

While it may seem odd, most people are unconsciously ambivalent about the very same change they seek. The paradox is that on the one hand a person may seem wilful and full of intent to change, yet acts in ways which are not conducive to change. There frequently is resistance to change, even when change is in a person's best interest. This paradox seems to be one of the 'truisms' of life.

A part of the difficulty is that our ideas of how our brains operate are typically based on erroneous models. We seem to believe that our brains operate much like a computer in that data gets inputted and a logical outcome prevails. This line of reasoning can be clearly seen in ideologies which believe that in one way or another our conscious thoughts are responsible for our actions.

A more accurate metaphor for brain processing entails a brain consisting of many disparate modules. These modules (remember the term 'modules' are used as a metaphor in this article) often function in parallel to each other where multiple modules are activated simultaneously. The other feature of these modules is that they operate out of conscious awareness. Given this information we can understand the brain as multi-faceted where sometimes the facets/modules are operating towards different ends. The implication being that the brain has the capacity to be at war with itself.

Quite literally there can be a war raging on in our heads where one part of us wants to go in one direction and another in quite a different direction. What often complicates things is that there can be several unconscious modules in conflict with each other. On top of that unconscious processes can be in opposition to our conscious process. Utilizing this model, we can understand why we simultaneously can seek change and resist it at the same time.

In our heads we think because we have consciously set our intention or will on something then it should occur. Unfortunately, this dismisses the influence that our unconscious has on our behaviour, emotions and thoughts. For example, if we placed identical washing powder into three boxes, one blue, one yellow and one blue and yellow and then asked you to rate which was the better cleaning product, chances are very high you would rate the blue and yellow box higher. If we pleasantly scented one pair of stockings and then had you compare them to an identical pair of stockings (minus the scent) and asked you to rate the stockings on fabric quality, you would very likely choose the former. Both results come from recent experiments in psychology.

These experiments among many others, tell the story that our behaviour including emotional and cognitive patterns are largely determined by the unconscious. But just knowing this does not really help us align differing processes and modules more fully

internally. It does not really help us to not resist change.

What does help is to start to begin to tune in on some of our unconscious motivations and then retrain our unconscious modules to reinvest their energy into pursuits we are interested in. There are many ways to do this, but no matter the technique, three of the more central features are;

1. To pay attention to ourselves and how we behave in the world. We must be brutally honest and dig deep without putting ourselves down. Done in the right way paying attention is a high form of love and self-love.
2. Related to the above, we must develop the ability to observe ourselves. There has to be enough connection there to be involved in our immediate environment and the world at large, but also we must maintain a high degree of objectivity. Mostly this is not particularly easy for people to do. Drama has become a way of life... To make really constructive decisions in life, we need to get into spaces where we can call upon all our resources. The ability to observe ourselves helps in this regard because if nothing else, it increases our understanding of how we work in the world.
3. We cannot remain passive - repeated action must follow. We have to identify our goals and values and then act in ways which align with these. This often means repeated attempts (think persistence) at aligning the inner values with outer behaviour.

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