



Lesson #5 — Conscious Alpha Brainwave State

Transcribed by Barbara Becker, edited by Linda LaTores
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Wonderful to be with you again.

In the last lesson we had, we worked with vagal breathing and we had a homework which was to practice vagal breathing and to really notice the effects it had on the body. Did our awareness drop into the body? Were we aware of its centered relaxation? Were we aware of the heartbeat, or the breathing process, the body's undulation with the breath or the heartbeat? What feelings did we notice? What thoughts did we notice, and did we notice a change in the frequency of thoughts and the nature of thoughts? This sort of thing. If we practiced well, in all likelihood you'd noticed some profound changes. And so, you got a good taste of what conscious alpha brainwave state is like. It's centered and clear, aware of the present moment at least within the body.

Let's work on the next step which is a way of stimulating the vagus nerve such that it allows for more movement, a more practical approach to life. And the way we're going to do this is what I call vagal stretching. And so, this is a way of stretching using feeling to stimulate the vagus nerve so that it creates a vagal response, shifts the brainwave from beta to alpha and results in a relaxed, centered, vibrant body, that then is able to take action in the world. Now this vagal stretching is not yet what I would describe the Warrior's Meditation, it is sort of heading us in the right direction. Let us give it a try.

So, I'm going to walk you through the process first, and then we'll have you try it yourselves. It's a very simple process. Essentially what the beta brainwave state means is we're not actually feeling the body. We're caught in thinking. We're caught in task-oriented, goal-oriented, self-absorbed state in some sense. It's a predatory mindset which means we are taking aim, everything is lined up towards that aim. Some of us do it better than others. We may be juggling multiple thoughts, multiple activities which leads to a very high beta brainwave state. Multitasking is very, very hard on the nervous system. I don't recommend it. It leads to a high beta brainwave state that then is very difficult to recover from. It agitates the nervous system and makes us much more difficult to be around in general. It makes life more unpleasant than it has to be. It would be better to really focus and work on one task at a time, then, when we are finished with that, work on the next one if we have to. If we must multitask, do it only when it is absolutely necessary.

But, in any case, let's move on to vagal stretching. The process is extraordinarily simple. All we are going to do is just allow our body to move and stretch in a way that feels good to it, which means feel the process. Don't overthink it, don't do a method of stretching that you were taught. Let it be sort of spontaneous. For example, I'm just going to do it right now. I have no idea why my left arm feels like doing this, but it feels quite good to do it that way. Alright, don't mimic my movement. Now, you are seated so you are going to also be stretching your lower body. Right now, my legs are stretching, my feet and toes, even my face is getting into it. Get the whole body. Leave nothing undone. Your face, your eyes, even your jaw. Ahhh. And whenever it feels done, it feels done, just let it relax. And you'll notice that you've entered into a very centered, calm state. You again might feel your heartbeat. You might be aware of your breathing. There might be very few thoughts, or no thoughts.

Alright, so that's how the process works. Let's do it together now. Again, I don't want you to pay attention to my specific movements, if anything, just capture the atmosphere, the motivation. Just work with feeling. It might help early on the first time if you close your eyes so that you are not trying to follow me. Or you turn away from your computer when you do it so that you are not... the key point here is that I don't want you to follow what my body is doing because what my body is doing is what it needs to do to release tension and find balance. Your body is going to need something unique to itself in this moment. The next time you do the stretch it will probably be a completely different process. Every time it will be different. The river is never the same twice.

Alright, so go ahead and turn off screen so you are not watching me and let us begin. Just feel the stretch, and as you are stretching you want to make sure you check in with every

part of the body. Make sure every part gets stretched. If you closed your eyes during the stretch make sure you open them when you are done. Hopefully, you were able to stretch with your eyes open as well as with closed. And feel the body when you're done.

Now let's imagine I was paralyzed for example; I couldn't move my legs. You are going to then just stretch your upper body. If you couldn't move your arms, you might just stretch your neck, your jaw and your face. Work with whatever it is that you can. If you can only move the pinky, stretch that. The key point is that you feel. That's the key point, you feel your way through whatever it is, whatever the process of stretching you are doing is, if it is stretching your tongue, you feel that. And so, we are going to go deeply into feeling. That is the key to this entire process.

So, the homework will be again, to do the stretching, and again you might see how long it takes. Once you do the stretching and your body feels like it's done and it relaxes, see how long it takes before your body naturally goes back to beta brainwave state, wants to get up and do stuff and is no longer in this highly aware state. It might take five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen, twenty, however long it is. And you might journal this. You might also notice after the stretch, what were you aware of? What could you feel within the body? If you can, please do it with your eyes open because we want to bridge into or move toward being able to meditate with our eyes open. One last point, please enjoy the process. Don't worry about getting it right or do it badly if you have to do it badly. It's much better that you do it badly than you don't do it at all. Remove all that pressure about trying to get it right and get it perfect. That doesn't belong in meditation. That's incompatible. That's the beta brainwave state. Take all that pressure off. Screw it up as much as you want. Just enjoy the process. Be a bit innocent. And with that, I hope to see you in the next lesson.