

How to Reach Higher Levels of Consciousness



By Sahar Fikouhi | [Creative Self](#)

The process of enhancing our overall consciousness is the act of obtaining greater connectivity within the brain, and gaining the ability to learn and perceive more from each experience. The mere understanding of evolving ourselves, requires a clear awareness of how the brain works as we experience change, emotions, and new memories, and how we can unify our experiences to create the most from every single moment and event.

MASTERING THE ART OF INNER CHANGE

The art of embracing change is a subject that is often fundamental in our ability to evolve, and grow in consciousness, yet truly acknowledging the essential characteristics of change is something that can be analysed

deeper, via a better understanding of our inner abilities of adapting to higher levels of perception. Firstly let's discuss the nature of change within our brains, for it has been long documented that the idea of developing new connections, and re-wiring old habitual programs of the mind, via the use of affirmations, and positive thinking, has the capacity to enhance our **default brain mode**, and give us greater results in obtaining our goals and ambitions. The ability to enhance our own mental perception via altering our thought process is actually the act of **neuroplasticity**, which is the ability of the brain to re-organise neural pathways, and enhance connectivity between different parts of the brain.

Our various states of consciousness are directly linked to the frequently changing neural networks within the brain. [Investigations](#) into neuroplasticity and neurogenesis (growth of new neurons) have shown that we can alter the connectivity between brain regions and increase brain volume, which can directly impact our mental awareness and functioning. The connectivity of our brains is defined by the number of synaptic connections we possess. A child at the age of 3 has approximately 15,000 synapses per neuron, whereas that average adult has approximately half that number. The reason being that as we gain new experiences and learn new skills, neurons that are used frequently develop stronger connections, and those that are rarely used will eventually be "pruned" and eliminated. In this way the brain is able to adapt to the changing environment, and evolve in the direction of the stronger, and more frequently used neurons and pathways. For example when people repeatedly practice an activity or thought, their neural networks shape themselves according to this specific event (by creating electro-chemical pathways), and these will form into stronger pathways with greater practice and repeated thinking.

Our ability to perform neuroplasticity is crucial in adapting well to change. Brains with more pathways have more

plasticity, and the more plastic our brain, the more able we become at evolving, and expanding our consciousness. Learning entices new connections and pathways, so every time we pick up a new hobby, or change our routine, we entice the brain to create new neural pathways and connections to sustain that knowledge or skill. Under-stimulated brains however will often lose their ability to learn more rapidly, and their plasticity, due to underdeveloped neural pathways. It is for this reason that as we grow older, it is essential to maintain a state of learning and continual change, to stimulate the brain to remain plastic and evolve with greater levels of consciousness. These changes can be as small as doing everyday activities while switching hands, or trying new foods, which will aid in the creation and expansion of new neural connections in the brain. However in order to strengthen or create networks, and connections that assist in our ability to feel fulfilled and joyous, it is important to look at the routes and functions of our inner neural pathways, and how they can be strengthened through neuroplasticity.

INNER CONNECTIVITY GOVERNS OUR EMOTIONAL STATES

Understanding our inner pathways is hugely beneficial in developing greater awareness of our thinking patterns and repeated habits. In fact the very acknowledgment of our thought patterns is what determines our capacity to grow in consciousness. One of the key characteristics of depression is being stuck in negative thought forms, and repeated overthinking of situations which are out of our hands. This mode of thinking, or repetitious loops within the brain, is often referred to as the **default brain mode network**, which essentially governs our thoughts when we are not actively engaged in tasks. This is the resting position of the brain in terms of neural activity, and is a very telling example of why we may have a predisposition to specific forms of thinking.

People with a positive frame of mind, and general optimism to life, have a specific default mode that has a strong neural pathway connecting to the reward centre of the brain (**limbic system**). This specific neural pathway is responsible for the chemical release of feel good neurotransmitters, including dopamine and serotonin, which essentially allow us to be well connected to our senses of pleasure, reward and motivation. Essentially staying connected to a positive default brain mode is what gives us the ability to grow, evolve and expand our consciousness. According to Neurologist [Marcus Raichle](#), greater connectivity between the **left Prefrontal Cortex**, as well as in the region of the **limbic system** (called the Nucleus Accumbens), is what determines this greater levels of positive mind frame. However within a consistently negative outlook, the Nucleus Accumbens is quiet and is found to have few connections to the **left Prefrontal Cortex**.

The **prefrontal cortex**, situated directly behind the forehead, within the frontal lobe of the brain, is responsible for abstract thought, creativity, thought analysis, and concentration. This area of the brain basically interprets our thoughts and behaviours and signals the **limbic system**, to produce the appropriate emotional responses. The **limbic system** is the regions of the brain which can essentially help us strengthen our inner pleasure and reward networks, and the emotional response from this region, is basically what derives our ability to stay well-balanced, emotionally stable, and able to experience greater levels of pleasure and self-contentment. Our emotional life, and the ability to form new memories is in essence in the hands of a well-connected pathway between the **frontal lobes and the limbic system**, which has an integral role in the way we possess our unique levels of consciousness, intelligence, and personality.

Understanding brain connectivity is essentially the start to fully appreciating the make-up of our own unique processing power. Reaching a heightened sense of awareness relies wholly

on our capacity to increase our brain connectivity, through increased networks and pathways, which allow us to access more functionalities of our brains. In fact [research](#) published in the Journal of Neuroscience, suggests that a global brain connectivity defines our specific rates of intelligence, and this is precisely measured by the strength of the neural pathways which connect the **left prefrontal cortex** to the rest of the brain. It is interesting to note the validity of the **prefrontal cortex** as the possible key in defining our specific rates of consciousness, for this critical area of the brain is directly linked to the various parts of **limbic system** which govern our overall emotional states as well. So the key question then is how we strengthen the connection between the frontal lobe and limbic system to maintain a constant flow of emotional stability and heightened perception?

MINDFULLY EXPANDING OUR BRAIN POWER

How we create memories is imperative in our understanding of producing neural connections which impact our actual brain structure and well-being. A critical role of the **prefrontal cortex** and the **limbic system(hippocampus)** is essentially the analysis and processing of memories. The reason this is such an important part of expanding our consciousness, is because we have a direct ability to control how we process and record memories created in each moment. Stimuli from sensory inputs, such as a touch, and emotional events, are analysed by the frontal cortex, and hippocampus, and encoded into a long term memory if they are considered relevant. Otherwise these events are transferred to a short term memory, which has a fairly limited capacity, and all events which hold no real relevance to us will soon disappear. The key to encoding memory is very much concerned with the **level of attention** we pay whilst experiencing, or registering an event, such as learning or reading a book. The more focus and attention is payed, the more we become able to encode stimuli to long term memory,

where stronger connections and neural networks allow you to access these information again and again. Repetition and habitual patterns work in the same way, by reinforcing these long term memory circuits, and giving us a very easy access point for knowledge and information. Unlike the small capacity of short term memory, our long term memory can store unlimited amounts of information, which gives us the potential to enhance our perception indefinitely.

Understanding how to reinforce the pathway between the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system, is essentially linked to our capacity to **stay present and focused** enough during each moment to build up, and strengthen the inner pathways of reward and pleasure. Being able to register the external world, while staying present with what you are feeling and thinking in each moment creates a wave of new connections that enhance greater mental stimulation and enhanced brain activity. In essence the idea of staying present in the moment to fully take in the details of each experience, or event allows us to keep the brain stimulated enough to enhance and strengthen our neural networks. The importance of keeping the brain stimulated has been reported in various studies, which indicate that new experiences, learning, and stimulating environments, assist in the growth of neurons, and stop the brain from shrinking in old age.

The importance of keeping our selves stimulated is one which is derived from an inner desire to grow in mental awareness, and one that isn't necessarily reliant on external pleasures, and outward changes to work. Practices such as mindfulness and meditations, have been hugely reported to enhance our levels of well-being and emotional stability due to their ability to change the inner circuitry of the brain. In a [2011 study](#), mindfulness training was shown to increase the number of neurons in the **hippocampus**, whose role is in allowing us to stay more present, and able to create new memories, instead of habitually replaying old recollections from the past. In fact

this key area of the limbic system is what has been also studied on patients with post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression, and shown to have reduced in size due to the inability to create and experience new stimulations, through repetitious rerunning of old events. Mindfulness however has also been shown to trigger changes within the neural networks of such patients, allowing them to escape the rut of loop-like thinking, and essentially turn-off their negative thought patterns, and increase the size of the hippocampus in effect. In [2016 study](#) patients learned to alter their **default mode network**, through mindfulness training, and enhanced the connectivity between the **prefrontal cortex**, and the **Corpus Callosum**, by simply bringing their attention in each moment back to the presence of the now.

The more we practice mindfulness the more connected we become to the reward centres of the brain. Essentially what is happening is that we are bringing our attention to the present moment and allowing our minds to stay stimulated to any inner or external trigger or event, in a silent, observant and non-judgemental way. This capacity to stay stimulated and focused gives our brains a greater chances of connecting the frontal lobe to that of the limbic system, thus changing the default brain mode to that of presence, and staying perfectly within the now. The benefits of this practice simply allows us to keep the brain registered, and the reward centres deeply connected with every moment of our experience. This is imperative in training the mind to understand that the rewards, and our sense of well-being, produced by our brains, are not necessarily created only after pinnacle moment of success, but during the ordinary, mundane everyday exercises, that keep us motivated, empowered and completely able to embrace the creative self!

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