

## Whatever We Master

“The conscious mind may be compared to a fountain playing in the sun and falling back into the great subterranean pool of subconscious from which it rises.”

– Sigmund Freud, Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis

It was late January and my buddy and I had met up at the local coffee shop. I had just sat down at our table with a tray laden with two large coffees and four cake donuts. My companion immediately grabbed one of the donuts, broke it in half and dunked it into his coffee. I watched him devour the morsel and then wipe an errant coffee drip from his chin.

I reached for my coffee and started laughing.

“What?” he asked.

“I was just wondering,” I said, taking a sip. “How’s the diet resolution?”

“About as solid as your exercise resolution,” came the reply.

I feigned indignation and then we both laughed.

We’re all well intentioned but, despite our best efforts, we often give up short of achieving our goals. Sometimes, it feels as if our mind had a mind of its own – and the truth is it does. We are all blessed with a conscious and a subconscious mind. The conscious mind is functioning as you’re reading these words and working while you’re awake. The subconscious – sometimes called the super-conscious – is working constantly. The two minds serve two unique purposes, and understanding those purposes may help you understand and resolve issues in your life.

Imagine an iceberg. Envision first the tip – the 10 per cent that appears above the surface of the water. Next, picture the 90 per cent below the water line. You’ve just formed a fairly accurate representation of the balance between the conscious and subconscious minds.

Let’s look first at the conscious mind – the top 10 per cent. The conscious mind has the ability to make decisions, set goals, judge things and think abstractly. It is time-bound, meaning it spends a lot of time regretting or longing for the past and then projecting fearfully into the future based upon past experience. The conscious mind can become easily overwhelmed and features limited processing capability of about 2,000 bits of information per second.

Now let's look at the 90 per cent. The subconscious mind monitors the operation of the body: motor functions, heart rate, digestion and such. (Imagine trying to consciously regulate body functions.) It prefers the familiar and thinks literally. Long-term memory, barring disease or harm, is forever. It is the storehouse of past experiences, attitudes and values. The subconscious mind is timeless; it knows only the moment. It has expanded processing capabilities – thousands of events at one time – with an average of four billion bits of information per second.

The two parts of the mind are designed to work in harmony, the conscious master making good decisions and setting worthwhile goals while the subconscious servant drives us toward achieving them. However, that is not always the case. Through lack of awareness, we allow the subconscious mind to take charge and, like a firefighter's hose left to flail about uncontrolled, often cause more damage than good. Awareness allows us to grab hold and direct the force.

Here's the interesting part and the aspect that most affects our self-esteem: whenever we master an activity, belief or way of being, it becomes the property of the subconscious mind. Walking, riding a bike, typing, driving, thinking empowering or disempowering thoughts – when we no longer need to make a conscious effort to perform a feat, the subconscious mind takes it over, putting the force of four billion bits of information per second to work for us.

There are countless ways to influence the subconscious mind and create harmony, and one of the best ways to begin is through self-awareness. Until you achieve some awareness of what the subconscious mind is doing for you, you can't bring about any worthwhile change.

The great motivator, Sidney Madwed, put it this way: "Our subconscious minds have no sense of humour, play no jokes and cannot tell the difference between reality and an imagined thought or image. What we continually think about eventually will manifest in our lives."

The subconscious mind works relentlessly in your favour. It doesn't judge anything, but simply takes whatever you've mastered and makes it a reality for you. Think about that, because unless you welcome self-awareness into your life and take charge of your thinking, the subconscious mind will forever be your master and not the servant it was intended to be.