquisition in humans, challenged the behaviorist notion that all behavior is a result of conditioning.[15]

During the same period as the cognitive revolution, the 1950s also saw the emergence of humanistic psychology, a movement that provided a refreshing counterpoint to the dominant behaviorist and psychoanalytic schools of the time. Spearheaded by psychologists such as Carl Rogers and

Abraham Maslow, humanistic psychology emphasized a more holistic view of the individual, focusing on positive growth, potential, and self-actualization. This approach was a radical departure from the deterministic outlook of behaviorism, which largely viewed behavior as a response to environmental stimuli, and from the psychoanalytic focus on unconscious processes and childhood conflicts.

Carl Rogers introduced client-centered therapy, advocating for an empathetic, non-judgmental therapeutic environment to help individuals realize their full potential.[16] He emphasized the importance of self-concept, the subjective perception of oneself, and believed that psychological problems arise when there's incongruence between self-concept and reality.[17] This style of therapy has influenced various forms of therapy, including *Non-Directive therapy*[vi]

Abraham Maslow, best known for creating Maslow's hierarchy of needs, proposed that human motivation is based on a hierarchy of needs, starting with basic physical requirements and moving up to the need for self-actualization – the fulfillment of one's unique potential[18]. He argued that once basic needs are met, higher-level needs become the primary drivers of human behavior.

It was humanistic psychologists like Rogers and Maslow who later played a significant role in shaping the self-help, personal development, and personal transformation industries. The core concepts behind their work suggest that every individual possesses the power to change their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors, thus leading to transformative changes in their lives.

Entering the latter part of the 20th century, psychology witnessed a remarkable transformation, becoming increasingly eclectic and inclusive.

[vi] **Non-Directive therapy** is a therapeutic approach that encourages clients to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without direct guidance or advice from the therapist. Instead of offering solutions, the therapist creates a supportive environment where the client can reach their own conclusions, using their own language and vocabulary. This process is believed to reinforce the client's insights and promote lasting personal development.

This era was marked by the integration of diverse theories and perspectives, significantly influenced by the rise of multicultural and feminist psychology. These movements challenged the previously dominant Eurocentric and male-centric views within the field, paving the way for a more comprehensive understanding of human psychology.

The burgeoning fields of multicultural psychology sought to understand how culture impacts mental processes and behavior. It emphasized that psychological research and practice must consider cultural diversity and context. Feminist psychology, on the other hand, critiqued the biases in traditional psychological research and theories, advocating for a gender-sensitive approach that recognized the unique experiences and challenges faced by women.[19] In the 80's and 90's, researchers such as Joane Chrisler, Carol Gilligan,[20] and Sandra Bem[21] ushered in a newer, more comprehensive perspective in gender psychology, and contributed to a broader, more nuanced view of human behavior and mental health as it pertains to cultural realities such as inequality.

Meanwhile, the nature versus nurture debate, a longstanding discussion in various scientific disciplines, found a renewed focus in psychology. This debate explored the relative contributions of genetic inheritance (nature) and environmental factors (nurture) to human development. As a result, concepts such as gender, race, and sexual orientation, traditionally viewed in binary terms, began to be understood as existing on diverse and complex spectrums.[22] This shift acknowledged the intricate interplay of biological, environmental, and sociocultural factors in shaping identity and behavior.

Moving into the 21st century, technological advancements significantly bolstered the understanding of the mind as a complex, dynamic system. Neuroimaging techniques, particularly functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), revolutionized the study of the brain and its relationship to psychological phenomena. These technologies provided empirical evidence supporting psychological theories, linking observable brain activity to cognitive processes and behaviors like thoughts, feelings and sensations.

Over the past 150 years, the field of modern psychology has evolved significantly. Initially, thoughts, emotions, and feelings were considered abstract concepts with no tangible reality. However, thanks to technological advancements, psychologists, cognitive scientists, and neuroscientists now recognize these once intangible experiences as profoundly real. These mental and emotional states are not just abstract notions; they can be measured through brain scans and bloodwork and are proven to have significant impacts on the breadth of human biology.

VIII. Conceptualization And Designing Intentions

With non-invasive technologies like fMRI, researchers could begin to tangibly study aspects of our psychological experience that behaviorists once deemed "unobservable" and "unstudiable." The result has been a broader acceptance of the power of these unobservable experiences, such as our thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and their influence on cognitive and nervous system activity.

Researchers began to look at how thoughts can affect our internal biological systems. For example, a study at Colorado State University in the mid-80's involved professional skiers mentally rehearsing their downhill runs while connected to an electromyography (EMG) device[23]. EMG measures and records muscle electrical activity, providing insights into muscle function and the nerves controlling them.

The study revealed that the skiers' muscle activity during mental rehearsals closely mirrored that during their actual physical downhill runs. Their findings became one of the first studies to peel back the veil on the deep connection between the psyche and our biology, suggesting that what happens in the mind directly influences the state of the body.

This brings us to the important topic of *conceptualization*, which is the process of shaping and refining a thought, idea, or insight within our psyche. The aim of conceptualization is to simplify our understanding of

complex concepts or systems. This simplification helps to refine the experiences we intend to have within our biology, energy, and environment, making them more accessible and manageable.

The innate ability of our psyche to conceptualize is crucial in our training and is frequently utilized in various Expere exercises. For instance, forming an intention involves defining and conceptualizing a desired outcome. Part of the training focuses on clarifying different aspects of the intention, thereby enhancing how clearly we can envision—or picture—the intended result. This practice of conceptualization can be used to influence outcomes across various layers of our human experience, such as the outcome of activities within our biology, our energy levels, and our environment.

In this context, an intention is a conscious and deliberate direction of focus and energy toward a desired outcome or state of being. It transcends the realm of mere concepts to become an experience that engages both body and mind. As a dynamic force, it encompasses mental imagery and emotional expression, shaping our actions and behaviors. In essence, intentions are deeply rooted in our motivations and aspirations, serving as the driving force behind our engagement with life.

In the realm of goal-setting and cognitive psychology, researchers often explore what constitutes a 'good' intention. Studies indicate that the development and deployment of an intention can significantly affect its effectiveness in our lives. For example, in the study of goal-setting theory, effective goal setting, which parallels setting a 'good' intention, involves specificity and clarity.[24] A well-defined intention is more actionable and measurable than a vague one. For example, instead of setting an intention to "be healthier," a more effective approach would be to intend to "exercise for 30 minutes every day." This specificity gives a clear direction and makes it easier to track progress, a key element in measuring the effectiveness of an intention.

Challenging yet attainable goals are another crucial aspect of their theory. An intention should stretch your capabilities but remain realistically

achievable. Overly ambitious intentions might lead to discouragement, while too easy ones might not provide enough motivation for change. For instance, setting an intention to "learn a new language fluently in a month" might be unrealistic, but "learning basic conversational phrases" could be more achievable and still challenging.

Self-determination theory adds another layer to this by emphasizing the importance of intrinsic motivation in goal-setting.[25] Intentions that align with personal values and genuine interests are more likely to be pursued with enthusiasm and dedication. For instance, if environmental conservation is a value you hold dear, setting an intention to reduce personal waste or to engage in community clean-up efforts would resonate more deeply with you than a goal that doesn't align with your core values.

There is a direct correlation between an individual’s belief system and the measurable effectiveness of their intentions. For example, the belief in one's ability to influence internal bodily functions significantly affects the success of these intentions. Psychology and neuroscience suggest that, with practice and repetition, individuals who believe in their capability, even without prior experience, can strengthen their ability to realize intentions involving entirely new experiences.

The field of biofeedback provides compelling evidence of how intentional thought can influence bodily functions, particularly in individuals with limited or no prior experience in consciously affecting certain body processes. Biofeedback is a technique where individuals learn to improve their health by responding to signals from their bodies.

A 2003 study by Schwartz and Andrasik illustrates this concept. In their research, biofeedback was used to help patients control physiological processes typically automatic, such as heart rate or blood pressure. Patients were trained to direct specific intentions towards their bodies for healing or regulation, effectively creating a link between mental intention and physical response.[26]

Additionally, a study by Gruzelier in 2014 explored the impact of neurofeedback, a variant of biofeedback, on various cognitive and creative tasks. The findings showed that participants could learn to modify their brain activity through intentional focus and feedback, enhancing their performance in certain tasks. This research supports the idea that focusing on and cultivating intentions is a skill that can be developed, with tangible effects on mental and physical capabilities. [27]

The practice of conceptualization is vital to the exercise of setting an intention. For instance, the time and energy we spend in Expere training teaching the science of our human experience stems from a commitment to arm ourselves with mental images or concepts that enable us to understand how and why things function the way they do.

Being equipped with this knowledge empowers us to formulate a more precise understanding of what is happening in our mind, body and external reality. Such comprehension enables us to be more discerning about various occurrences and processes as they manifest in our psyche, body, energy, or environment.

The essence of conceptualization is this: we first form a mental picture or knowledge base about a specific topic, theme, or insight. Then, we translate that understanding into a lived experience. Conceptualization in this way allows us to be more intentional or conscious of our direct experiences.

As another example, consider the effect of our breathing rate on our nervous system. Though we'll explore this in more detail later on, we can learn, conceive, or conceptualize that accelerating our breathing rate elicits certain nervous system reactions, while decelerating prompts another set of responses.

Now, with this understanding of how breathing is interconnected with our nervous system, we can use this knowledge to modulate our breath and evoke specific bodily reactions. For instance, we might slow down our breathing to intentionally induce a calming response in our body.

When we design our intentions for personal healing, growth, and transformation, part of the intention design work involves conceptualizing what it means to be the healed or transformed version of ourselves. We consider the aspects or qualities in our psyche, biology, energy, or environment that are intended to be healed or transformed, and we create a concept in our minds of what healing or transformation looks and feels like.

To create greater clarity around our conceptualizations, we are encouraged to further research the science behind the intentions. We are also prompted to explore how other people, groups, or organizations have achieved similar success with parallel intentions. These insights not only enhance our understanding of what a healthy intention might involve but also build confidence in our own potential for success.

As we progress through the Expere material and learn about the intricate aspects of our biology, energy, and environment, we will continue to develop mental representations of how various systems function. This deepens our capacity to learn, conceptualize, and interact effectively with these systems.

IX. The Feeling Attribute Within Our Psyche

Let's expand our conceptualization of the workings of our psyche, and examine different experiences we can have within it. When discussing the layer of the psyche, we can distinctly define various experiences and sensations, such as the differences between thoughts, feelings, imagination, memories, emotions and intentions.

Consider the following scenario: Think about another person. Now, imagine a vivid memory involving that person. Finally, reflect on how you feel about that person. As you go through these mental exercises, pay attention to the differences in your experiences.

Did you notice the contrasting sensations between your *intention* to imagine this person, and then the corresponding activity of your imagination, thoughts, memories, and emotions related to this person?

By examining this example, we can begin to understand the unique qualities of each mental aspect:

- **Intentions** are the deliberate and purposeful direction of our mental energy.
- **Thoughts** involve the cognitive process of generating ideas or engaging in internal dialogue.
- **Imagination** allows us to create mental images and scenarios that may or may not correspond to reality.
- **Memories** are recollections of past events or experiences stored within us and are accessible to our minds.
- **Emotions**, on the other hand, encompass the range of feelings we experience in response to various stimuli.

Feelings in this regard are themselves dynamic. For example, the feeling of anger is characterized by heightened arousal, increased heart rate, and a surge of adrenaline. Contrastingly, the feeling experienced when burning a hand on a stove top involves immediate pain and a reflexive withdrawal. In both instances, the feeling manifests in both mind and body, engaging various bodily systems such as the nervous and cognitive systems, motor functions, and the release of specific hormones and neurotransmitters. These physiological responses shape the subjective experience of the emotion or physical sensation, emphasizing the complex interaction between our mental and physiological states.

However, feelings are distinctly different from thoughts, memories, or emotions. For instance, if I ask, “How do you feel about your career?” you might experience a range of psychological and emotional responses. But if I ask you to “focus on your left hand and describe how it feels,” your response might be more physically oriented and less emotional.

In this context, feelings are a fundamental aspect of our awareness, acting as both the language and life-force of the mind and body. They enable us to experience our internal world and external environment and serve as a medium through which we communicate and receive essential information about physical sensations, emotional states, and sensory perceptions.

Feelings function as messengers, transmitting and receiving subtle and explicit cues that inform the mind and body about our reactions, choices, and interactions. As a communication system, feelings also relay information between us and our environment, a topic we will examine more closely in later chapters.

As we delve deeper into this material, a significant portion of our exploration will revolve around heightening our awareness of these feelings. By doing so, we aim to harness this innate power we all possess, the power of feeling, which is the modality through which we communicate with various internal bodily and external environmental systems.

X. The Attributes of Visualization and Mental Rehearsal

In the realm of shaping and achieving our intentions, visualization emerges as a powerful attribute of the psyche. It complements conceptualization, which helps us clarify complex intentions, and feeling, which enables us to interact and communicate with various bodily and environmental systems. Visualization is the process of creating and manipulating mental images, playing a crucial role in how we manifest our intentions.

Think of visualization as the landscape through which the pathways of our experiences are carved. Just as feeling represents the actions we take in engaging our mind and body—similar to walking down a chosen path—visualization forms the backdrop and context of these paths. It's not just about seeing an image in the mind's eye; it's about creating a mental environment where our intentions can take root and flourish.

Akin to setting intentions, there are ways we can utilize our visualizations to have a more positive and influential outcome in our lives.

For instance, in a 2003 study, researchers in the Department of Neurology at University Hospital Aachen, Germany explored how playing the piano and imagining playing the piano affects the brain. The researchers worked with music students and used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to observe the brain's activity. The students were asked to play a piece of piano music and also to imagine playing it.[28]

This study provides strong support for how visualization and mental practice can improve our skills and impact our lives. Researchers looked at music students who were asked to both play a piano piece and then just imagine playing it. They found that when the students imagined playing, many of the same parts of the brain were active as when they actually played the piano. While playing the piano activated the brain's movement areas more strongly, just thinking about playing also triggered these areas, albeit not as much. This means that when we visualize or mentally rehearse something, it's not just in our imagination; our brain is working in a way that's similar to how it does when we're actually doing the activity.

The study's implications extend far beyond musical training. It underscores the effectiveness of mental rehearsal in various aspects of life, reinforcing the idea that actively visualizing and mentally practicing a skill can prepare the brain and body for actual performance.

Dual-coding theory, developed by Canadian psychologist Allan Paivio in the late 1960s, suggests that our brains process information through two distinct but interconnected systems: one for processing verbal information (the verbal system) and one for non-verbal information, such as images (the non-verbal or imagery system). According to this theory, information processed through both systems is more deeply encoded and better remembered than information processed through just one. This is because the two systems can work independently or together, allowing for more complex and interconnected memory formation.

Mental rehearsal, a technique associated with this theory, involves mentally practicing a task without physically performing it. This practice leverages the imagery system by creating vivid mental images of performing the task, which can be as effective as actual practice in improving performance. The technique also engages the verbal system, as individuals mentally elaborate on the details of their visualization, including spoken words.

In the Expere framework, during mental rehearsals, we encourage participants to engage the *feeling system*; our other systems include all physical sensations (touch, smell, sound, taste, sight, etc.) and emotional sensations (joy, happiness, compassion, challenge, etc.). For example, an athlete might imagine not only their movements but also the feeling of sweat on their forehead during a performance, the smell of the oder in the air, and not just the positive emotions, but also the emotions associated with overcoming a difficult opponent, and eventually winning a match. The more immersive, vivid, and realistic these mental sensations are, the more effectively the body responds to the activity.

By engaging our imagery, verbal and feeling (sensory and emotional) systems within visualizations and mental rehearsals, we can enhance our mental preparation, leading to improved physical performance. This approach has become a vital part of training regimens for athletes, including Canadian Olympic athletes, who use mental rehearsal to visualize their routines and performances.[29] By doing so, they prepare their minds and bodies for the actual event, reinforcing muscle memory and boosting confidence, even when they're not physically practicing their sport.

The benefits of regular visualization and mental rehearsal practice extend beyond muscle memory and confidence; there are also physical alterations and improvements within our physiology. For instance, in a study conducted at Ohio University, United States, researchers demonstrated the powerful impact of imagination on our human biology, specifically in the activity of our muscles.

The study involved a group of 29 participants who had their wrists immobilized in surgical casts for a month so that they couldn't move them.[30] One group was formed and asked to imagine flexing their muscles strongly for five days each week, even though they couldn't actually move their muscles. Surprisingly, the group who just imagined exercising their muscles didn't lose as much muscle strength as those who didn't do any imagining. In fact, their muscle strength decreased only about half as much as those who didn't use mental exercises. Participants that imagined their arm exercises not only had stronger arms than those who didn't, but they also had a stronger brain; their mental exercises created more neuromuscular pathways than those who did not do the mental exercises.

Further upstate, at the Department of Biomedical Engineering, The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, United States, researchers looked at whether thinking about exercising specific muscles can make those muscles stronger.[31] The researchers divided 30 healthy volunteers into different groups. One group focused their minds on contracting their little finger muscles, another group did the same but for their elbow muscles, and a third group didn't do any mental exercises and just acted as a comparison. There was also a group that actually did physical exercises with their fingers.

After 12 weeks of doing these mental or physical exercises for 15 minutes a day, five days a week, the researchers found some interesting results. The group that mentally exercised their little finger muscles increased their strength in those muscles by 35%, and the group that focused on their elbow muscles increased their strength by 13.5%. The group that did physical finger exercises improved their strength by 53%. The control group, who didn't do any exercises, didn't get any stronger.

The researchers also found that the improvements in muscle strength in the groups that did mental exercises were linked with increases in brain activity related to muscle control. They concluded that this kind of mental training can increase the brain's ability to signal muscles to work harder and become stronger, even without physical exercise.

XI. Second-Person Visualization and Top-Down Processing

The more immersed we become in our visualizations, the greater the impact they have over our mind and body. In first-person visualizations, we can engage our imagery, verbal and feeling systems in order to immerse ourselves more deeply into the mental rehearsal as we play out the mental scenery in our imagination.

There are also other types of visualizations that can have different effects on our psychology and biology. One example includes second-person visualization.

Research in psychology and cognitive science has shown that different visualization techniques can have varying levels of effectiveness, depending on their intended effect. For instance, a first-person visualization, where you see through your own eyes in the imagined scenario, can be more effective for intention setting, emotional processing and goal achievement. In contrast, a second-person visualization, where you see yourself as an observer, can be better for self-reflection, external perspective, and evaluation of personal behavior.

A notable study by researchers at The Ohio State University in 2011 demonstrated the differing impacts of first-person and second-person visualizations. They found that first-person visualizations were more effective for experiencing and processing emotions, while second-person visualizations provided a more detached perspective, useful for self-improvement and behavior change.[32]

The study focuses on how we use visual imagery in our minds and how it affects our understanding of events, our emotions, and our self-perception. When we think about past or future events, we often visualize them in our mind's eye. Sometimes, we see these events from our own perspective, as if we're looking out through our own eyes (first-person perspective).

However, there can be a benefit to seeing ourselves as an observer would, from an outside viewpoint (second-person perspective).

This is because the perspective we use in our mental imagery affects how we process and understand events. A first-person perspective leads us to understand events based on the concrete, immediate details we imagine ("bottom-up" processing). In contrast, a second-person perspective makes us think about these events in a more abstract way, connecting them with a broader context ("top-down" processing).

Bottom-up processing is like starting with the small pieces of a puzzle and putting them together to get the big picture. It begins with the sensory information we receive from the world around us, and we use this information to build up to a larger understanding. For example, when looking at a painting, you first notice the colors, shapes, and details before understanding the whole image.

Top-down processing, on the other hand, is like having the picture of the completed puzzle in mind and then finding where each piece fits. It starts with our expectations or prior knowledge, which we use to make sense of what we see, hear, or feel. For instance, if you're a pianist expert, you might listen to a new song and immediately understand its genre or style based on your previous knowledge of music.

In the Expere framework, top-down processing is essential for enhancing our decision-making and supporting our transformational journey. For example, when we apply an intention design methodology, we use top-down processing to firstly identify the desired dream and aspiration.

The Reframing Method, something we'll talk about in more detail in Chapter 4, uses top-down processing techniques to identify our overarching knowledge or preconceptions about a particular *resistance,* which can manifest in the form of fear-based responses and challenging emotional responses, enabling us to efficiently interpret new information and reshape our existing understanding. This is particularly crucial when addressing beliefs or experiences that may be impeding our growth and

transformation. We will delve deeper into this aspect, focusing on our conditioning and resistances, in later chapters.

Moreover, top-down processing is incredibly valuable in honing our intuition. As we engage in setting intentions, refining our visualizations, and practicing mental rehearsals, we are essentially painting the canvas for a deeper understanding of our world and ambitions.

When we identify the feeling systems associated with our intentions, such as experiencing joy and happiness during our mental rehearsal of these intentions, we start to construct a psychological blueprint. This blueprint becomes a guide for our day-to-day decision-making processes, which is a key part of our intuition.

By clearly defining how we want to feel about a particular outcome in our lives, we are creating an experiential framework within our psyche. When faced with a difficult decision or challenge, we can reflect: does this choice align with the feeling system I established in my intention design work?

Over time, and with consistent practice, our ability to make quicker, more instinctive judgments based on these feeling systems improves. This skill is particularly valuable in complex situations where we need to navigate through a lot of information and determine what is most relevant or accurate in our lives.

XII. Strengthening Intuition as A Key Indicator of Progress

Developing a strong intuition is a key part of the Expere framework. Intuition is often more than just associating feelings and intentions; it's a sense of 'knowing', sometimes without a clear rationale. As we progress in our training, enhancing this intuitive response is a clear sign that we are deepening our connection with both the inner workings of our body and the external world around us. A robust intuition not only guides us but also

instills confidence in our decisions, an essential attribute when facing life's challenges and embracing growth.

However, like any skill worth cultivating, strengthening intuition requires consistent practice and dedication. It's akin to an athlete training to improve their endurance – the results are a product of persistent effort and learning. To build a strong intuition, one must master fundamental skills and techniques.

Consider a scenario where you're faced with a binary choice – option A or B. Each choice leads to a different outcome, and you can rationalize arguments for both options which might leave you feeling uncertain and less confident in your decision.

In these instances, strengthening intuition involves accessing a broader range of information to guide the decision-making process. This information isn't limited to mental analysis; it can also include bodily responses too. For instance, one option might cause a physical sensation of tightness in the chest, while the other elicits a relaxed, calm, or even joyful response. Such bodily signals can be integral to our overall intuition.

We'll explore later how our central nervous system processes an immense amount of information – about 11 million bits per second. This includes everything from the enzymes digesting food in our stomachs to the light hitting our retinas, as well as more intricate energy patterns like the Earth's electromagnetic field or the biophotonic light from living cells (more on this in Chapter 7).

There's a constant flow of information reaching us every second of every day, and to operate efficiently, our minds and bodies employ filters. These filters determine what information should reach our conscious awareness and what can be handled subconsciously without taxing our conscious mind.

This means that the majority of our human experience happens without our conscious awareness. However, the good news is that we all have the

capacity to tap into this vast subconscious realm. By learning specific tools and techniques, we can create the internal conditions needed for progress, enabling us to access and utilize this wealth of subconscious information to support our transformational journeys.

XIII. Learning the Basics: Attention, Concentration and Anchoring

This concept of learning some basic techniques to advance our awareness training is particularly relevant when confronted with life's tougher challenges, such as disease or trauma. Alongside modern medical treatments, one might also engage in mindful healing and visualization practices. Intuitively, we might feel positive about our practices and protocols. As we define our intentions, imagery, and feeling systems, and begin visualizing our health, we might initially struggle however with basic steps like sitting still for extended periods, and the struggle can call into question our overall confidence in the practice.

Just as learning to play the piano requires fundamental skills such as finger dexterity, muscle memory, and understanding rhythm and tone, meditation and mindfully navigating the mind-body connection also demand foundational skills and techniques. These skills are essential to develop in order to strengthen our resolve and harness the full potential of our mental and physical capabilities.

Three fundamental skills that are essential to master within the Expere framework are *attention*, *concentration*, and a mental technique known as *anchoring*. Delving into these techniques and understanding the pivotal roles they play in our cognitive processes can greatly enhance our ability to benefit from them through consistent practice.

Attention is our capacity to focus our awareness on a specific object, task, or idea. It involves directing our mental energy and resources toward a particular point of interest. It's important to note that attention differs from

awareness. While awareness encompasses the broad range of what we perceive and experience at any given moment, attention is more about zeroing in on a specific aspect of that vast perceptual field.

To better understand the difference between attention and awareness, consider sitting in a theater. When we concentrate on the performance on stage, our attention is narrowly focused. Meanwhile, our broader awareness passively registers other stimuli – the room's temperature, the scents in the air, the subtle background noises, and even the soft shuffling of the audience. This encompasses all the other information to which our subconscious has access. Although these peripheral elements are part of our overall sensory experience, they may not be the direct focus of our attention.

In this example, attention allows us to selectively engage with what we are directly perceiving, such as the actors on stage, while awareness encompasses both our direct and indirect perceptions. It's as if attention shines a spotlight on the focal point of our experience, while awareness encompasses the broader backdrop against which that focal point exists.

We use this distinction to not only develop greater control over our attention but also to navigate the information or stimulation we consciously choose to focus on. Understanding the difference between awareness and attention is crucial in expanding our perception of information. This includes information within the range of our awareness that we might not be actively 'paying attention' to. It encompasses both external environmental cues and internal bodily signals, such as the previous example when you became aware of whether or not your bladder demanded a visit to the restroom.

Herein lies the true power of our attention in awareness training: our attention is akin to the outward expression of our life-force, and it can both influence and be influenced by various elements within our body and environment. The saying 'where our attention goes, our energy flows' aptly summarizes this point. We can direct our attention to different experiences within our body or our environment, and due to its dual nature, it possesses

the power to both receive and send information, or to influence other entities.

This dual nature of attention – its ability to both receive and transmit information – is a fundamental aspect of its abilities. When we focus our attention on a particular experience or sensation within our body, we're not only receiving information about our internal state, but we're also potentially influencing that state. Thus, attention in awareness training is more than just a mental spotlight; it's a tool for interaction and transformation. Like any tool, one can learn how to skillfully wield it.

Concentration, as an extension of attention, is about maintaining a deliberate and sustained focus on a particular object, task, or idea over time. It's the ability to keep our mental focus steady, regardless of potential distractions within our broader field of awareness. This level of sustained focus is a powerful tool in our psyche’s arsenal.

The development of concentration is a critical aspect of mental training, as it not only strengthens our ability to maintain attention but also allows us to explore our chosen focus in greater depth. Whether we're zeroing in on a specific object or experience for a particular outcome, or directing our concentration toward achieving a state of stillness and quiet, each practice serves a unique purpose.

In fact, concentrating on stillness and quiet, especially for extended periods, is a particularly useful skill to develop. This practice is key to enhancing our perceptiveness of stimuli and sensations in both our internal and external environments. By focusing on quietness, we create a mental space free from the usual chatter and clutter of thoughts, enabling us to become more attuned to subtle cues and details. For many practitioners, the greatest challenge in their training is the ability to sit in silence for extended periods. However, the rewards of mastering this technique are significant, as it is in silence that one might come to perceive the 'loudness of the universe,’ a profound and joyful discovery.

This heightened state of perceptiveness also enriches our understanding of our inner world. Through concentration, we can become more attuned to the nuances of our thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. This increased internal awareness is a significant step towards deeper self-understanding and insight, allowing us to navigate our mental landscape with greater clarity and discernment.

One technique that enhances concentration and directs attention effectively is *anchoring*. Anchoring is a mental strategy that involves creating a 'mental anchor' – a specific association or reference point that helps us maintain our focus on a chosen object or activity. This anchor could be a mental image, such as a mantra or visual symbol, a physiological activity like focusing on our breathing, or a point in our environment, like the flame of a candle, that we use to concentrate our attention on.

For instance, anchoring our mind to our breathing creates a stable focus point, helping us concentrate and maintain attention. This technique acts as a steadying anchor amidst the fluctuations of thoughts and external distractions, providing stability and preventing our attention from wandering aimlessly. The more we practice anchoring techniques, the easier it becomes to maintain concentration for longer durations of time.

XIV. Learning the Basics: Convergent and Divergent Focus

We have discussed how concentration is important in sustaining attention, influencing our awareness of a specific object or the stillness of the mind. In addition to concentration, focus is another key aspect of attention, closely tied to sustained and concentrated engagement with a particular object or task. While focus and concentration can be used interchangeably, understanding their subtle differences can enhance our cognitive skills.

Focus can be understood as the initial act of directing attention to a specific point, while concentration refers to the ongoing effort to maintain that

focused attention over an extended period. It's the difference between initially zooming in on a target and then continuously keeping it in our sights.

Within the context of focus, there are two important techniques to explore: convergent focus and divergent focus.

Convergent focus occurs when we narrow our attention and direct it towards a specific thing or action. It's like a laser beam, intensely focused and precise. For example, when we bring our awareness to our breath, we converge our focus onto the respiratory process. By focusing on the breath, we narrow our attention to the rhythmic inhalation and exhalation, creating a sense of centeredness and presence.

On the other hand, divergent focus, also known as open focus, involves expanding our attention to encompass a broader field of perception, such as a multitude of objects or an entire system. This is akin to a floodlight, illuminating a broader area and accommodating a multitude of thoughts and stimuli.

To experience the difference between convergent and divergent focus, let's try a brief exercise. Begin by closing your eyes and focusing solely on your breath. Concentrate deeply on each inhalation and exhalation, bringing a sharp, convergent focus to this singular aspect of your experience. Feel the rhythm and the subtle nuances of your breathing.

Next, gently shift your focus. Move away from the concentrated attention on your breath and allow your focus to expand outward. Become aware of the sensations surrounding your body – the brush of air on your skin, the ambient temperature of the room, the smells you perceive, and the lingering flavors and tastes within your mouth. Observe the difference in this expanded, divergent focus compared to the pinpoint attention you gave to your breathing.

Now, let your awareness diverge even further. Expand it to encompass the entire room or space you are in. Take a moment to sense the environment,

the objects, and the activity within the room. Don't stop there; extend your awareness beyond the confines of the room. Imagine it enveloping the entire building or the broader environment you are in. Pay attention to how your focus adjusts as you broaden your awareness. Observe the extent to which you can diverge your focus, opening up to a wider, more inclusive awareness.

Convergent and divergent focuses are both important aspects of our mental training. Convergent focus helps us cultivate concentration and stability, allowing us to direct our attention to specific tasks or objects with precision. Divergent focus, on the other hand, encourages expansive awareness and the ability to perceive insights and information that are otherwise inaccessible to our focused psyche. We use both styles of focus in our mental training work to elicit different physiological and psychological responses from the mind and body. Both can also serve complementary roles in our learning and training process, enabling us to regulate, stimulate, and activate different parts of our brain and body, consciously initiating what are known as different *mind states*.

XV. Categorizing Mind States Within Our Psyche

As we explore the various attributes of the psyche, categorically describing what distinguishes one experience from the next, this comprehensive examination equips us with a foundation of vocabulary that we can begin to integrate into our training modules.

The next segment of our discussion involves exploring the concept of mind states. These states emerge as experiential expressions — our personal experiences — resulting from the intricate interplay of our psychology, biology, energy, and environment.

Mind states can be understood as the unique combination of our thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, and perceptions at any given moment. They help to categorize the overall state of our dynamic consciousness,

acknowledging that each experience is unique and no two experiences are exactly the same.

Consider, for instance, the times when we feel relaxed and calm. We can classify this experience of relaxation under a mind state, which we might label as a 'calm state.' Although the sensation of relaxation is familiar and can be repeated under the right conditions, it's important to note that no two instances of this calm state are ever entirely identical. Each occurrence has its own nuances and subtleties, making every experience distinct.

Just as the psyche is dynamic and complex, mind states act to categorically identify different types of subjective experiences. They help us label and understand the varied mental and emotional landscapes we navigate. For instance, we might categorize certain experiences as part of meditative mind states, while others could be identified as distressful mind states.

Developing an awareness of your own personal mind states can be a valuable practice in recognizing patterns in your internal processes and understanding how you are influenced by your body and environment. You may notice that under certain conditions, your mind state aligns with creativity and motivation, whereas different conditions might foster feelings of confidence and athleticism. In this regard, mind states act as blueprints for achieving repeatable experiences within your psyche. By recognizing and naming these states, we gain a more profound understanding of our internal processes and their interaction with the external world.

Consider, for instance, the mind state referred to as a *Lucid* state. This state refers to a heightened awareness and clarity experienced during a dream or deep meditative state. It is a unique phenomenon where the individual becomes conscious and aware while deeply meditating or dreaming, often leading to a sense of control and active participation within the meditation or dream narrative.

In a lucid dream state, the individual can actively engage with and manipulate the dream environment, exerting intentional control over their

actions, surroundings, and even the dream's storyline. This heightened level of self-awareness within the dream realm opens up a realm of possibilities for exploration, self-discovery, and creativity.

Therapeutically, Lucid mind states can be an invaluable approach to mental training for real-life scenarios. For instance, someone with a deep fear of public speaking might use a visualization practice within a Lucid mind state to rehearse a speech in front of a large crowd.

Even though this training might take place within a Lucid mind state, such as in a dream, under therapeutic hypnosis, or through self-directed meditation, the participant often experiences the benefits of this training in their real life. Many have reported the ability to overcome fears and significant personal challenges by utilizing a Lucid state experience as part of their training.

There is another version of a mind state known as the superconscious state. While the Lucid state encompasses vivid, imaginative experiences as an individual undergoing some activity, the superconscious state is often described as a transcendent peak and the pinnacle of cognitive capability. Here, we transcend personhood and experience a sense of boundlessness.

In our daily lives, we are bound by the constructs of identity, location, and the linear passage of time. However, in the superconscious state, these boundaries often dissolve. Practitioners frequently recount feeling as if they are nobody (free from identity), nowhere (unconfined by location), and in no time (unhindered by the constraints of past, present, or future). This liberating experience allows for boundless exploration of consciousness, providing profound insights and understanding.

By cultivating an awareness of our mind states, we open a window into the ever-changing landscape of our mental processes. This awareness helps us recognize the intricate patterns, tendencies, and triggers that shape our daily experiences. More importantly, through targeted training, we gain the ability to consciously navigate and direct these mind states. This

skill leads to more purposeful and controllable experiences, allowing us to harness our mental capabilities more effectively.

XVI. Mind States and Our Brainwaves

Though no two experiences are ever exactly the same, we can have repeatable types of experiences, known as mind states. Our knowledge of the underlying physiological activities within our biology and energy that influence different types of experiences within our psyche is important for our exploration.

Central to this understanding is the role of brainwaves, the vital energetic activity that influences the functioning of both our brain and body. Brainwaves are essentially the electrical energy produced by the brain, offering crucial insights into the various mind states and mental experiences we undergo.

These brainwaves are the electrical impulses coursing through the brain, akin to a symphony of neural activity. They form the foundation of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Varying in frequency, these brainwaves are closely associated with different mind states and a myriad of mental activities. They are not just indicators of mental states but also influential factors that can be modulated for enhancing mental health and cognitive functions.

Let's briefly overview these waves to appreciate their significance:

1. **Gamma waves (30-100 Hz)**: Gamma waves represent the brain's highest frequency and are associated with high-level information processing and cognitive functioning. These waves are prevalent during activities that require intense concentration and problem-solving. Notably, they are also dominant in deep meditative states, particularly the *Superconscious* state, where one experiences transcendent awareness. The presence of gamma waves indicates

a mind that is actively engaged in complex thought processes or deep, transformative meditation.

2. **Beta waves (12-30 Hz)**: Beta waves are the brain's standard rhythm during most awake and alert states. They are linked with active, analytical thought and an external focus on the world. When you are engaged in tasks that require conscious judgment and decision-making, beta waves dominate your brain activity. These waves facilitate critical thinking, logical reasoning, and focused attention on your surroundings, known as the *Active* state.

3. **Alpha waves (8-12 Hz)**: Emerging prominently during relaxed states, alpha waves signify a calm yet alert mind. They act as a bridge between the conscious and subconscious realms, making them particularly significant in practices like relaxation and becoming more aware of our bodily processes. When alpha waves are dominant, the mind is in a state of wakeful rest, conducive to concentrated mental coordination. They represent a state of peaceful wakefulness, often found in moments of reflection and introspection. They are often associated with the *Flow* state.

4. **Theta waves (4-8 Hz)**: Present in deep meditation and the REM dream state, theta waves are indicative of a highly imaginative inner experience. They indicate a brain that is disconnected from certain executive functions such as critical thinking, often absorbed in the flow of a vivid inward experience. These waves are dominant in *Lucid* mind states, where one experiences vivid dream-like scenarios with conscious awareness. Theta waves are also associated with memory recollection, and the processing of emotions and internal experiences, offering a gateway to our deeper, non-rational self.

5. **Delta waves (0.5-4 Hz)**: Delta waves are the slowest and are dominant during deep, dreamless sleep. These waves are essential for healing and regeneration, playing a critical role in *Restorative* mind states of sleep and neuroregeneration. The presence of delta

waves indicates a state of unconsciousness and disconnection from certain high-functioning mental processes, allowing the body and nervous system to recover and rejuvenate.

Brainwaves, like mind states, offer a tangible and observable way to measure the effects of psychological experiences on the brain and body. Just as mind states can be seen as unique configurations or categorizations of our thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, and perceptions at any given moment, brainwaves provide measurable insights into these experiences.

During busy and mentally active periods, such as while working or handling important tasks, you might observe predominant beta waves. These brainwaves are linked to mental activities like problem-solving and critical thinking. We might affectionately refer to this mind state as our 'busy brain state', or active mind state.

However, when you return home and start to relax, there's likely an increase in alpha waves, corresponding to the calming experiences you undergo. As you unwind, perhaps by soaking in a warm bath to ease the day's stress while drifting off into a daydream, your brainwaves shift more towards a dominant alpha and theta state. This shift marks our transition into what we might call our 'zen state,' a state we repeatedly experience under these relaxing conditions.

What this example underscores is the interconnection between our psychological states and our energetic state, specifically in terms of brainwave energy. Based on the principle of interdependence, what occurs in one experience – such as taking a warm bath – can influence the outcome of another, like the brainwave patterns expressed throughout our central nervous system. These insights into brainwaves also illustrate the profound biological and psychological connection within ourselves.

XVII. Altered States of Mind

"*I was listening to the audio recording and doing my breathwork, but it was taking me longer than usual to let go of my mind's distractions. Consumed by thoughts and emotions from an argument the day before, my mind was foggy, my heart quiet and unsure, but at least my body felt calm and meditative.*

The breathwork session involved six rounds. My first two rounds felt like I was going through the motions, struggling just to stay on task and wondering if I would complete the practice. By the third round, however, I started feeling a shift in my perception. It's a distinct feeling where you visualize yourself as an observer from above. The best way I can describe it is as if you imagine yourself above your body looking down and watching yourself as an 'observer'.

In round four I'm now fully immersed in the visualization experience. As a second-person observer, I feel a rush of immense love and compassion. I visualized sending my love to different people in my life, seeing their faces smiling and happy. I see them as these beaming beings of bright light.

In round five, the audio instructor guides us to go deeper within ourselves. He guides us to send our bodies the energy it needs and desires. He makes a comment that we don't do this often enough anymore, and it sticks with me. I returned to visualizing my body, and I can see bright blue neon lights streaming through my veins and organs.

I had a bit of a head cold that day, so when I observed these neon blue lights around my head and focused on them, they began to brighten. This made me intuitively feel that my sinuses were healing. Witnessing this experience filled me with so much love for my body that I was in awe and appreciation for its incredible capabilities.

I then knew it was time to tackle the 'big one,' the major health issue I was avoiding: the area in my body where my cancer had previously been. I

knew I had to shift my observer-awareness to this part of my body to understand what exactly had happened to me and why I had developed cancer in the first place.

As I observed my genital region and abdomen, it immediately became clear that the blue neon light in that region was much darker, and I could tell it had been like this for some time. It was an intense experience. I began to understand how I've disconnected to this area of my body for a long time. I realized that the organs in this area needed my love and gratitude. Over time, I recognized that I had been giving this area less and less attention. I could feel its alienation from the rest of the blue neon light throughout my body. As a result, my biology deteriorated, and mutated cells began to accumulate in my testicle. My body was unable to clear out these mutated cells, leading to the spread of cancer, which eventually reached my abdominal area.

I felt a strong urge to now send love and my appreciation to this area of my body. I remember what it felt like to have a strong and healthy connection with my sex organs and abdomen, and I visualized myself hugging this area and holding it tightly with a loving embrace. I encouraged it to thrive and be expansive. I visualized this area becoming a beaming blue light of positive energy in the universe.

It was all so profound and beautiful at the same time. In that moment, everything just was. The cancer experience was neither good nor bad; there was no longer guilt or shame that I hadn't done enough. I understood that the entire experience was part of my journey to becoming more aware and conscious. I finally understood my 'why'—why I felt I got sick, which is personal to me and provided the closure I needed. I am so grateful for it all!"
- Graeme Raymond Davis

Experiencing one of these vivid aforementioned meditative mind states, known as the Lucid state, involves an experience where deep bodily relaxation coexists with heightened cognitive activity.

As we recall, the Lucid state is characterized by dominant theta brainwaves. Here, our attention remains active and alert, and there's a noticeable shift in awareness from the external world, typically associated with beta brainwaves, to an internal, imaginative landscape.

In the Lucid state, we may experience a detachment from our usual sense of self and time. This detachment can be likened to the immersive nature of dreaming, where our connection to real-world identity and surroundings becomes blurred, and we're engrossed in the mind's vivid fabrications.

Based on research in lucid dreaming, where theta brain waves are dominant, we have learned certain aspects about these states. Specifically, these studies investigate if actions in dreams, during lucid episodes, take the same duration as they would in a wakeful state.

Research has shown that the time taken for counting in lucid dreams is similar to that in wakefulness.[3334] This suggests a kind of time equivalence for certain cognitive tasks between the dream state and the waking state. In contrast, the same studies found that performing motor tasks, like squats, took about 40% more time in lucid dreams than in the waking state. This would mean that different types of tasks influence how time is perceived in deep, lucid states.

To illustrate this point, a study conducted by researchers from Switzerland and Germany conducted experiments with lucid dreamers who performed three different tasks (counting, walking, and a gymnastics routine) in both a wakeful state and a lucid dream state. The tasks' durations were measured and compared across the two states.[35]

The study discovered that all tasks took somewhat longer in the dream state, but the only significant differences were only found in tasks involving motor activity (walking and gymnastics). The complexity of the motor task did not result in more prolonged times in the dream state. The study suggested that the longer durations in lucid dreams might be due to the absence of muscular feedback or slower neural processing during REM sleep.

The study's findings are relevant for understanding the functioning of the brain during Lucid mind states. For example, it has implications for fields like sports science, or practitioners who wish to use Lucid mind state practices for mental rehearsal and training.

Another important aspect of a Lucid state involves a shift in cognition where we absorb and store information without critical analysis. Studies in early childhood brain development have become an effective way to learn more about the role of these theta-dominant states within our experiences.

For instance, a 2022 study conducted at Washington State University found that children engaged in play exhibited higher levels of frontal theta and alpha wavebands, whereas higher beta and gamma wavebands were observed when they were engaged in watching an audio-visual display.[36]

Theta brainwaves, typically in the 4-8 Hz range, are also known to be prominent during deep relaxation, meditation, and light sleep, states often associated with enhanced creativity and problem-solving abilities. Research, such as the 2022 Washington State study, suggests that when children are playing and exhibiting an increase in theta activity, their brains are likely forming novel associations between different ideas, a key aspect of creative thinking. This also holds true during meditation experiences, where practitioners express a decrease in critical analysis, allowing for a more free-flowing thought process and internal experience.

Theta brainwaves also play a significant role in other cognitive processes, particularly in learning and memory. This is believed to be due to the brain's reduced critical analysis during theta states, allowing for the absorption of large amounts of information without the usual filters applied during fully alert states.

Studies have shown that theta brainwaves are closely linked to an area within our brain known as the hippocampus, which these theta bands signal during tasks that depend on memory. For instance, a 2021 study

involving 226 participants performing associative memory tasks demonstrated that hippocampal rhythms could be identified in behavioral responses during memory encoding and retrieval.[37] This suggests that theta oscillations are crucial during the encoding phase of memory formation. Another important aspect of hippocampal activity involves spatial navigation. Disruptions in the theta rhythm in this area have been linked to spatial memory deficits in rats, indicating that when we are experience increase theta activity, we are also experiencing an increase in spatial memory processing.[38]

This is what makes the Lucid state experience so vivid, personal, profound and memorable for mediators, it’s a psychological experience that involves the brain's reduced critical analysis, allowing internal space for more creativity and emotional processing to occur.

Vividness and clarity are cornerstones of the Lucid state, where experiences are not only deeply imaginative but also insightful and often remembered. This state's potential for offering important guidance and solutions to challenges is immense. As we explore this altered state of awareness, we venture into a new territory for self-discovery and personal growth to take place within.

The Lucid state however is not just an altered state of consciousness; it's a gateway to deeper understanding, connectivity, and insight within ourselves. As we navigate through various states of mind and consciousness, we unlock the boundless potential of the human psyche, expanding our horizons and enriching our experience of life and self-awareness. In the next chapter, we’re going to explore various techniques and methodologies to develop our cognitive training, and design an effective, Lucid state practice.

Chapter 2
Cognitive Practices and Training

I. Introduction to the Cognitive Training Modules

In this chapter, we will delve into fundamental techniques and skills essential for enhancing our awareness and meditative experiences. Each technique will be thoroughly explained, along with suggestions for adjustments and improvements.

While these techniques offer readers a chance to engage with Expere training techniques and modules at home, it's important to note that not every technique or module may align with everyone's specific intentions or goals. Therefore, we encourage you to use these modules as a flexible guide, adapting and customizing them to fit your unique needs.

However, many techniques covered in this chapter are fundamental to developing a progressive, mind-body awareness practice. For example, the anchoring technique is invaluable for centering the mind and grounding the body, which are critical aspects of most awareness practices. While it's possible to advance to more complex practices without mastering anchoring, learning to become proficient in these basic skills leads to more significant and consistent improvements in advanced training.

Consider this analogy: with minimal training, you might be able to run a marathon, but your performance and experience will be heavily influenced by your lack of preparation. You may encounter early successes nonetheless, but progressing in your running without a solid foundation in the basics will prove challenging. Similarly, in awareness training,

Notes

Chapter 1: The Psyche and Cognition

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