

Heart Cultivating

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by Nicholas de Castella

This is the fourth article in the series: 'How to live a Heart Centred Life'. Lets recap:

The first step in living a Heart Centred Life is 'Tuning in' - raising self awareness by practicing being present and connecting with what is happening within.

The second step is opening our hearts, which means opening up and allowing the life force of emotional energy to flow through us more freely: laughing, crying, singing, dancing and living more passionately. Saying 'Yes' to all our feelings. Learning to validate, relax and welcome them in as they pass through us.

The third step is Heart Centring: Learning to tune in and open our hearts, connecting to the wealth of peace, love, happiness and contentment within.

Cultivate Heart Qualities

Today I want to encourage you to consciously begin to cultivate positive hearts qualities.

Why cultivate Heart Qualities?

The most compelling reason to cultivate heart qualities is that we are creating our reality in accordance with the state of our heart. Love and gratitude sowing seeds for happiness and goodness, resentment and hatred sowing seeds misery and suffering.

To cultivate means to nurture for growth. Like a farmer who cultivates his crop, we too can cultivate heart qualities.

Some of the heart qualities are:

happiness	gentleness	love	peace	gratitude	courage	playfulness
gratitude	abundance	ease	openness	connection	humility	contentment

All these qualities already exist within us, but because our hearts are closed and our minds are detached and distracted we do not consistently experience them.

Why what you feel matters more than what you think

It was Descartes that said "I think therefore I am". We live in a culture that prizes thinking over feeling, but the truth is far from this. It is our feelings more than our thinking that determines what we perceive to be true, how we think, what we think, how we act, the results we get and how we feel about our lives.

What we are feeling affects everything. How we perceive what we are experiencing, every thought we have, everything we do, and the results we get.

Feelings condition perception

Quantum physics demonstrates that there is no objective reality that we can 'know'. There are only subjective experiences, the scientist impacts upon the experiment by choosing how they set up their experiments.

Our perception changes depending upon how we are feeling. When we are feeling happy the world looks bright and when we are feeling down the world looks bleak.

One day I was driving my old car, feeling a little low, the rust and rattles, the scratches

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and dints and the many things that were broken all stood out and I thought "this car is very ordinary". The next day, I was feeling quite happy, as I drove the car I thought "This car was ahead of its time, it has great styling and handles really well and is going to run forever". Suddenly I remembered what I had been thinking the day before! The contrast in how I had perceived the same car differently because of how I was feeling was most striking.

Feelings affect how we think.

Brain functioning is grossly affected by what we are feeling. When people are in states of fear, shame or anger they do not think clearly. Conversely when people are feeling peaceful and calm they think more clearly, perceive more accurately and remember things better. Just think about how hard it was to think clearly in an exam, or when you feel under pressure or feel embarrassed.

Feelings condition what we think

Did you know that twice as much information travels to the heart to the brain as from the brain to the heart. It appears that the heart informs the brain more than the other way around.

If you look closely and continue to track back you will find that any particular thought that arises in any moment is most likely preceded by a feeling. If you are in a dark lane and you start to think about potential dangers, (like tripping over, being mugged etc.) the thoughts arise because of an underlying fear of being out of control (not being able to see clearly).

It is also true that the thoughts then create more emotion, which in turn drives more thinking, but there was always a feeling there first.

Feelings condition actions

The old sayings about 'putting our heart into it' points to the fact that any action we take is conditioned by what we are feeling at the time. If we don't do something very well we say "I was only half hearted". When we are feeling frustrated we tend to be impatient and try to hurry things up by pushing them along, often with negative consequences. Like when we are running so late for an appointment that we don't have time to check our directions and then end up getting lost and arriving even later. Conversely, when we are feeling relaxed and at ease, we are more in tune with the natural tempo of what we are working with, there seems to be plenty of time and things very often seem to just flow along quite effortlessly - and more often than not we perform at our best.

Feelings condition Results

The most compelling reason to cultivate heart qualities is that we are creating our reality in accordance with the state of our heart. Love and gratitude sowing seeds for goodness, resentment and hatred sowing seeds pain and suffering.

Buddhists believe that what you are feeling when you die determines what happens to you next.

I believe that it is what we are feeling right now that is sowing seeds for what is going to happen next in our lives. Most people live in reaction to what has happened to them. They are victims of the past, not in control of their lives.

It is only when we consciously choose to cultivate what we feel that we start to take control and become conscious creators of our destiny.

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How to Cultivate Heart Qualities

Once you have learnt to connect with your heart by heart centring then you can extend the practice by consciously expanding and increasing the intensity of feeling what you are feeling. Here are the steps for Heart Cultivating

1. Tune in
2. Open your heart
3. Heart Centre
4. Choose a quality you wish to expand - for example gratitude.
5. Think of things in your life that you are grateful for:
 people you love, friends, opportunities, health, achievements, being alive
6. Feel the gratitude in your heart
7. Continue to breathe into the feelings in your heart
8. Feel the feelings expanding out through your body

Building Resilience

When we practice cultivating positive heart qualities our attitude to life automatically becomes more positive. The long term effects of Heart Cultivating is that we develop resilience: and increasing capacity to meet challenges without collapsing into overwhelm or negativity.

There are a few other things you can do to help cultivate resilience

- Make a practice of focusing on what you want.
- Heal unresolved past hurts (they get activated and trigger a cascade of negative emotions and thinking and actions)
- Live in the present moment. Just deal with what is here, now makes the journey much easier.
- Practice mercy: refraining from punishing when it is justified. Punishment make us (and others) frightened and small and prohibits goodness.
- Say 'Yes' to life. Welcome everything 'in' as part of your journey of growth. Also yourself 'how is this challenging me to grow?'

Homeplay this week

Spend a few moments regularly each day tuning into your heart, focusing on and cultivating positive heart qualities.

Any questions? Let me know how you go.

I'd love to hear from you.

Thankyou to those who gave the lovely feedback.

<\$contact.firstname\$>, may the peace, love, happiness and contentment in your heart abound in the world.

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P.S. I have formatted the Heart Thoughts as pdf's you can download from my website at:
<http://www.breathwork.com.au/heartthoughts.htm>

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