

Oprah's **SOULSERIES** webcast

Exercise courtesy of Jill Bolte Taylor

1. We each have two very different and structurally separate cerebral hemispheres in our head. Each of these hemispheres has a distinct personality. The more you pay attention to who is who inside of you, the sooner you will realize that you have the power to choose, moment by moment, which character you want to project into the world. By paying attention and getting to know the two characters inside your head, the easier it will be for you to consciously choose the gifts and skills of each halves of your brain at appropriate times.

Try to identify the personality inside of you that is filled with joy, is celebrative of life and is filled with gratitude—the portion of your character that is willing to show up with enthusiasm in the present moment. Describe this personality. When does it emerge naturally during your day? What does this character feel like inside your body? Who is usually around you or what are you usually doing when you feel this way?

Then, pay attention to what your body feels like when it is feeling stressed, rushed or disappointed with yourself or others. You are experiencing the personality of your left hemisphere. This portion of your brain often expresses negative judgment and can be conditional in its relationships. It often obsesses about the past and is fearful of the future. Again, think about what this character feels like inside your body and when it has a tendency to emerge. Describe as much as you can about this very distinctive personality. You might even choose to give names to the two different characters.

2. Our ability to experience anything is based upon the health and well-being of the cells inside our brains. You can think thoughts because you have cells that permit me the ability to think those thoughts, including the brain chatter cells that are designed to use language to make up stories based upon minimal amounts of information. This storyteller portion of our brain is designed to make up stories in an attempt to help us prepare for the possibilities of our future.

Think about a time when you became fretful with worry because your brain was making up stories that scared you. If you understood that the cells in your brain creating all of that drama and trauma were about the size of a pea, what would you want to say to those cells to encourage them to stop?

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3. Pay attention to the energy that other people bring to you. Realize that you can observe other people and interact with them without engaging with their energy. Write about a time when someone else's energy affected you in a negative way. Consider how different the situation might have turned out if you had chosen to observe rather than be engaged and swept away by their energy. How might you approach the exact same situation in the future?

4. It takes less than 90 seconds for any emotional or physiological circuit to be triggered, surge chemicals through your body and then flush those chemicals completely out of your blood stream. Think about the last time you felt angry or sad, and document what you can remember about what it felt like inside your body to feel those feelings. Think about the depth of your breath, the tension in your forehead, the loudness of your voice. Try to remember the thoughts you were thinking that triggered that intense emotional circuitry. How long did you stay angry or sad?

Journal about how different your life might be if you realized that it only takes 90 seconds for the physiological component of anger or sadness to flush through your body. How might you use this information in the future to change how you interact with yourself?

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5. Brain circuits are very predictable and consistent entities. The more time you spend thinking a thought, then the stronger that circuit becomes and the less outside energy it takes for that circuit to run. As a result, for many of us, our brains run constantly with brain chatter, and loops of thoughts go around and around in our minds. Pay attention to what is going on inside your brain. Journal about the thoughts that seem to go around and around that make you unhappy, angry or uncomfortable. Recognize that you have the power to choose not to think these thoughts by choosing to think about other things.

Identify something that your mind obsesses about that you would rather not spend so much time thinking about and document three different things that you can purposefully choose to replace in your mind when those thoughts come up. Create this list for yourself so you can arm yourself with alternative circuits to run in your mind when the time arises. Learn to "tend the garden" of your mind in this way.

6. We are neurocircuitry, and if you want to bring your mind back to the present moment and to quiet the brain chatter, then allow yourself to pay attention to the information streaming in through your sensory systems.

Allow your mind to quiet for a moment, and journal about three things you can hear right now. Listen closely to your world; pay attention to the sounds. Write about how you have successfully used your senses to help bring your mind back to the present moment—using smells, touch, sound, taste or visions of nature. Document what it feels like in your body to be in the present moment, and then call on this feeling at any time. It only takes a moment to find your deep inner peace.