

FEELING CONNECTED

By Nancy Jackson/Swami Dayananda

When you think about it, what are the moments you most enjoy? How do you feel at the time? Perhaps relaxed, comfortable, at ease. Maybe exhilarated, filled with motivation and promise. A sense of well being, feeling . . . connected.

What is the experience of connecting? And what are you connected to? Feeling connected has characteristics such as upliftment, peace, insight and unlimited potential. When in this state, you are actually connecting to yourself—the deepest, most vibrant part of you, your life force itself. This aspect within is variously described as the spiritual self, the inner self or the higher self. It is the source and expression of consciousness. Being connected to your higher self manifests as a sense of everything's right with the world; you are in complete relationship to other people and the world around you.

In contrast, what is the experience of feeling separate? Characteristics might include tension, insecurity, fear, anger and unhappiness. You might feel lonely, unable to communicate, filled with blame or regret. Things seem hard to do, or you feel like you are not getting your way.

Sometimes we can't tell the difference. That's because we are not always paying attention. Oddly enough, we are most likely to notice when we feel connected because we take a moment to enjoy the good feeling. We don't necessarily know we are feeling separate because we might be overcome by a negative emotion or agitation.

Why does it even matter? The experience of feeling connected is a more pleasant experience than feeling separate. But that's not the only reason to move towards connection. When you are connected you make better choices, you think more clearly, communicate well, operate with more grace. When you are feeling separate, even small challenges seem insurmountable, it's difficult to listen, accidents happen and mistakes are made.

One technique to feel connected is to become aware when life seems difficult. At that moment focus on yourself to investigate what is going on. Here are three ways you can bring yourself into connection to your most vibrant being.

Inquiry

To move yourself towards connection, focus your awareness away from outside objects, events or people. Follow an imaginary arrow that points directly at you. Bring your consciousness to the present, what is happening right now. Ask yourself: *What is my body doing and how do I feel physically?* Go into your mind, or your inner world. Ask yourself: *What is my emotional state? Is my mind agitated or calm?* Take a moment to consider where you are and what you are doing or thinking. Ask yourself: *Does this thought, action or impulse keep me connected to myself or make me feel separate?* Notice your breath and your sense of being. Experience your own consciousness.

Meditation

The part of you that is in total harmony, filled with love and carries ultimate wisdom is your spiritual self. To consciously connect to this energy, turn inward with awareness. You can focus on the point in your emotional heart where breath enters deepest into your body. Imagine your desires dissolving into this spiritual consciousness. Feel your expansion and extend it to feel connected.

Contemplation

When making a choice, pick the one that feels most uplifting to your higher self.