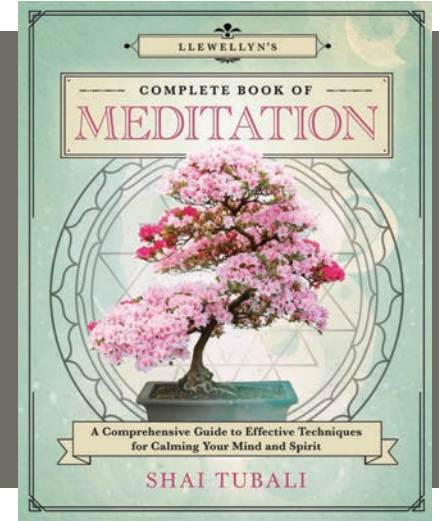


Llewellyn's Complete Book of Meditation

A Comprehensive Guide to Effective Techniques for Calming Your Mind and Spirit

A book excerpt from Mobius Master Transformational Faculty member Dr. Shai Tubali



MEDITATE ON THIS: RECLAIMING THE LOST POWER OF ATTENTION

An excerpt from Chapter 6

The greatest power in the universe, at least as far as we are concerned, is something we take for granted: the power of our attention.

In many respects, the process of meditation is the discovery that we don't know what attention is, and that we certainly don't know how to use it. But our meditative insight into the heart of attention goes even deeper than that. At first, we learn to acknowledge the value of this tool, but at a later stage, we come to realize that attention is what we are. To avoid awkward language in this text, I will use phrases such as "when you use your attention" or "direct your attention." But in reality, I mean that attention is what you are. So, what is attention and why is it the greatest power in the universe?

Attention consists of two elements. The first is awareness. Right now you are turning your attention to these words. Attention, in this sense, is like the light of awareness. In its purest meditative form, it is just awareness, but attention in action includes a second element: choice. When you turn your attention to these words, you do so because of a choice you have made; you have chosen to endow this book with

meaning. In the same way, you could choose to pay attention to the mental chatter that goes on in your head. If you choose to do that, your mental chatter will become meaningful, and my words will recede into the background.

So, attention is a combination of awareness and choice.

However, as it is right now, what we call attention is almost completely conditioned and automatic. Therefore, the process of meditation is the beginning of deconditioning and freeing our attention. Second, in terms of choice, we are unable to redirect our attention at will. Being able to do so is actually a great achievement; it's a genuine feeling that we can freely decide how to direct our attention. We can say that this is the beginning of inner freedom and true will: if you are able to guide your attention at will, you will be able to disengage from all the elements you are no longer interested in focusing your attention on.

Your Attention Is Stronger than Any Thought or Feeling

Presently, the process of directing our attention is so automatic that we are not even conscious of it. We are not aware of the gap in which we can make a conscious choice. For this reason, we experience

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many types of thoughts and feelings, like sexual fantasies or fears, that we believe are just too powerful and overwhelming to overcome. We tend to think that when a given thought or emotion takes over us, we are powerless. We say things like “This thought gives me no rest” or “This desire ruins my life.” We experience being taken over by emotional storms, panic attacks, and destructive thoughts. But what does it mean for a desire to ruin your life? How can the desire do anything to you? Does it force itself on you? Why do we speak of these things as if we have absolutely no choice?

Now, what would happen if you were aware of this choice and could therefore consciously choose? That would give you the greatest power in the universe, because nothing – no inner force or energy – could ever take over you again. This is what has been traditionally captured in the term *Buddha*: becoming master of your own attention. You are then able to control the chain reaction that rapidly follows the choice of giving attention to something. To better grasp this chain reaction, we should understand an important law called the law of attention.

The Law of Attention

The law of attention consists of at least four aspects.

1. Between your attention and any thought, emotion, or feeling, there is a gap.

The reason we don't feel we have a choice is that we are unable to notice there is a difference between us

and the thought or emotion. We are not aware of the existence of a gap. Why? Because in the past, when we still had a choice but were unaware of it, we decided to direct our attention to certain internal forces and, convinced of their reality and their being a part of us, we made the choice to give them our attention.

Attention is like the food that mental and emotional entities, such as self-destructive thoughts or fears, require. In the same way that our body needs water and food, these energies feed on attention. The very nature of attention is to act as the light that shines on something. When attention shines on something, it instantly becomes a reality.

2. Whatever attention focuses on becomes a reality.

Now, this is an immensely powerful principle, because it implies that things are not real unless you focus on them and decide to accept them as a part of yourself. It is only your decision that can make them real. In actuality, thoughts, desires, or emotional turmoil cannot do anything to you if you don't accept them as a part of yourself. If attention looks at these things and is not convinced of their reality, these energies disappear for the simple reason that they can no longer feed on your attention.

The chain reaction works like a closed circle: we turn our attention to a thought, emotion, or interpretation of reality, and immediately it appears to be our reality. Then we begin to feel – physically, mentally, emotionally, and energetically – according to the reality we created through our attention.

**When you think about it, this is our true source of trouble:
the thoughts we believe and give power to.
Everything else is quite manageable.**

For example, I may encounter the thought *I hate myself*. This thought sounds quite convincing, especially since it uses “I” and “myself,” which makes it appear personal and intimate. People suffer from this kind of thought all over the world. It is not a small matter: this is the reality of many. Then they find so-called reasons to hate themselves. As soon as they decide that this thought is a part of their being and identity, it becomes a reality. Now this thought becomes like a toxin that infiltrates the body, and as a result, a complete emotional reality and self-destructive behavior begin to emerge.

Thus, in reality what we suffer from all the time is thoughts – thoughts that pretend to be reality. We make them our reality, and then we begin to respond to them and to feel according to our response. When you think about it, this is our true source of trouble: the thoughts we believe and give power to. Everything else is quite manageable.

When you don’t have thoughts, interpretations, and reactions to situations, the situations are pretty manageable. In Byron Katie’s words, “Reality is always kinder than the story we tell about it.” Reality is easier to handle without thinking: you encounter a situation, you face the situation, and that is all. This is

what seeing things as they are is really all about.

When you detect a thought or an emotion, start experiencing the gap. Ask yourself: What would happen if I identified and embraced this thought or feeling? What would I feel right now? What would my

body feel like? Imagine what it would feel like if this became your reality. And then, after realizing what it would feel like, choose whether or not to focus your attention on it to a degree that it becomes a reality.

Realizing that your principal suffering is caused by thoughts is a tremendous power – more precisely, not even by thoughts, but by your *reactions* to thoughts. After all, it is not that we need to control these thoughts; in fact, we cannot control them. We are not meant to control fear or

desire and make it go away. Any attempt to control these elements will only get you caught in another conflict. The only thing you can control is your attention, which means owning your own mind and not letting anything in. If you start being convinced by any of these elements, they will enter you and become a part of your mind.

So, this is one of the first things that meditation does for us: it teaches us that our attention is separate

THE LAWS OF ATTENTION

1. Between your attention and any thought, emotion, or feeling, there is a gap.
2. Whatever attention focuses on becomes a reality.
3. Whatever attention identifies with, it becomes.
4. We don’t always have to focus on objects and identify with them.



Strata-Let I by Mobius Featured Artist, Jim McManus

from all thoughts and feelings, and that consequently, it always involves a choice. In meditation, we begin to create a gap, and then we train ourselves to maintain this gap and to even remain in it for a while. If you are able to do this consistently, you can then return to life and decide, on the basis of your newfound freedom, what you are going to choose as your reality.

The Next Step: Remain as Awareness

The deeper layer of meditation is the discovery of the freedom of awareness itself: a place where you can just *be* attention.

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(also available on in audio)

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All day long we turn our attention to objects. Right now your attention is turned to the understanding of my words. We constantly turn our attention to objects and make these things our reality. But there is a third component of the law of attention.

3. Whatever attention identifies with, it becomes.

This means that if you constantly focus on something and identify with it – if you decide that something is a part of you – at a certain point, it becomes you.

This third component is the reason most people cannot even imagine that there is a difference between their core identity as attention and all the things that they identify with: their thoughts and emotions, their body, life circumstances, life story, and memories. Everything they think they are is, in reality, something they have consistently focused on, identified with, and therefore become.

This third aspect of the law of attention, however, points at a magnificent reality: it shows you that in a sense, you are already free. This is because there is already – right now – an inherent separation between attention and everything that you have ever identified with. Right now, as you are reading these lines, you are, at the core of your being, pure attention. All your past conflicts and stories are just things that you have decided to attach your attention to. The two have become so glued to one another that they now appear to be inseparable.

The solar plexus chakra meditations evoke and enhance the sense of “I am” as pure presence that precedes anything else. Prior to “I am hungry,” “I am sick,” and “I am going to have a baby,” there is “I am,” a primordial self-presence. Allowing yourself to be pure attention in meditation is no different from this sense of pure presence.

Ultimately, being wide attention with no object is the essence and purpose of all meditation. And this is what the fourth component of the law of attention tells us.

4. We don’t always have to focus on objects and identify with them.

There is absolutely no reason to focus on thoughts, emotions, and objects all day long. We can do

what meditation suggests we ought to do: keep our attention unfocused. Unfocused means pure attention. It means that you are fully attentive, but not attentive toward anything in particular. The result is that attention becomes a concentrated energy, an awake presence, because it is not wasted on focusing, identifying, and making anything a reality. In a way, this means that attention returns to its original state, before it became identified with or focused on anything.

If you meditate in this way and truly free your attention – or rather, free the attention that you are – from any focus, you can later return from this state to life and choose to redirect your attention at will. At present, our attention is extremely narrow because it is exclusively focused on the needs and wants of the body and mind. As a result, all that it perceives and notices in space and time are those things that correspond to the wants and needs of the body and mind. It has become highly selective, picking from life's magnificence only those elements. Life has been divided into two: whatever the body and mind like, and everything else they don't like.

Being so focused in this way, your attention has become extremely limited. But when attention returns to pure attention and regains its choice of focus and identification, it becomes not only awake but also sensitive. It notices so many other things in life. It is available. It is vast.

This is an even deeper layer of meditation: when your attention becomes this wide and spacious, it finally relaxes into the ocean of consciousness. Consciousness is like the mother of attention: attention sprang from it. Consciousness is what permeates the entire universe, while attention is like a drop of consciousness. And when this drop is reabsorbed into the ocean, your meditation obviously reaches its fulfillment.

So, attention is not just a capacity of your mind. It is the power that determines who you are, who you

become, what your reality is, and whether you suffer or not. This is the key: if you understand the law of attention, you can be free from suffering – and only you can free yourself from suffering, because *you are attention*. ■



DR. SHAI TUBALI is a member of Mobius Master Transformational Faculty. He is an academic philosopher, speaker, and author specializing in mysticism, self-transformation, and Eastern thought. In his writings and teachings, he combines Western philosophy and psychology with Eastern philosophy and practice to create powerful processes of inner transformation. Shai is also the developer of several meditation-based coaching and therapeutic methods. His numerous books have appeared internationally for the past three decades in twelve languages. His most prominent writings have been published by major publishers, and two have won awards in the United States and Israel. Several of his books have become bestsellers, inspiring tens of thousands on their inner journeys of mental, emotional, and spiritual evolution.