

# Living Realization

## An Introduction

### **About the Living Realization Sharing**

Present awareness is our real identity. Awareness is prior to any body, story, thought, belief, position, opinion, viewpoint, idea, religion, political affiliation, teaching, national association, emotion, state, sensation, experience and every other appearance or thing. Awareness is not an appearance or a thing. It is the space through which all appearances come and go. The space and what appears within the space are “not two.” That recognition is the Living Realization. The message of Living Realization is a simple message of love, compassion, wisdom, freedom, and peace. Those are words pointing to your true nature beyond the limited “me” you take yourself to be.

We are not individual selves, separate from one another who lack something that we must gain in the future or who must negotiate with other separate people. The false belief in being a separate individual is the basis for personal seeking and suffering and interpersonal, inter-group, inter-religious, political, and international conflict. The recognition of awareness as our real identity reveals this separation to be illusory.

There is no way to know yourself as a separate person or to know that there is something that exists as a separate object except through thinking. Thinking makes it appear that the world is full of separate things and that you are one of those separate things. This central misperception leaves us in a repetitive, self-centered loop of thought. The loop is literally ‘self’-perpetuating. The more we rely on thinking, the more it looks as if there is a separate self. It’s all about “me.”

Thoughts are ideas, abstractions, and symbols. Thoughts can only represent something. They are never the thing which they describe. The thought, “lemon,” is not the thing it represents. We would never try to bite into the thought, “lemon.” Yet we take thoughts of ourselves to be who we are. We are not thoughts. We cannot find ourselves in thoughts. Our real identity is awareness itself. Awareness is that which is aware of all thoughts. This recognition solves the identity crisis fully and finally.

The central message of Living Realization is that, through the direct recognition of present awareness as our real identity, the seeking, suffering and conflict that arises when we identify with thought can

relax. This relaxation and the direct experience of present awareness reveals a natural harmony and equanimity in our lives and in our relationships. A direct, actual, experiential recognition of awareness as our real identity is necessary. Intellectual speculation and belief is not enough. Thinking that we are awareness may be a good start, but it is not enough. No idea, teaching, religion, position, nation, political or religious belief, doctrine, or organization can achieve this level of harmony and equanimity. Thousands of years of human suffering, conflict, and seeking are enough proof of the basic fact that ideas alone cannot heal the suffering, seeking, and conflict. We are not, however, asking you to stop thinking. That would be impossible. The simple invitation here is to recognize present awareness.

It is important to be very direct about what awareness is and what it is not. It is easy to believe that words are delivering “truth” or “reality.” Words can seem poetic, captivating, and “true.” In Living Realization, we are aware of the human tendency to identify with words, including words pointing to awareness. In Living Realization, we do not encourage techniques designed to stop thinking. The notion, “I should stop thinking,” is just another thought that is all about the “me.”

Instead of waging war against thought, we gently invite you to recognize present awareness as your real identity. Awareness is the bare naked awake presence that is looking right now. It is prior to all words, names, bodies, stories, histories, roles, titles, thoughts, emotions, and all other forms that appear within awareness. It is not a thing, not an object we can see. It is presence itself. It is that simple. Anything we think, hear, see, touch, taste, smell, or experience is an appearance of awareness. It is not awareness.

Awareness is what is looking right now, from behind the eyes, before the filter of thought divides what is seen into individual parts such as person, computer, world, desk, light, and universe. Actual awareness is what is looking right now even before thought divides this life into the concepts “awareness” and “appearances.” This is why it is often called “non-dual” awareness. “Non-dual” means “not two.”

Awareness cannot be and is not limited in any way. When we name awareness with such words as “awareness,” “being,” “no self,” “spirit,” “consciousness,” “God,” “non-duality” or some other word, we do not actually limit or capture awareness in any way. A label is arising. That is all. The label creates the appearance that by naming it we know what awareness is as a thing or that we can own it or have it to the exclusion of others. But actual awareness cannot truly be named, owned, harnessed, embodied, or captured. Names and labels create the appearance of boundaries and the appearance that there are separate people who do things with awareness or who can have it to the exclusion of others. Names and labels are appearances of awareness. Awareness has no boundary. No beginning. No end. It is the source of all appearances. It is not any particular appearance (to the exclusion of

other appearances) yet no appearance is separate from it. All appearances are of the same, equal “essence” as awareness.

If you see some “thing” move, change, appear and disappear in any way, that is not awareness. That is an appearance of awareness. Awareness is the awake, timeless space within which appearances come and go. No matter how deeply awareness is recognized, no insight that arises as a seeming result of this recognition is actual awareness itself. Insights are appearances of awareness. They also come and go. They are wonderful. Enjoy them when they come. Repeat them if you like. Share them with friends. They are not, however, awareness. Be clear about that. Every word we use to describe awareness is an appearance of awareness. It is not awareness. The word “spirit” is synonymous with the word “awareness.” Throughout history there has been talk of “spiritual awakening.” These words are pointing only to the direct and immediate knowing of present awareness as our real identity. Many other words have been used throughout history to point to this recognition including Nirvana, enlightenment, the Tao, God, silence, Christ-consciousness, Brahman, non-duality, awareness, Oneness, the light, love, consciousness, the source and a host of other words. Notions such as self, no self, time, timelessness, form, formlessness, nothing, everything, reality, truth, being, and all other spiritual pointers are merely words appearing within the actual, naked, cognizing space that is awake and looking right now.

There is often a persistent belief within us that if we land on one of the words above or on some other conceptual notion about ourselves, life, reality, or God, we have found the truth or have “arrived” at a spiritual awakening. In that case, all that has really happened is more identification with thought. The separate self has simply changed the content of its loop. Instead of looking to ideas or any other appearance, we invite you to recognize present awareness as your real identity. The direct, experiential recognition of awareness is all that is needed. All words, spiritual or otherwise, are merely appearances of awareness. By clinging to an idea, the idea gives the appearance that there is a self who is the center of knowledge. Belief in this center provides a false sense of certainty and stability. Through maintaining this false center, we tend to marginalize others who do not agree with us and who do not feed our illusions of being the center. There is no center anywhere in the universe, which is to say, there is no separate self. There is only awareness and whatever is appearing within awareness. The appearances are not happening to a person. They are simply happening. Therefore, this is not about “a person living or embodying a realization.” It’s much simpler than that. Your real identity is presence itself.

There is nothing particularly wrong with any of the words that are used to point to actual awareness except that they sometimes have the effect of appearing to pull attention into identification with thoughts. We begin emphasizing the word “enlightenment” or some other word rather

than simply recognizing actual present awareness. This emphasis on words keeps alive the notion that what we are is separate from spirit, God, enlightenment, or whatever other word we are focusing upon. The separation is in the words only. The notion of subject vs. object and the notion that there is a person who must reach some later point of time in which an awakening will happen are all simply ideas appearing within present awareness. In seeing that such separation is merely the product of clinging to concepts, the separation is seen through. The boundary between what we are and what words like “God” and “enlightenment” are pointing to is seen to not exist except as thoughts. In that seeing or “realization,” we have the direct experience of what the words above can only point to. Don’t be fooled by the words “Living Realization.” They are fancy words pointing to the recognition of present awareness as our real identity and the seeing that what appears within awareness is not separate from it. That is all. Although this recognition may sound esoteric or intellectual, it is not. It is as simple as presence itself. It is simply this moment totally awake to itself through the opening known as “you.”

In Living Realization, we relentlessly yet compassionately point out that these words we use to point to awareness, no matter how clear or unclear they are, are appearing within awareness. They are not actual awareness itself. Every spiritual word you have ever heard, read, or spoken is an appearance within awareness. As stated above, even the concept “awareness” is an appearance of the actual awareness that is looking right now. Drop the concept and recognize the pure, actual space that is immediately present and inseparable from what is happening in the present moment. If there is a tendency to try to conceptually or intellectually grasp what is said here, keep it simple and just recognize awareness.

That actual space is awareness. Your most beloved positions, ideas, beliefs, teachings, and opinions about spirituality or anything else are appearances of that spacious awareness. They are not awareness. This may seem like the most difficult thing to see. We want so much to cling to ideas, not realizing that the real freedom is in the direct experience of awareness itself. The simplicity of recognizing awareness is quite beautiful once we start to see that no idea is actually awareness itself.

Recognizing actual awareness is not, however, non-duality. It is also important to point out that the appearances are “of” awareness. Appearances include anything that is temporary, that comes and goes within awareness, including thoughts, emotions, states, experiences, and sensations. Although appearances are not awareness itself, *they are not separate from awareness*. They are “not two.” Just as reflections in a mirror are not separate in any way from the mirror, appearances within awareness are not separate from awareness itself. Yet appearances are not awareness. Appearances, like reflections, move and change. They

come and go. Awareness, like the mirror, is constant, stable, and unchanging. It is timeless presence itself. Be careful with this metaphor and every metaphor, with the Living Realization text and all texts, and with all pointers generally. Despite the words used in this and every other teaching, no word is actual awareness. Words are appearances “of” it. Without the mirror, the reflections cannot appear. Similarly, without awareness, words cannot appear. Yet no matter what you think about yourself, others, life, the world, spirituality, science, politics, philosophy, or any other subject, that thought is an appearance within awareness. Thoughts do not happen without awareness, yet they are not awareness itself. Thought is like a movie. The world of separate things is really just a play of images that we call thought. And these thoughts have no existence separate from the awareness that sees them. Therefore, awareness and thought are “not two.” Being clear about this goes a long way in the recognition of awareness.

It is important to talk about non-duality in this way so that we don't get stuck in extreme states of non-conceptualization, stillness, or emptiness. The mind can easily associate non-dual awareness with the absence of things including the absence of sound, emotion, thought, experience, excitement, or enthusiasm. In this detached state, life loses its vibrancy. There you are in some idea of being a witness separate from what is being witnessed. But there is no need to get rid of thought. Only another thought would seek to do that anyway. Awareness has no agenda to be rid of thought. The invitation here is always to recognize awareness as your real identity and see that appearances, including thought, are inseparable from awareness. That ends the idea that we need to achieve or do anything. Living Realization is a present seeing.

To create a split between awareness and its contents, between emptiness and form, is yet another form of separation. It is helpful to see that we are not any appearance, that we are not any thought, emotion, sensation, state, or experience. But this seeing reveals there is no center. It reveals that, in the place where you thought there was a separate self in control of life and living in time as a story, there is only space. And that space is not at all separate from what appears within the space. In this seeing, the entire world is seen to be totally alive. Life is seen to be intimacy itself. Total love recognizing itself in each moment, in each thing, in each thought, in each emotion, in each sensation, in each state, and in each experience. To be mentally identified with the idea you are space or the idea you are emptiness is still just an idea. States of silence and non-conceptualization are still just passing states. All states come and go. To be identified with or to cling to any appearance is to miss the simple and beautiful fact that what you are—absolutely nothing—is appearing as absolutely everything. This is when the most seemingly mundane moment, such as walking to your car on the way to work, feels totally free, as if the universe is recognizing itself for the first time with each step.

In pointing beyond the idea that you are any temporary appearance within awareness, Living Realization does not seek to vilify appearances (i.e., thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, and experiences). We are simply pointing you to the fact that suffering, seeking, and conflict arise when we *identify with* (i.e., focus on, cling to, or emphasize) appearances rather than recognizing awareness as our real identity. In recognizing awareness as our real identity and seeing that appearances come and go within awareness, the tendency to cling to appearances comes to rest. We see that appearances are beautiful reflections of awareness itself. Appearances are like ripples on a pond. There is no way to separate the ripples from the water itself. Although the ripples come and go and each one is different than the others, the ripples are “of water” itself. In the same way, we see that appearances have no separate existence from awareness. In this seeing, we celebrate appearances rather than vilifying them. Life is alive. You are that aliveness.

The remainder of the text of Living Realization only seeks to clarify the basic outline above. The main invitation in Living Realization is this:

*Recognize awareness right now, do not move to manipulate any appearances within awareness, and see that the appearances are not separate from awareness.*

You will see this invitation in many places throughout the text. Stick with this simple but potent pointer.

### **About the Organization**

Awareness is the only real organization. It is the great space in which all ideas appear and disappear. Human organizations are essentially ideas. They may have referents that appear “out there” in the world such as buildings, members, doctrines, by-laws, and leaders, but first and foremost organizations are ideas. Even the referents such as “buildings” and “members” are ideas. When you say, “I belong to Organization X,” that is a thought. In seeing that your real identity is awareness itself, the need for finding a sense of self in any organization tends to decrease or disappear. We are often looking for hope, comfort, belonging, love, acceptance, or change of some kind when we join organizations. In recognizing awareness as what we truly are, we see that awareness contains these things we were seeking. We never again have to look outside of ourselves for these things. We see that there are no individual selves, there is only awareness, which is to say, there is only love. Awareness (i.e., love) is one universal energy that knows no boundaries or divisions. Therefore it knows no such thing as an organization that is separate and apart from life, from other organizations, and from awareness itself.

Nonetheless, as appearances of awareness, organizations can be helpful to provide a supportive atmosphere for pointing to and recognizing awareness. In that sense, Living Realization is such an organization.

As stated above, the message regarding the recognition of awareness as our identity has gone by many names throughout history, and reinvented itself through many teachings and religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity and many modern teachings that are not affiliated directly with any traditional religion. The message is like a song passed down from one artist to the next, except that this song (i.e., the message of awareness as our real identity) has no single author. Each time a new artist speaks about the recognition of awareness, the song changes (i.e., the message of awareness changes). Sometimes it is made clearer, sometimes not.

These days, words pointing to present awareness are clearer than ever. You can search books, stores and the internet and find very clear pointers to present awareness. Yet none of these teachings or teachers owns awareness. Awareness is that which sees all teachings. Awareness cannot be owned or copyrighted in any way. Can what is looking right now behind your eyes be owned? Awareness is its own light. No appearance within awareness owns awareness. People, teachings, teachers, authorities, and religions are all appearances within awareness. "Living Realization" is merely another idea or set of ideas appearing within awareness. Therefore, there is no ultimate authority, embodied either in human form or in the form of an organization. An appearance can never own awareness to the exclusion of other appearances or be an authority on it. No reflection is the mirror and no reflection represents the mirror exclusively. All reflections are "of" the mirror. All waves are "of" the ocean. All ideas are "of" awareness.

Awareness doesn't belong to any person, lineage, teacher, teaching, nation, group, culture, organization, or religion. Awareness is our basic identity. As the message regarding awareness has passed down throughout history from one teaching to the next, it remains like sand sliding through fingers. It cannot be held onto in any way. No one owns it. No word captures it. No set of words captures it. In fact, the notion of something "passing down throughout history" is just an idea appearing in it.

Awareness cannot be reduced to an idea because it is not an idea at all. It is not any idea. Be clear about that. It is that which is aware of all ideas and all methods, practices, religions, teachings, organizations, cultures, political beliefs, and every other thing (and it isn't the idea contained in that last sentence either). Ideas that point to awareness are not separate from awareness. Just as no one owns awareness, no one owns the ideas and words used to point to awareness.

It is important to speak in this way so you see that "Living Realization" is nothing more than an idea appearing in awareness right

now as you read this. In staying “true” to that seeing, Living Realization can never be made into a belief, position, or religion. There is nothing here to defend or protect, to follow, or believe in. Any kind of clinging or identifying or arguing about words in this text or any other teaching or sharing comes from not seeing that ideas are transparent appearances of awareness. Organizations surrounding the message of awareness including “Living Realization” are transparent appearances of awareness.

It is also impossible to use awareness to make or support relative arguments. Statements such as, “Religion X is the only right religion,” “child molestation is wrong,” and “America is the best country in the world,” are statements of relative truth. These things—religions, countries, child molesters—exist only in relationship. They exist only in mind. Child molesters only exist because there are others who are not child molesters. America only exists because there are other nations that are not America, such as China. Religion X only exists in relationship to other religions. In Living Realization, we call this the mirror of relationship. Things are actually thoughts. They are not separately existing things at all. Their separateness arises through thought and language. It arises through reliance on mental labeling. Our language is entirely dualistic. Language only operates through the creation of conceptual boundary lines (e.g., self v. other, right v. wrong, black v. white, America v. China, Religion X v. Religion Y—the list is endless). Relative statements about “the world” continue once there is a recognition of awareness as our true identity. Opinions, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and views are all appearances of awareness. Yet as the boundary lines between “things” are seen to be purely conceptual, and therefore ultimately unreal, great compassion, freedom, love, wisdom, and peace are naturally realized. Awareness is not a concept that can be used to defeat other concepts such as Christianity, Buddhism, or some other philosophy, religion, idea, method, or practice. Awareness is the great space within which all ideas, beliefs, religions, philosophies, worldviews, methods, and practices inseparably appear and disappear. Therefore, we can argue for thousands of years about which idea is better, clearer, or right. But we cannot argue with the simple fact that what is looking at all these ideas is what we really are—awareness. The recognition of awareness often has a profound effect on the way we look at all dualistic relationship. In other words, in the recognition of awareness as our real identity, the tendency to identify oneself as a separate person or as a member of some group that seeks to exclude and separate itself from other groups gently falls away. What is left is an unconditional, naturally compassionate and loving awareness that is completely open to the many appearances of awareness. It is difficult to find an enemy or an “other” in this seeing. Therefore, it is difficult to find conflict of any sort.

The boundaries of the Living Realization organization are therefore transparent. Although the Living Realization sharing can be helpful in

assisting us to see our real identity as awareness and to see that all appearances are not separate from awareness, Living Realization is merely a set of words. Because no one can own awareness, Living Realization cannot purport to be the final word on awareness. There is nothing to absolutize here. Treating awareness or any words pointing to awareness as some final truth is like holding space in your hands and claiming to exclude other space. It's impossible! Fundamentalist viewpoints are appearances of awareness. They are not awareness itself. There is no final word on awareness because awareness is not a word. It is the bare naked pure seeing that sees all words and all views, whether those views are personal, religious, fundamentalist, scientific, philosophical, modern, or postmodern.

Awareness is the pure seeing that sees these words right now before you come to agree or disagree with what is said here, before you identify with them or forget them completely. In the direct and immediate discovery of awareness as your real identity, the tendency to identify exclusively with these words or anything about Living Realization or any other view or organization relaxes. A broader view arises from this relaxation, a view that encompasses and includes all views of humanity. This broader view does not find its roots in thought alone. It does not seek to land solidly and finally on one side or the other, on one dualistic viewpoint instead of its opposite. Therefore, it cannot be defended as a "thing" against other "things." This view is pure naked awareness itself. All thoughts or mental views are seen to be temporary appearances of this broader view of awareness. When there is seen to be no center—including no self or group that can claim exclusive ownership of knowledge, "truth," or "reality"—the universe is seen to be one universal energy. It is a wide open, stable, unchanging space appearing inseparably as every temporary movement of thought. In that seeing, everything is seen to be perfect as it is. This is an unconditional and limitless love that cannot be contained or owned exclusively by any person, group, discipline, teaching, nation, religion, theory or other view. This love sees itself everywhere, in everything and every view. In this seeing, the tendency to treat awareness or Living Realization as something that must be protected or defended as against some other thing "out there" gently falls away. All fundamentalism and insistence on "being right" gives way to our true nature as love itself, which includes and integrates every expression of itself.

Rather than seeing Living Realization as a rigid structure with boundaries or a teaching that exists in and of itself, see it as a transparent set of words pointing to the transparency of all form. Words are empty just as awareness is empty. "Living Realization" is therefore a transparent appearance of awareness. Because our boundaries are transparent, we cannot even say that Living Realization works with other organizations or whether it endorses or does not endorse other teachings, religions, or other organizations. Separate people, religions, teachings,

nations, and organizations are products of thought. They are ideas. We are not saying that these things don't exist. We are saying that they don't exist without awareness. They are appearances of awareness. The nothingness of space is appearing as the everything-ness of the world of relative appearances. As products of thought and language, appearances exist only in relationship to each other. So to conclude that there is truly an organization here that relates to other organizations or people is to miss this point. To miss this point is to buy into the illusion of separation. As soon as we buy into separation as real, we welcome conflict. We welcome the false notion that people, groups, organizations, nations, and religions actually exist apart from awareness and apart from each other and are somehow at odds with each other or need to be reconciled in some way. The universe is never at odds with itself except in the human mind. Love has never been broken. The universe has never actually existed as separate pieces of a puzzle that need to be put together. This recognition resolves the tendency towards separation, seeking, conflict, and war.

The goal of any good teaching regarding awareness is to self-destruct. Once awareness is directly recognized to be your real identity, you won't need these pointers or this sharing. You won't need any teachings. In the end, Living Realization has done its job only when it too is seen to be nothing more than an appearance of awareness. Living Realization, therefore, does not condone teacher-worship of any kind. Please do not look to the teachers in Living Realization as "enlightened beings" or "awakened beings." All words and ideas, including "enlightenment," "teacher," "student," and "awakened being" exist only in dualistic relationship. Enlightened teachers do not exist without so-called "unenlightened students." This is the illusion of separation. The most a teacher can do is point you to the fact that his or her identity is the same as yours. Your identity is everyday, ordinary awareness. Stick with this simple yet extraordinary fact. It is the key to freedom. Any notion that a teacher has something that you do not have is merely your personal mental projection.

The most freeing thing is to see that there is no need to rely even on the teaching of awareness itself. The point of all good teachings is to help one realize his or her real identity as awareness. Timeless awareness is the true guru. A good teaching that points to awareness as our real identity will self-destruct. By self-destruct, we simply mean Living Realization is like space itself. Its usefulness as a teaching or set of pointers dies the moment it is seen that it is merely pointing to awareness itself and that "Living Realization" is an appearance of awareness, an appearance which—like all appearances—is empty just as awareness is empty. This may sound strange at first until it is directly recognized. It is then seen that what the word "awareness" is really pointing to is one universal empty space seeming to appear as a realm of duality, a realm of ideas, organizations, religions, teachings, nations,

people, and things. The realm of duality is like a hologram. The apparent separation is not denied, but the boundaries of the hologram are seen to be unreal. The “things” that appear in space are inseparable from the space. They are none other than space itself.

We talk about the self-destructive aspect of Living Realization because humans have a tendency to want to find and believe in grand narratives about future utopia or organizations that will fulfill some future promise. This tends to keep people hooked into the idea that the future holds salvation or freedom. Living Realization makes no such promise. Its sole aim is to reveal that *present* awareness is our real identity and that all ideas, including grand narratives are appearances of awareness. Grand narratives including narratives surrounding enlightenment, God, science, religion, culture, and so forth are ideas. We can enjoy ideas. Ideas are beautiful expressions of awareness. We can play with them. We can express them freely and use them to communicate and create in the world of appearances. But to buy into the idea that ideas are anything more than appearances of awareness is to buy into the illusion of separation and to miss the obvious basic fact that non-dual awareness is our real identity. If any transformation of the world happens, it happens through the recognition of timeless awareness. We use pointers, methods, practices, teachings, teachers, organizations and other ideas merely to assist in the recognition of awareness. As the recognition becomes available, the need to rely on those things falls away naturally.

We invite you not to buy into anything that has been said here. Instead, we invite you to simply look with us and see for yourself that your real identity is the actual present awareness to which the words can merely point. Nothing else needs to be done. That seeing alone provides the freedom, love, compassion, peace, and wisdom you have been seeking. This is why there are no promises in Living Realization regarding future attainment of special states, enlightenment, bliss, or anything else. What we have been seeking is already here. It is what is looking presently. All we have to do is be open to its recognition. If you feel so moved, please join us in this endeavor to speak openly, freely, and directly about our real identity as that which cannot be contained. To join the Living Realization mailing list or to participate in online meetings, contact us at [Livingrealization@hotmail.com](mailto:Livingrealization@hotmail.com).

# CHAPTER ONE

## Recognizing present awareness

**Right now, recognize present awareness. Don't move to manipulate any appearance within awareness. See that the appearance is not separate from awareness.**

This is the main pointer in Living Realization. It sums up the whole text. There are many other pointers to come, but if you can stick with the simple pointer above, that is all that is needed.

### A. A Few Points About Pointers

The words we use to speak about present awareness are only pointers. There is a tendency to “hook into” the concepts, comparing them to other concepts you have heard, deciding which concepts sound the best, and then mistaking the concepts for that to which they are pointing. This is a huge trap. Therefore, before we begin pointing, let's discuss a few points about pointers so that you don't fall into the trap of believing that when we use the word “awareness” we are talking about a concept.

To speak of present awareness as if it is something totally separate from that which appears within awareness is delusion. It comes straight from our language only. Reality is ‘non-dual,’ meaning “not two.” To speak within the confines of dualistic language about the non-dual nature of reality is to divide life into ideas that get their meaning only in relation to other ideas. See the challenge in the use of concepts? *Actual* awareness itself is not a concept. The word “awareness” is a concept. Concepts come from our dualistic language. The moment we identify “awareness” conceptually, we define it in relation to some other concept—“appearances.”

One could say, “It's all awareness,” or “all there is, is Oneness.” One could also say that there is no way to rest as or recognize awareness because that implies a person who is separate from awareness and who must do something to realize awareness. That implies duality! Fair enough. For some, those pointers may be all that is needed. Perhaps just hearing those very clear pointers is enough to see through the illusion of separation, to see that present awareness is already what you are and there is no way to reach what already is. How can you reach what is simply awake and present right now? It's impossible.

There are many clear pointers to this seeing in various teachings and traditions. Perhaps there is some intellectual understanding of the pointers. Yet, if you are reading this now, it is safe to assume that the

direct, experiential knowing of that to which the words are pointing remains less than fully recognized. That's ok. Don't make your "non-recognition" into a problem. Be gentle with yourself. Read on.

It would be great if we could just throw around a few words or metaphors that would instantly reveal the direct experience of that to which the words are pointing. In some cases, one clear pointer is all that is needed.

In most cases, however, a few words won't do. It's not that the words are wrong, incorrect, or unclear. It's that they are words. Concepts. Ideas. Thoughts. Again, thought operates only within our dualistic language. It creates the appearance of separation between apparent objects where there is no real separation. It creates a world of conceptual opposites in which one thing exists only in relation to its opposite. To thought, the concept of "nothing" exists only in relation to another concept called "something" or "everything." Similarly, to thought there is no subject without object, no black without white, no wrong without right, no clear without unclear, no me without you, no us without them, no non-duality without duality, no awareness without appearances, no Christian without Muslim, no life without death—the list goes on. Each of those words gets its identity at least in part from what it is not. To the thinking mind, "black" is black partly because of what it is not—"white." "Nothing" only has meaning within our language because of its relationship to "thing." The sense that words are pointing to clearly distinct, separate objects is a product of thought. Thought is a wonderful tool. It is not to be denied or suppressed in any way. But Living Realization is pointing to seeing that thought is creating the appearance of a separation that is not ultimately real. The most direct way to see that is to simply recognize present awareness as your real identity and notice that all appearances are inseparable from awareness. Thinking about awareness and thinking about thinking won't help much.

A good indication that present awareness has not been recognized as your real identity is the degree to which you believe that some dualistic idea is awareness. Remember, awareness is not any idea. Ideas are appearances of awareness. Confused? Then simply look back at the entire page you just read. None of the ideas presented here are awareness. Each one of these words—and every other word you can think of—comes from within a finite set of symbols that we call language. Every symbol gets its meaning from its relationship to other symbols. Therefore, no symbol here or anywhere else ever expresses non-dual awareness or non-separation.

## **B. Recognizing Present Awareness**

Keep it simple and let all the ideas above drop away for one moment. Just recognize what is timelessly awake and looking. Forget

everything that has been said in this text thus far. Just drop it all and look. What is looking is what you are. That IS awareness! Awareness is more akin to the white page on which this text appears than any pointer that appears on it. Now drop that pointer too! Present awareness is so immediately here and present in all situations that it seems to get overlooked as we focus on ideas appearing within it and trying to describe it. Actual awareness is the space within which all these pointers appear and disappear—including the pointer right here and all pointers to come.

In Living Realization, we define “appearances” as anything that moves or changes, has a beginning and end, or that comes and goes within awareness. This includes thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, objects, and experiences. They come and go. In Living Realization, we invite you to discover what never changes or moves and is simply awake right now to what is changing and moving. That IS actual awareness. These words are moving and changing. They are coming and going, constantly being replaced by other words in this text. None of these words are awareness. Awareness is the space that allows each one of these words to appear and disappear effortlessly. Now maybe you can relax and let every word that appears in the remainder of this text to float on by. There is nothing to remember, nothing to hold onto, and nothing to grasp intellectually.

Still confused? Confusion comes from believing that there is some idea you have to grasp before recognizing awareness. But awareness is simply awake. That is all! It is the alert presence that is looking right now. Don't refer back to the last sentence or paragraph or to some other page in this text. Awareness is just space. No word has ever grasped space or will ever grasp space. No word will truly clarify that which is looking at all words. Simply feel into or fall back into the space that is simply awake in the here and now, the space that is inseparable from this moment. There is a vast awake space within which this moment appears. That IS awareness.

Now drop even the word “awareness” and any other pointer you have read in another teaching. Simply rest here. Just be. Take a moment for that.

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What you are in the most basic sense is the simple sense of present awareness before you look to any labels appearing within awareness. Awareness is the actual, vast, basic, no-boundary, non-conceptual space from, in, and through which all appearances (including all labels) seamlessly come and go.

Awareness is timeless, spacious, empty, formless, and open. It knows no boundaries. It knows no divisions. Only concepts create boundaries and divisions.

Awareness is impersonal. It is not “your” awareness. The concept of ownership arises only through thinking. The “I” thought itself is an appearance of awareness. Any sensation(s) in the body that give the sense that awareness is located in your body (either in your head, or chest, or some other part) is happening in awareness. It is not awareness itself. It is not what sees the sensation. Actual awareness—that which is aware of the sensation—has no boundary and cannot be proven to be limited to an individual body.

If a thought arises as you are recognizing present awareness as the simple awake space that is present, instead of answering the thought or adding more thoughts to it, simply allow that thought to be exactly as it is. Don’t manipulate it in any way. Let it come to rest in awareness. Thought is temporary. Its very nature is to come and go very quickly. As soon as a thought disappears, there is awareness. If we don’t move to stop thought, analyze it, understand it, add to it, or do anything with it, then thought naturally resolves itself back into the space of present awareness from which it came. Simply notice the space that is left as a thought comes to rest. Yet if another thought appears after the previous thought, let that thought be as it is. In letting thought be just as it is, and not adding energy to it by analyzing or doing anything to it, it starts to lose its energy. To just “be” or recognize awareness does not mean to permanently end thinking. Dropping thought may be helpful in the beginning to recognize present awareness. But as we rest, we see that thought has its own energy and that, if we do not move to do anything with it, it comes to rest naturally in awareness. It is only when we move to manipulate thought, believing that we have some control over it, that it continues to have power over us. All thought arises from awareness and falls back into it. In recognizing awareness as our real identity, we see that awareness has no agenda to do anything with thought, including drop it. The most we can do is simply notice the naturally-occurring appearance and disappearance of thought. As we see that there is no longer a need to manipulate thought in any way, it is no longer seen as a problem. It arises and falls gently, harmlessly, spontaneously, and involuntarily from awareness and naturally returns back to awareness. Remember, the point is not to stop thinking but rather to recognize present awareness, which is the space within which all thoughts appear and disappear.

Whenever anything appears (a thought, emotion, sensation, state, or experience), we simply notice that it is an appearance of awareness. It is not awareness itself. We then get a felt sense of the pure seeing of the appearance. This is not about focusing intensely on the appearance. It is more like letting the appearance remain unmolested, letting it arise and fall on its own, and noticing that what we are, in the truest sense, is

that which is doing the noticing. Recognizing awareness just means allowing the pure seeing to recognize itself.

The pure seeing is not an appearance. We will not find seeing anywhere as a “thing.” Present awareness is the act of seeing itself. Think of “pure seeing” as a verb, rather than a noun or object. This is not about recognizing yourself as a person who is aware of the thing that is arising. See that even the thought “I” is an appearance within awareness. This is not about looking only from the eyes. The entire space within and without the body and mind is one awareness. This is an invitation to allow that awareness to recognize itself.

Pure seeing is the present, clear, empty, quiet, peaceful, awake space from which every appearance appears and into which it disappears. Seeing is always happening whether there are appearances being seen or not. Awareness is there during the day and even at night in formless sleep. It doesn’t come and go. Only appearances within awareness come and go. Awareness is that which sees every appearance that is seen but the seeing itself is not an appearance.

Recognizing awareness means allowing awareness to recognize itself rather than be focused on thoughts or other appearances happening in awareness. Yet if thoughts arise, those are simply allowed to fall back into the space of awareness very gently on their own. We don’t move to understand the thoughts that arise or add intellectual analysis to them. They are simply allowed to be in the space just as they are.

Recognizing awareness is more like the present recognition of being, rather than a doing. We are not recognizing awareness as a “doing” to reach a later point of awakening or enlightenment. We are recognizing awareness right here, right now. Recognizing awareness is an end in and of itself! We are recognizing that the pure, timeless seeing is what we are in the most basic sense, before any thought appears including thoughts about practicing presence or resting as awareness throughout the day.

In Living Realization, we prefer the phrase “recognizing present awareness” over other phrases such as “resting as awareness,” “being present,” “watching,” or “witnessing.” We are not engaging in a practice in time to reach a later point in which you recognize awareness. “Later” and “future” are ideas arising in present awareness. Whenever the thought arises, “I must practice presence,” “I must rest as awareness throughout the day,” or “I must be present more this week,” see those as ideas arising in present awareness itself. We are not inviting you to do something throughout the day or in the coming months. We can only relentlessly and compassionately point you to the fact that present awareness is presently what you are. This moment is the only portal to that seeing. If you want to interpret that as something to do in the coming months, in some attempt to reach a later point, that is your right. But be clear that the notion of time is a presently arising idea only.

Therefore, the self that would make presence into a story of time is just a presently arising idea.

In recognizing awareness, we are not inviting you to identify as a separate witness to what is appearing. You are not a separate watcher or witness. The sense that there is a separate entity watching or witnessing is, itself, an idea or sense that appears within awareness. This entity may be experienced as a bodily sensation or a tension behind the eyes or in the head. Whatever it is, if it is a 'thing,' it is not awareness itself. Awareness is not any thing. It is the seeing itself. An appearance of awareness can never appear without awareness itself. Without awareness, the thought, "I'm the witness," cannot and does not appear. Awareness is the screen on which all appearances appear and disappear. The awareness and the appearances of awareness are 'not two.' There is no actual boundary between the two, only a conceptual one.

But this is not about seeing or catching everything that arises and falls. Sometimes awareness sees thoughts, emotions, and other things that arise. Sometimes it doesn't. We are inviting you to simply be and to notice that awareness naturally allows everything—every thought, emotion, state, and experience—to be just as it is. When something happens and it is not noticed, that 'not-noticing' is perfectly allowed. This is about relinquishing the desire to do or achieve something and to understand or analyze what is happening.

Recognizing awareness includes recognizing inner body awareness. We allow awareness to naturally recognize itself in the inner body. This is not an invitation to think of a body part as a separate thing but rather to feel into the awake, alive space within each body part. Each part of the body—from toe to head—is awareness. This is awareness being aware of itself.

In the sense of being a separate self, it does not feel as though the inner body is clear, empty, awake awareness. It feels more like a physical contraction supporting a time-bound, thought based story of "me." By recognizing inner body awareness, there is a recognition that the inner body is like a bubble. There is clear, empty space within the body, even though the body appears to have a boundary around it. The space "inside" the body resonates at the same frequency as the space "outside" the body. The bubble analogy is good for getting a conceptual picture of what is being pointed to. But once we have the picture, we drop the pointer and feel into the direct experience of it.

If visual stimulation seems to get in the way, we can close our eyes. But the recognition of awareness is available with eyes closed or open. Awareness is not limited to the body. The invitation to recognize awareness is not an invitation to look only within the body. Notice that, in closing our eyes, the boundary between the body and what is "outside" the body is not as strong. With eyes closed, we can no longer see the boundary of skin that appears to separate the body from the rest of life. We may still feel sensations that give the sense that there is a body there.

But notice that they are sensations appearing in awareness. Awareness is looking at the sensations. Therefore, the body is not what we are in the ultimate sense. It is appearing in what we are. And the appearance is not separate from awareness itself. In other words, only ideas create the appearance that there is a separation between something called “awareness” and something else called a “body.”

Just as there appear to be things “outside” the body/mind such as trees that are objects in awareness, there are also objects “inside” the body/mind such as thoughts, emotions, and sensations. All of these are objects appearing in the pure seeing itself. This allows us to see that the boundary between the body and its surroundings is essentially just conceptual. The conceptual labels “inside” and “outside” are appearances of awareness.

With eyes either open or closed, we sense that the space “inside” the body is the same space as the space “outside” the body. This is a doorway into seeing that awareness has no boundary. It is not personal to the body. There is only one space with no beginning and no end. As awareness identifies with or focuses on thoughts, emotions, the body, and other objects, the illusion of separation arises.

The invitation here is recognize awareness right now, not throughout the day or for the next few weeks. There is only ever right now. Days, weeks, months, and years are only ideas appearing within present awareness. Awareness is timeless. It is only available now.

If you find the mind arguing with the pointer “recognize awareness,” then drop that pointer and use “rest as awareness” or “be present.” If you believe a pointer is needed, find one that shows you that all pointers are just ideas appearing and disappearing in present awareness. Find one that takes you straight to the recognition of present awareness as your real identity in the here and now. Notice that the tendency to argue with concepts comes from the belief that awareness is a concept that has to be defined or defended. Although the word “awareness” is a concept, actual awareness is not. Recognizing actual awareness through direct experience goes a long way in no longer fighting with yourself or others over conceptual pointers and teachings and over notions of who is or who is not present, enlightened, or awakened, and what is true and not true, clear and not clear.

## **C. Ways of Recognizing Awareness**

### **Center of the Room**

Sit in the middle of a room in a chair that can rotate around in a circle. Start by looking at only one wall. Notice all the internal and external objects that appear as you look at that wall. There may be the appearance of external objects (colors, textures, lines, lamps, doors,

pictures, etc). But notice that there really are no external objects until thought arises. Notice that thought is a so-called “internal object.” Without thoughts appearing internally, there are no independent objects appearing out there. Thought creates the notion that there are things existing independently out there. See that all appearances, whether internal or external, are appearing within a space. Notice that the space is what you are. This space (also called “awareness”) is the only thing that never moves or changes.

Test this out by rotating your chair to the next wall, then to the next wall, and then the next. As you face each wall, completely new appearances happen. New thoughts, which name new “objects” out there, such as “chair,” “picture,” and “door.” The only thing that remains unchanged is the space within which all of these appearances are viewed. That space is awareness. It is the only constant. All appearances come and go inseparably within that space.

## **2 Points**

For this exercise, we locate two objects (points) at least three feet apart in the room in which we are now sitting. These objects can be anything—a lamp, desk, plant, or light. Let’s call them object A and object B. Notice that the eyes can only focus on one object at a time. We go back and forth between A and B. We notice that we cannot see both objects at once with directed attention. We can only oscillate back and forth between the two objects. First A, then B, then back to A, then back to B.

We then stop focusing on one object at a time. Instead, we “pull back” and notice the awareness within the body and mind that knows the present moment directly. This space resonates at the same frequency as the actual space in the room. We notice that this present awareness is not focused on any particular object. It is simply aware of space itself. It is the space that holds the objects and allows them to simply be. This space is not focused on either object. It is not trying to name them or compare them. It is simply and gently awake to the objects.

This space that allows and holds both objects is pure, transparent seeing that is naturally empty, awake, and formless. It is not focused at all on any one thing in the room. It is the space in which all objects appear including the two objects A and B. If a thought arises that says, “I don’t get it” or “I don’t see it,” we just notice the thought and return to the simple spacious present awareness. Thought will never see what is being pointed to here. Thought can only think about or look at one object at a time.

## **Looking from the space**

For this exercise, we first look in the mirror. We notice that there is a form staring back. In the reflection, we clearly see a physical form with eyes, a nose, a mouth, ears, and hair. In walking away from the mirror, however, we notice that only space is looking outward at the world. In that area where the reflection showed a physical form there is now only space looking outward. From the view looking outward behind the face, there is no form. There is no face. There are no eyes, nose, mouth, ears, or hair. There is only spacious awareness looking at the world.

What we took to be a solid separate form when looking in the mirror is really spacious awareness when looking at the world from the area behind the face. We notice that the entire world appears in that spacious awareness from which we are looking. We see that there is no division between that space and the world that is appearing in it. How can there be a boundary? Space is not a thing. Only things have boundaries.

### **Awareness “around” emotions**

As emotions arise, no matter whether they are positive or negative, we notice the space around the emotion. We forget the mental labels we use to talk and think about emotions such as anger, sadness, grief, pain, loneliness, fear, anxiety, happiness, or any other label. When an emotion arises, we simply see that it is a raw energy form in the body. It has a beginning and an end. It has a shape.

We notice the mind’s tendency to label the raw energy or strategize or analyze it away. In noticing the thought that labels the energy or wants to strategize or analyze it, the thought is allowed to naturally die and awareness can return to noticing the raw energy form in the body.

When we say “notice” the emotion, we are saying allow awareness to become aware of itself around the emotion. Notice the actual space that holds the emotion. Notice that, although the mind may have an agenda to be rid of or strengthen the emotion, the actual space has no such agenda. It simply allows the emotion to be exactly as it is.

### **Recognizing silence**

No matter where we go, what we do, or what sounds are arising, silence is permeating the universe. There is a quietness here that is overlooked in each moment as the mind searches for the next thought, the next state, or the next experience. This silence cannot be known by thinking about it. It can only be known through present awareness. Present awareness resonates at the same frequency as this permeating silence. There is silence “inside” the body and “outside” the body. It is one silence. That silence is a doorway to present awareness. It is revealing our true nature. We simply notice silence. We don’t notice silence throughout the day as a practice. We notice that silence is only here

now. There is only present awareness. We notice that every sound arises out of the silence and falls back into it. We notice that there is no “we” separate from that silence. Even the sounds “I” and “we” arise from and fall back into that present silence.

### **Locating Awareness**

In each of the experiments above, it may have looked like we were pointing to an awareness that is located in the body or in the mind, as if it is emanating out of your eyes. There is a tendency when reading non-dual pointers to believe that awareness has a location. This belief accompanies the belief that awareness is my awareness and that other people have their own “awarenesses.” Let’s look at this more closely.

Awareness is not a thing. It is not an object. Only objects appear to have location. Awareness is more like pure space. There is nowhere to locate space as being in one place but not another. The word “space” here is just a pointer. Let it point you to the realization that the fundamental essence of life is one undivided, purely empty, boundary-less space. There is no place where there is not space. Even where you see a form, as in a cup, the cup is none other than space. There is no way to pull the space within the cup out of the cup. There is no way to pull the cup out of the space in which it appears. The cup and the space are inseparable. So space is everywhere. And that isn’t really accurate. To say it is anywhere, nowhere, or everywhere is to give it a location.

This one undivided space has no location. Location appears when thought appears. In order to even contemplate the notion that awareness resides within the body and mind, there must be a subtle mental image or outline of a body and mind that appears as a concept. It’s often very subtle, more like an assumption, but it’s there. Just notice it when it appears. Notice that whatever sees that thought is actual, pure, spacious, non-locatable awareness. In noticing that thought, or any other thought that attempts to locate space as being only inside or outside something, it is realized that what is noticing is not a concept. That which is noticing is actual space. In simply resting there for one moment, completely free of thought, it is seen that space cannot be located and is not located anywhere exclusively. It is the basic space permeating everything. This should clear up the notion that awareness is located only in the body and mind. The concept of a body and mind appears within actual awareness. And the concept itself is empty and transparent. Look at it. It is as empty as air. It is as empty as the space in which it appears. This reveals that the thought that appears to locate awareness somewhere and the space in which it appears are inseparable. They are “not two.”

## Questions and Answers

*What can I do to recognize awareness?*

In Living Realization, we are pointing to what you are (i.e., what is presently here) not what you can do now to achieve a goal later. The idea of doing something now to achieve a recognition later comes from within the time-bound story of self, which we will talk more about in later chapters. If some method or practice works to reveal present awareness as a vast, unmoving, unchanging, cognizing space prior to (and permeating) all appearances, then use the method or practice. But be clear that what is being revealed is a timeless essence. Awareness is simply what is awake right now.

The word “being” can be helpful here. Although some teachings make a distinction between “awareness” and “being,” Living Realization uses these words interchangeably. What do you have to do in order to be? Nothing. All that can happen is a recognition that being already is. That’s what you are. Being. You are not the concept “being” nor any other concept including a “person who is recognizing being.” Simply drop all concepts right now (including the concepts “being” and “awareness”) and *notice an actual, non-conceptual sense of being that is already here*. That is your real identity. Any idea that you have to do something to get to what is already here appears and disappears within actual being (i.e., within actual awareness). You are not anything that temporarily appears and disappears. The “I” thought and the notion, “I need to do something,” are both appearances that come and go in what is presently aware.

*But shouldn't I stop for moments throughout the day to “be present” or “rest as awareness?”*

That’s a method or practice. There is nothing wrong with methods or practices. Use whatever works. But be clear that the notion that there is one “moment” different from another “moment” is an aspect of the realm of appearances. All appearances are temporary. This is why moments feel temporary. There really are no separate “moments.” These are movements within awareness. How do you know you are stopping for a particular “moment?” You know this through focusing on the thought “this moment” and paying attention only to what appears temporarily in that moment. Remember that appearances include thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, and experiences. Don’t look to appearances to define how you are doing or whether you are “present enough.” And don’t move to manipulate, analyze, or change any of the appearances. See that all appearances simply come and go.

Believing that you need to continue resting as awareness in the future tends to solidify the belief in the time-bound story of a “me.” This

confuses present awareness with what is appearing inseparably within awareness. If this moment appears peaceful as you rest as awareness, the mind likes to take a snapshot of it and confuse what is appearing within awareness (i.e., a state of peacefulness) with awareness itself. It then tries to maintain that state, which means it is trying to carry it over to the next moment. This is what creates the sense of a person “living in time.”

The same is true for a moment in which frustration or non-peacefulness are appearing. As frustration appears, there is a tendency to look for some future moment when frustration is gone. This tends to solidify the idea that you haven’t “rested as awareness enough yet” or that you “aren’t enlightened yet.” And so the mind gets really busy back in the time-bound story of “me.” It rejects the present experience of frustration and goes looking for its future peaceful state. But both “peaceful” and “frustrating” are temporary appearances within present awareness. There is nowhere to go. There is nothing to escape from or find in the future. There is only ever present awareness and whatever is appearing inseparably within it.

Awareness is the unchanging *present* space within which all appearances come and go. Don’t confuse appearances that come and go with awareness itself, which does not come and go. The recognition of awareness, right now, is an end in and of itself. It ends the notion that there is some appearance within awareness (i.e., some thought, emotion, state, sensation, or experience) that you have to maintain, get back to, find, seek, or let go of. This recognition shines the light on the mistaken notion that there really are separate moments and that you have to continue “being present” or “resting” in each future moment in order to be what you already are. Again, use whatever method or practice works but be clear about the central message here.

**The central message is this: Right now, recognize present awareness. Don’t move to manipulate any appearance within awareness. See that the appearance is not separate from awareness.**



# CHAPTER TWO:

## Appearances (Generally)

This Chapter contains a general, introductory discussion of appearances. Each of the broad categories of appearances introduced in this Chapter will be more specifically discussed in later chapters.

Suffering, seeking, and conflict happen as awareness identifies with appearances within awareness, creating and maintaining the sense of a separate self.

For purposes of this sharing, an appearance is *anything* that moves or changes or comes and goes within awareness. All appearances are temporary. Awareness is the pure, permanent, unchanging, unmoving, spacious seeing within which the temporary appearances move and change, and come and go.

Appearances generally fall into at least one of the following categories: thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, or experiences. Below is a more detailed but non-exhaustive list of appearances. These categories are not rigid and we may find that some appearances fall within more than one category. Remember, the material in this Chapter is not meant to provide new information for us to memorize, learn, and remember. This material consists of tools that assist us in seeing that our real identity is present awareness and that appearances come and go inseparably within awareness.

**Thoughts:** thoughts, beliefs, ideas, interpretations, concepts, opinions, judgments, stories, spiritual concepts, identities, roles, and titles.

**Emotions:** fear, anxiety, worry, elation, happiness, resentment, anger, rage, grief, disgust, shame, guilt, sadness, despair, love, surprise.

**Sensations:** pain, pleasure, contraction, pressure, smelling, touching, tasting, hearing, seeing (visual), tingling.

**States:** waking, dreaming, deep sleep, drug-induced or altered state, egoic, witnessing, emptiness, fullness, conflict, confusion, doubt, uncertainty, certainty, relaxation, nervousness, peace, frustration, freedom, bondage, depression, excessive thinking, illness, boredom, and any other temporary mode or condition of being

**Experiences:** Too numerous to name. This literally includes the wide range of human experiences from going to the prom to sitting on the toilet. It is easier to define what the word experience means. Webster's

Dictionary defines an “experience” as any event “personally encountered, undergone, or lived through.”

Appearances are temporary movements that come and go within awareness. Appearances can never truly define or be what we are because of their temporary nature. To define yourself conceptually in any way is to identify with a fleeting image, an idea that rapidly comes and goes within awareness. In the same way, to define yourself through any appearance including an emotion, sensation, state, or experience is to do the same. Because of the temporary, fleeting nature of all appearances, they cannot provide the deepest, most authentic answer to the question, “Who am I?” The answer to that question is not found in any appearance. The answer reveals itself in the direct, immediate, timeless recognition of awareness as our real identity.

The metaphor of a movie on a theater screen is helpful to illustrate the invitation in Living Realization. Appearances are like the characters and scenes in a movie. Awareness is like the screen. Remember that, when we say awareness is like the screen, we do not mean that awareness is an object or appearance that we can see or find. Awareness is the pure seeing itself. It is like space itself. That is what we are.

Suffering, conflict, and seeking happen as awareness identifies with temporary appearances on its screen, looking for a sense of self in the temporary appearances. Freedom is realized through recognizing awareness to be our real identity and seeing that the characters and scenes in the movie are appearances of awareness. In this recognition, the appearances are seen to come and go freely, temporarily, seamlessly, and inseparably within awareness. The appearances are not what we are in the most basic sense. Yet they are not separate from what we are. Stated another way, the screen is the most fundamental aspect in the theater metaphor above. This is why we say that awareness is our real identity. Without the screen (i.e., awareness), there can be no characters or scenes (i.e., appearances). Yet, without the characters and scenes, there would be only the screen. There would be only awareness without anything appearing within it. This is why we say that appearances are not separate from awareness.

Another way of talking about awareness and appearances within awareness is by way of the distinction between internal and external appearances. Internal appearances are thoughts, emotions, sensations, and states. These are things we experience within what we call body and mind. External appearances include objects external to the body and mind such as chair, house, moon, apple, and road. Awareness itself is not any of these appearances, whether internal or external. The physical object “road” is an appearance of awareness. It seems to appear “out there” in the world. But it cannot appear without awareness. The two are inseparable in that way. In other words, without awareness, the road

cannot be seen. In the same way, a feeling of anger is an appearance of awareness. Anger cannot be experienced without awareness. It is inseparable from awareness. The energetic form within the body that we call “anger” never appears outside of awareness. Therefore, it is inseparable from awareness. Therefore, in Living Realization, we cannot know whether something exists except by its appearance. “To exist” is the same as “to appear” in Living Realization. We can only know a road exists if it appears. Similarly, we can only know anger is happening if it appears.

Awareness is not any of these appearances, internal or external. It is “farther” back, so to speak. It is the seeing itself. No matter what appearance comes and goes temporarily within awareness, there is still ‘something’ that sees the appearances. This is awareness. It does not come and go. Awareness is that which sees all appearances. Awareness is what you are. The word “road” and all other words pointing to apparently external objects happening outside the body and mind in an objectively separate world are actually thoughts appearing internally. In other words, the thought “road” and any mental image that appears in conjunction with the thought are occurring within what we call the mind. So, what appears as a world of objectively distinct objects “out there” are creations of thought “in here.” Stated another way, a chair is known to exist only when we see the apparent physical object “out there in the world” and the thought “chair” appears within the mind simultaneously.

Now take an even closer look at what is happening. The notions of “internal” and “external,” “out there,” “in here,” “awareness,” “appearances,” “body,” and “mind” are all just thoughts appearing and disappearing within the actual awareness (not the thought) that you are. This is the awareness that is looking at these words right now. All concepts that appear and disappear in the awareness that is looking right now give the appearance that the world is divided into separate things. But the separation is a product of thought. It isn’t real. In this seeing, separation between what you call you and what you call the world is seen through. All appearances are appearances of awareness. And even that distinction is conceptual. All is. No separation.

Living Realization is not about passively witnessing appearances as if awareness is somehow separate from what appears within awareness. It is not about being “spaced out” or stuck in emptiness. It is the recognition that our real identity is the present, spacious awareness within which everything is happening. In this seeing, the division between the space and what is happening in the space is seen to be non-existent. Awareness and whatever appearance is happening within awareness right now are “not two.”

We are also not inviting you to get rid of anything. The invitation here is to not manipulate or do anything with any appearance. In the recognition of awareness, every appearance is *naturally* allowed to be exactly as it is. The sense of being a separate self—and any personal

suffering and seeking or interpersonal conflict resulting from identification with appearances—is ‘seen through’ in this recognition. As these appearances are allowed to arise and fall within present awareness, without any movement to manipulate or change them, it is realized that awareness is already effortlessly accepting of everything that appears and disappears in awareness. Every appearance is seen to come and go within awareness, leaving no trace. This is perfect acceptance of everything.

Acceptance is not something we do as persons “trying to accept” situations and people in our lives. Acceptance is a natural by-product of recognizing our real identity. In that recognition, every character and every scene in the movie of life is allowed to be just as they are.

**Keep it simple: Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate the appearances of awareness. See that the appearances are not separate from awareness.**

# CHAPTER THREE:

## Appearances (Thoughts)

We are still in the discussion of appearances. Thoughts are the focus of this Chapter. Remember that we defined an “appearance” in Chapter Two as any temporary thing that moves or changes or comes and goes within awareness. Thoughts are clearly appearances of awareness. Let’s revisit the category of thoughts that was introduced in Chapter Two:

**Thoughts:** thoughts, beliefs, ideas, interpretations, concepts, opinions, judgments, stories, spiritual concepts, identities, roles, and titles.

### **The Triangle of the Simulated Self**

There are many discussions about thoughts throughout this text. But let’s start with the basics. Living Realization calls the sense of a separate self, “the simulated self.” We choose this definition so that we can look at the separate self for what it is. It is a dream-like simulation appearing in what you really are—present awareness. This simulated self is not our real identity. In Living Realization, we define the simulated self as more than just the “I” thought. It is more than just thought and emotion. In fact, it is an entire physical and emotional contraction supporting a time-bound, thought-based story.

The very root of this simulated self is the “I” thought. If you trace the thought “I” back to its present source, it is revealed that your true essence is not a thought at all. It is more like a non-conceptual present awareness that is inseparably awake to the present moment, looking at life without any labels. For some, this simple invitation is all that is needed. One quick investigation to find the root of the “I” thought reveals that there is no separate “I” there. In fact, there is no root either. There is no object. There is no concept. There is nothing. There is only a clear, spacious, present seeing in which everything appears and disappears. It is a seeing in which everything is seen. And no appearance can be seen without the seeing itself. This is why we say that appearances are inseparable from awareness itself. The non-conceptual awareness that is repeatedly pointed to in this text is closer to your real identity than anything that appears in awareness including the “I” thought.

Although the root of the simulated self is the “I” thought, the simulated self is more involved than that. Living Realization uses the

term, “the triangle of the simulated self,” to describe the entire conceptual apparatus of the separate self including what it is made of and what it does. The word “triangle” points to three bundles of thoughts: past, future, and present resistance. The simulated self is created and maintained as awareness identifies with thoughts within these three bundles.

### *The Past Bundle*

The past is considered “who you are.” This bundle of thoughts includes everything you know conceptually about who you are and what life is. More specifically, this bundle includes your name, your identity, details about your family and childhood, your education, history, the roles you play, the titles you wear, and all other aspects of your personal story. This bundle includes all political, religious, spiritual and other ideas, opinions, and beliefs you hold, all of which are also part of your story whether you see it or not. This bundle includes any mental identification you have as a member of a group. When you say, “I am a Christian,” “I am a Muslim,” “I am a scientist,” “I am an American,” or “I am a Russian,” these are all concepts with which awareness is identifying.

This past bundle includes all your ideas about the world and reality itself. Simply stated, it is anything that apparently happened in the past or any idea that was formed in the past but that has now been reduced to a memory (i.e., a thought) and become a part of the conceptual story called “me and my life.”

The only real point here is that these are all concepts. Everything you think about yourself is just that . . . a thought. It is a representation, a sign. All signs are pointing back to and appearing and disappearing within your real identity, which is present awareness. If you visited Texas, you would not walk up to the “Welcome to Texas” sign and claim adamantly that the sign is Texas itself. The sign is only a sign. It represents or points to something. In the same way, every concept within the past bundle represents or points to something. It points to your real identity, which is present awareness. You would not confuse the “Welcome to Texas” sign with the actual Texas. In the same way, Living Realization invites you to stop looking to past concepts for a sense of who or what you presently are. Instead, simply take a moment right now, or any other time throughout the day when it is convenient, and recognize that which is looking, which is awareness itself.

You feel a sense of separation from others and from the rest of life because you continuously rely on and emphasize thoughts from within the past bundle. You look to memory for a sense of self. This memory consists of signs or images. These signs or images are more like reflections of what you are. They are things that appear and disappear within what you really are—awareness. This separation creates an

identity surrounding a sense of lack. From this sense of lack, there is a desire to find completion. This results in looking into future for that completion, which we will talk about in the section below.

The point here is that there is nothing to analyze, know, neutralize, overcome, figure out, get rid of, understand, or do with any of the thoughts that appear from the past bundle. Just recognize that they are all concepts. You are not a concept. As each thought arises, simply notice it. In noticing, you don't let go of the thought. It falls away naturally on its own, resolving itself back into present awareness. Notice that what is looking is present awareness. That is what you really are. The recognition of that present awareness is an end in and of itself. It resolves the identity crisis completely. You are this present awareness. It is that simple. No concept can be what you are because all concepts appear within what you are.

### *The Future Bundle*

The future is considered "who you are going to become." This bundle of thoughts includes everything you know or think you know conceptually about the future "you." More specifically, this bundle includes stories about the next moment, tomorrow, next week, next year, and the rest of your life. Simply stated, it is anything that you believe needs to happen in the future for you to be at peace or anything that you fear will happen in the future that will threaten your sense of self.

This bundle includes thoughts of future fulfillment with regard to relationships, jobs, career, material items, fame, prestige, attention, praise, acknowledgement, and seeking pleasurable fixes through drugs, alcohol, tobacco, eating, shopping, sex or gambling. It includes thoughts of future spiritual awakening also. All of these concepts fall under the umbrella of hope. The central, mostly unconscious, fuel behind each idea surrounding hope is as follows: I hope X will happen. If X happens, I will be ok.

The future bundle is not only about hope. The flipside of hope is fear. The future bundle also includes any fearful thoughts about the future including failure, suffering, and death. The central, mostly unconscious, fuel behind each idea surrounding fear is as follows: I fear that Y will happen. If Y happens, I will be threatened or will die.

The point here is that there is nothing to analyze, know, neutralize, overcome, figure out, get rid of, understand, or do with any of the thoughts that appear from the future bundle, regardless of whether the thoughts surround the notion of hope or fear. Just recognize that they are all concepts. You are not a concept. By continuously entertaining the future bundle, the simulated self is being maintained. This self feels separate and looks to future for completion. But completion cannot be found in time. Time is merely another thought. In other words, there is no way to entertain the notion of a next moment, a tomorrow, a next

month, or a next year without thinking. Each of those are merely concepts appearing and disappearing within present awareness, which is what you really are.

As each thought about the future appears, simply notice it. In noticing, you don't let go of the thought. It falls away naturally on its own, resolving itself effortlessly back into present awareness. Every manifest thing in the universe—including thought—has a temporary life span. Noticing just means noticing that all thoughts of future appear and disappear within present awareness. In noticing the thoughts, notice that what is looking is present awareness. That is what you are. Recognizing that you are is what is looking in the here and now and not any of the appearances that are coming and going (i.e., the concepts) resolves the identity crisis completely. The search for future ends right now, in this seeing.

### *The Present Resistance Bundle*

The third bundle of thoughts within the triangle is the present resistance bundle. This includes any mental interpretations of the present moment, especially those that are in resistance to your present experience including blaming, complaining, judging, comparing, and any other thought that makes it appear that something that is happening now ought not to be happening.

The point here is that there is nothing to analyze, know, neutralize, overcome, figure out, get rid of, understand, or do with any of the thoughts that appear from the present resistance bundle. Just recognize that they are all concepts. You are not a concept. By continuously entertaining thoughts from this bundle, the simulated self is maintained. This simulated self is fueled by continuously resisting, through mental interpretation, what is happening in the present moment.

As each thought of present resistance appears, simply notice it. In noticing, you don't let go of the thought. It falls away naturally. Notice that what is looking is present awareness. Present awareness is what you are. In recognizing present awareness, you see that awareness is naturally and effortlessly accepting of whatever is happening right now. You also see that whatever is happening is an appearance within awareness. You see that no appearance can appear without awareness. This is the seeing that appearances are inseparable from awareness. This is the true meaning of acceptance.

### **Is This About Identifying as a Separate Witness?**

With respect to all three bundles mentioned above, this is not about getting trapped in an ongoing process of witnessing. It is not about creating a duality between the witness and the appearances that are seen. Living Realization invites you to see that you are the

awareness within which all thoughts *inseparably* appear and disappear. The thought is not separate from awareness itself. These thoughts are happening within awareness. They are the energy of awareness itself. Awareness is not a thing. It is the awake space within which thoughts happen. Therefore, these thoughts are happening to no one, which is to say that the separate self that you take yourself to be is, in fact, not real. This is why we call it a simulation. Therefore, any other concept about a separate witness who witnesses life and is somehow separate from what is happening is just another story within the past bundle of thoughts. It is yet another concept that awareness has identified with. By simply noticing that thought, it falls away. That which notices the thought, “I am the separate witness” is what you really are—awareness. These thoughts appear inseparably within what you are. There is no self separate from life. There is only life itself. You are THAT.

### **Questions and Answers**

*Do I have to get rid of thinking in order to recognize awareness?*

The simple answer is no! The only thing that would seek to get rid of or quiet thought is another thought. Only the simulated self would have an agenda to get rid of itself. To want to achieve something from the recognition of awareness is a thought from the future bundle. It is based on the idea that if you do X now, you will achieve Y later. This is why Living Realization gently cautions against the idea of "resting as awareness" to achieve a later recognition of awareness in time. Awareness is timeless. It is what is simply awake in the here and now. It is what registers these words. In other words, the notion of having to get rid of ego, or the simulated self, or thought itself is based on the idea that awakening happens in the future. That is the time-bound, thought-based simulated self talking. Future is only a thought appearing within timeless awareness. Making an enemy out of any appearance often causes more frustration for people. The central invitation in Living Realization is to recognize present awareness right now, to not move to manipulate any appearance, and to see that appearances are not separate from awareness. A thought is an appearance of awareness. The simulated self is an appearance of awareness. In seeing that your real identity is the present awareness that is simply awake now, there is an effortless seeing that the simulated self is not what you are. In that seeing, it no longer matters whether thought is appearing or not or whether the past and future are appearing or not. Everything is allowed to be just as it is. In this seeing, you know what you are. You see that no thought is what you are. Yet you see that no thought can harm what you are. No simulation can harm or threaten your real identity as that which sees the simulation. Even the simulated self is allowed to be as it

is. Yet it is seen to be an appearance within what you are, not what you are.

*Is the intellect an obstacle to the recognition of present awareness?*

It sure can appear that the intellect is an obstacle to the recognition of awareness. But it appears that way only because there is a sense of self invested in the intellect. As we stated in the paragraph above regarding the past bundle, we often identify with our intellect, believing it to hold the key to our real identity. Much of our search through philosophy, religion, science, and spirituality and many other intellectual pursuits are based on an underlying desire to answer questions like, "Who am I?" and "What is life?" These are questions revolving around the idea of identity. In recognizing present awareness as our real identity, the identity crisis is solved fully and finally. It is also seen that awareness is the same as space itself. Can the intellect harm space? Of course the intellect cannot harm space. No appearance can harm awareness. So the intellect cannot harm or obstruct what you are. The intellect is an amazing appearance within what you are. It is not to be denied or repressed. Who would do that? In that seeing, there may be a great desire to read and study philosophy, religion, science, spirituality, or some other intellectual pursuit or there may be no desire to do any of that. In any event, in the recognition of awareness, there is no longer a need to look for the answer to the question, "Who am I?" in any appearance, including in any intellectual pursuit.

*Does thought obscure awareness?*

Again, it can appear that there are things that obscure or obstruct awareness. But remember the central invitation in Living Realization: Recognize awareness right now. Do not move to manipulate any appearance. See that the appearances are not separate from awareness. Thoughts are appearances of awareness. Appearances cannot happen without awareness. In other words, there is no way for a thought to appear without the screen of awareness on which it appears. Rather than obscuring or obstructing awareness, thought actually proves that awareness is here. See that every thought comes and goes temporarily within awareness, yet no thought is awareness itself.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate thoughts. See that thoughts are not separate from awareness.**

# CHAPTER FOUR:

## Appearances (Emotions)

Emotions are appearances of awareness. There is no way to experience an emotion without awareness. This is why we say that awareness and emotions are not separate.

Like all appearances, emotions come and go temporarily. The emotions that are appearing today are different than those that appeared ten days or ten years ago. If emotions stick around, that means they are being “carried over” in time. To suffer is to carry something over in time, to make it part of the time-bound story of self. Awareness is our primary identity. Suffering happens when there is personal identification with whatever emotion is appearing and when the emotion is not allowed to follow its natural course. Its natural course is to appear and disappear fully, openly, uninterruptedly, and naturally within present awareness. This natural flow is seemingly disrupted as awareness contracts around the emotion, creating and maintaining the sense of a separate self (i.e., the “simulated self”) that is suffering in time.

We tend to hold onto or focus on emotions that we perceive as “good” and resist those that we deem to be “bad.” We spend a lot of time and energy trying to recreate the emotions we want and trying to get rid of the ones we don’t want. This constant movement towards good and comfortable feelings, and away from bad and uncomfortable feelings, is the spiritual search itself. In Living Realization, we define the spiritual search, very simply, as wanting something to happen other than what is happening now. This constant resistance to what is solidifies the simulated self that lives in time and believes its salvation or freedom is in the future rather than here and now.

In the story of the simulated self on a spiritual search, emotions are turned into a problem—something to eradicate, analyze, get rid of, or manipulate in some way. It may be helpful to see that emotions arise in conjunction with thoughts within one of the three bundles discussed earlier in the Triangle of the False Self. For example, the past bundle of thoughts may carry corresponding emotions of resentment, shame, guilt or some other movement or emotion. The present resistance bundle may carry anger or frustration. And the future bundle may carry fear or anxiety. But seeing that emotions arise in conjunction with thoughts is enough. No further analysis or manipulation is needed. That which sees each emotion is awareness and awareness is our real identity. That simple recognition is sufficient.

Insight arises from seeing that emotions are appearances within what we are. They are not what we are. For example, in the moment

fear arises, you can bet that some future threatening thought is appearing. That seeing is enough. Don't move to analyze the thought or manipulate the emotion. Just notice the thought and recognize that what is looking is spacious awareness. In recognizing awareness, the raw energy of the feeling can be felt directly without the mental label "fear," "anger," or "shame." Awareness is the space from which the emotion seamlessly appears and disappears. Awareness has no agenda to get rid of or manipulate the emotion. Only a thought would seek to get rid of or manipulate an emotion. The emotion is not separate from awareness. The emotion is not happening to a "me." The sense of "me" is just another appearance of awareness. It is the time-bound, thought-based simulated self we discussed earlier in this text. The thought "me" is a temporary appearance. Emotions happen within awareness. Stated another way, emotions arise and fall to no one. There is no person there to carry the emotion over "in time" and therefore to suffer. There is only space. Space naturally allows everything to be just as it is.

In Living Realization, the invitation is not to reach a state where nothing comes through or where all emotions, good or bad, are gone. Again, emotions are none other than the movement of awareness itself. Just as with thoughts, there is nothing to analyze, get rid of, manipulate or do with any of the emotions that appear and disappear. Everything is allowed to be exactly as it is. Everything is seen to be a seamless appearance of awareness. In fact, even when there is a movement to analyze, get rid of, manipulate, or do something with an emotion, that movement is also seen to be a seamless appearance of awareness. It is allowed to be completely. The "person," which is the time-bound, thought-based self, cannot truly allow or accept emotions. Spacious awareness naturally allows and accepts emotions because space is inseparable from the emotion itself. Emotion has no separate existence from space itself. Therefore, in the deepest sense, everything just is. That recognition ends the need to do something with emotions. It reveals that the person who is on a spiritual search is not a real entity. The simulated self is just that . . . a simulation that arises from a misperception of what we really are.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate emotions. See that emotions are not separate from awareness.**

# CHAPTER FIVE:

## Appearances (Sensations)

Sensations are also temporary appearances of awareness. For purposes of Living Realization, sensations are placed into two categories: (1) the five senses and (2) physical sensations.

In the most rudimentary sense, we experience the physical world through touching, tasting, seeing, hearing, and smelling. We tend to overemphasize thinking about sensory experience and underemphasize sense perception itself. For example, we tend to think about the weather with ideas such as, “Today is a wet, dreary day,” or “I hope tomorrow will be sunny,” rather than simply feeling the present sensory experience directly in whatever way that is appearing, either as the actual wetness of rain falling on our faces or the actual heat of the sun warming our bodies. To know a sunny day directly is to experience the heat and the light of the sun directly rather than through the label, “This is a sunny day.” The label is, at best, a representation. It is a thought. The actual warmth and light of the sun is not conceptual. In Living Realization, we are not saying that you shouldn’t think about the weather. We are simply pointing to the obvious fact that all appearances—including all thoughts and sensations—are equal appearances of awareness. In recognizing awareness as our real identity, the tendency to identify exclusively with mental labels relaxes.

We can think about water all we want, and even write a book about it, but to know water directly is to put our hands in it and feel its wetness. The mental label “water” will never provide that direct experience. We can never drink the idea, “Water.” A label will never quench our thirst. The same is true for every aspect of our world. To know tapioca pudding is to feel its texture in our mouths and taste its sweet flavor as it slides effortlessly down our throats. Reading the recipe for tapioca pudding or thinking about pudding will never provide that direct experiencing. The same is true for Living Realization. The phrase “Living Realization” is just a concept, as are words like “non-duality,” “enlightenment,” and “spiritual awakening.” But when we drop the concept and simply look at our present reality, the way it is really happening, we see that what we are in the deepest sense is a vast, loving, spacious awareness and that all appearances seamlessly appear and disappear within awareness. The direct experiencing of that, without heavy reliance on concepts, reveals what the phrase “Living Realization” is really pointing to. It is pointing to the simple fact that what you are is boundless, timeless space itself, recognizing itself equally as every appearance, every thought, every emotion, every sensation, and every experience.

The simulated self stays in place through looking at life only through a conceptual veil. By living only through these labels, we fragment life into separate occurrences: “I love this view from the mountaintop;” “I don’t like the sound of the car alarm going off;” and “the feel of this bug crawling up my leg is really ‘bugging’ me.” These labels create and maintain a false center (i.e., the simulated self) that is judging each and every sensory experience. It is all about “me” and whether life is giving “me” the experience I think I need or want in order to be a fulfilled separate self. This self is either for or against everything it sees, touches, tastes, hears, and smells. We live through stories of what sensory experiences mean for “me,” rather than through the bare naked, actual sensory experiencing itself.

It is very easy to create a story about how present physical sensations such as pain or discomfort should not be happening or how we have been suffering with pain or discomfort for a long time. In this way, we suffer. We “carry over” sensations through time. But time is thought. And all thought is an appearance of awareness. So carrying over sensations through time just means that we overemphasize our stories about the sensations. The resistance created through that storytelling strengthens the time-bound simulated self that is seeking future release. Conversely, this simulated self engages in a game of maintaining or recreating pleasurable sensations, whether it is the feel of a massage, comfort from food, the high from spiritual experiences, or the egoic boost from receiving praise and acknowledgment.

The spiritual search is a search for something more, for the next moment. It is a chase after future pleasure or release and an avoidance of present pain or discomfort. The simulated self is chained to this duality of pleasure v. pain—this movement of chasing pleasure and avoiding pain.

As sensory experiences such as pleasure and pain are seen as nothing more than movements within present awareness itself, they are allowed to appear and disappear naturally. They are no longer being focused on and carried over into the story of self that lives in time. Our true identity is revealed in this seeing. Everything is naturally allowed, both pleasure and pain, both the beautiful view from the mountaintop and the annoying sound of the car alarm. Awareness simply has no agenda to resist. It naturally accepts what appears because the appearance itself is not separate from that space that sees it. Sensations are not separate from awareness. Awareness does not move toward or away from any sensation. In this seeing, the constant movements of chasing pleasure and avoiding pain tend to relax on their own.

### *The Self-Contraction*

The simulated self is not just a thought-based, time-bound story. It is also not just emotional in nature. It is physical. The self-contraction is

the tense, seemingly solid, physical energy knot within the body that creates a real sense of separation between “me” and the rest of life. The self-contraction is located in any number of areas including the stomach, chest, throat, behind the eyes, and even in parts of the head. The knot may be in more than one area simultaneously.

The self-contraction, as real as it seems, is also just a temporary appearance of awareness. It feels permanent only because we have assumed all our lives that we are in fact separate selves. Until we hear the invitation to investigate whether this contraction is our real identity, we simply assume that it is. Take a moment now and investigate this assumption. Find the physical contraction(s) in the body. Where is the dense energy located? Where does it feel like there is a solid, separate you? Do you see that the self-contraction, regardless of where it is, appears within awareness? Your real identity is that which is awake to the contraction. If *you* can find the contraction as an appearance, it must not be *you*. It must be an appearance in what you are.

No amount of effort or resistance against the contraction will diminish the contraction. The contraction is the energy of separation and resistance itself. Resistance cannot eradicate resistance. Only the simulated self would seek to be rid of the contraction anyway.

The only practice here is to recognize present, spacious awareness and to notice that space gently surrounds and permeates the contraction. Remember that the invitation here is never to manipulate an appearance. The contraction, like all appearances, is “of awareness.” There is actually no separation between awareness and the contraction. It’s all energy in different forms. In simply recognizing awareness, it is revealed that the contraction is not you. That seeing reveals your real identity as awareness itself. The contraction tends to fall away effortlessly and naturally in that seeing.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate sensations. See that sensations are not separate from awareness.**

# CHAPTER SIX:

## Appearances (States)

One of the greatest myths is that spiritual awakening involves reaching, maintaining, or recreating a particular state, whether it's a state of peace, bliss, non-conceptualization, silence, or some other state. Continuing to view spiritual awakening in this way perpetuates seeking as the mind attempts to seek comfortable states and avoid uncomfortable states.

Living Realization is the recognition that your primary identity is present awareness. Awareness is the permanent, unchanging, unmoving opening through which each and every temporary state comes and goes. The key here is that every state is temporary, no matter how spiritual or unspiritual the state appears to be.

States are appearances. We suffer and seek because awareness identifies with certain states and avoids or dismisses other states. This results in a time-bound cycle of dualistic seeking. In this cycle, our happiness seems so elusive. We always want to feel different, better, freer, or more at peace. We don't see that the very seeking after future states makes the present moment feel as though it is lacking.

Living Realization defines the spiritual search very simply as wanting something to happen other than what is happening now. Virtually everyone in the world is on a spiritual search, whether they realize it or not. One definition of the simulated self is "the constant movement towards future for a sense of completion." Regardless of whether we have been seeking spiritual awakening for years or have been engaged in seeking happiness in material items, career, attention, fame, relationships, food, sex, drugs, or anything else, this basic fact remains: to seek any state other than the one that is appearing now is to continue in the story of the time-bound, thought-based simulated self.

As we stated earlier, there are many different kinds of temporary states including but not limited to the following: waking, dreaming, deep sleep, drug-induced or altered state, witnessing, emptiness, fullness, conflict, confusion, doubt, calmness, agitation, enthusiasm, uncertainty, certainty, relaxation, nervousness, peace, elation, frustration, freedom, bondage, depression, excessive thinking, non-conceptualization, illness, boredom, and any other temporary mode or condition of being.

As with all appearances, there is nothing to manipulate, get rid of, maintain, seek, recreate or do with regard to any state that appears. States are temporary appearances of awareness. They are not separate from awareness. To say that they are not separate just means that it is impossible to experience a state without awareness.

Living Realization is not about merely witnessing states in some detached way. To be detached, there must be a person who is separate from the state and who feels detached from the state. In recognizing awareness as your real identity, the division between the space and what is happening in the space is seen to be non-existent. There is no separate you bringing the state about. It simply appears. There is also no separate you who can control or bring about the end of the state. It simply disappears. In this seeing, every state is allowed to be by no one.

In this recognition, there is only the state that is happening. There is no movement to resist what is happening. And if a movement to resist a state arises, that movement is also completely seen and allowed to be. To want to suppress or escape a presently-arising state or seek or recreate a future state is to try to block the natural, effortless, creative, and loving movement of life itself.

### **The Oscillation**

One of the most common traps in the spiritual search is what Living Realization calls the “oscillation.” In seeing through the simulated self, we experience moments, even sustained periods, of peace, joy, freedom, calmness, love, or bliss. During these states there is a sense of “I’ve got it.” The mind unconsciously associates these states with spiritual awakening. Whenever the mind dualistically labels anything in this way, it polarizes the opposite states. Therefore, in the moment a painful or less desirable state arises such as frustration, confusion, doubt, or boredom, there is a sense of “I’ve lost it.” There is a movement to recreate or seek the previous, desirable state. We then go looking for our lost freedom or peace. The spiritual search continues as an oscillation between moments of peace or freedom and moments of confusion, doubt, or separation.

As with all appearances, the invitation here is to recognize present awareness as your real identity. Positive and negative, and spiritual and unspiritual, states appear in what you are. They are not what you are. In this recognition, it is seen that the oscillation is happening in awareness. It is not true that we are moving in and out of enlightenment or awakening. All that is happening is that states are appearing and disappearing in what we are—present awareness. That recognition tends to quiet the oscillation.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate sensations. See that sensations are not separate from awareness.**

# CHAPTER SEVEN:

## Appearances (Experiences)

Experiences are appearances of awareness. Remember that, in Living Realization, an appearance is defined as anything that comes and goes. Experiences come and go, no matter how good or bad they are perceived to be. We suffer and seek through focusing on past experiences for a sense of self, constantly labeling and resisting present experiences, and seeking future experiences for a completion of that sense of self.

There is no way to list all possible experiences. Essentially every event that happens in life is an experience from visiting the doctor, to eating red velvet cake, to sleeping, to going to work, to taking a vacation. Rather than trying to list all possible experiences, we rely on Webster's Dictionary definition, which states that an "experience" is any event "personally encountered, undergone, or lived through."

The operative word in that definition is "personally." Thought refers and clings to experiences from the past bundle to strengthen and maintain the simulated self. So the story goes: "I received my doctorate degree in 1999," "I got married in 2002;" "I had a powerful spiritual awakening in 2003;" or "Yesterday, I finally saw a positive change in my relationship." Thought labels present experiences as good or bad, often resisting what is happening now. So the story goes: "She shouldn't speak to me in that manner;" "I'm tired of being here at work;" or "This conversation is boring." By labeling and resisting present experiences, thought then looks to future for completion: "Tomorrow will be better because I have the day off;" "I hope they make me CEO of the company one day;" or "I will be better when I have an enlightenment experience."

In Living Realization, we do not say that experiences or memories of experiences are bad or that you should stop having experiences or memories. That would be impossible anyway. We simply invite you to see that experiences appear from and disappear back into awareness, that awareness is your real, unchanging identity, and that focusing on experiences for a sense of self is the cause of suffering and seeking. Enjoy the experiences fully. Celebrate them! But also see that every experience is temporary. There is nothing to hold onto. There is wonderful freedom in that seeing.

The invitation in Living Realization is to simply recognize awareness as any experience is happening and see that the experience is a temporary appearance of awareness. We do not move to change, manipulate, get rid of, or do anything with experience. Yet if any of those movements arise, we see that the movements are also appearances of awareness. Even movements to manipulate experiences are allowed to

be just as they are. These movements are not manipulated in any way either. We don't choose any appearances. They simply appear and disappear. All that we can do is notice that.

In this seeing, no experience is held onto, every experience is allowed to come and go effortlessly, naturally resolving itself back into spacious awareness.

An important point is that experiences are appearances *of* awareness. We are not inviting you to passively witness experiences. This sets up a duality between the witness and the experience that is happening. Awareness and the experience happening in awareness are not separate. This seeing reveals that our freedom is always present, because it is a natural attribute of present awareness itself, regardless of what experience is appearing.

### **Spiritual Experiences**

We hear stories of teachers and others who have had various spiritual experiences including Oneness experiences, experiences of nothingness, no self, light and luminosity, unconditional love and bliss, Kundalini or chakra awakenings, seeing God, hearing God, touching God, and any number of other experiences. Or we—ourselves—may have had one or more of these experiences in the past.

These experiences can be beautiful. Enjoy them totally if they occur. But each experience is temporary, no matter how spiritual or unspiritual it is perceived to be. Living Realization is not about having a particular experience. It is not about a person who is separate from an experience, having the experience. And it is not about a witness witnessing an experience. Living Realization is about space being whatever experience is presently happening in that space. The space and the experience are “not two.”

Awareness permeates every experience, no matter whether it is a spiritual experience full of love and peace or the experience of arguing with your spouse. To look at reality any other way sets up a duality where one seeks after certain pleasurable or comfortable experiences and pushes away other painful or uncomfortable experiences.

To seek after certain spiritual experiences as told by teachers or others is to reduce those experiences to concepts and then chase after those concepts, believing that the concepts will provide freedom. But concepts are not the source of freedom. Awareness is already free. Even when we have certain pleasurable spiritual experiences, there is no need to try to recreate those past experiences. To chase after memory is just more seeking.

True freedom, peace, love, wisdom, and joy are inherent aspects of awareness itself. Awareness is ever present. This is the wonderful news of Living Realization. Never again is our sense of well-being dependent on having certain experiences and avoiding other experiences. We are

not individual selves living in time, defining ourselves by past experiences, and looking to enhance this selfhood through the attainment of future experiences. Our real identity is the present space in which all appearances (i.e., experiences) come and go. And the appearances are not separate from that space.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate sensations. See that sensations are not separate from awareness.**

# CHAPTER EIGHT:

## Core Story

Let's return to the discussion of the triangle of the simulated self. Earlier we said that this triangle consists of three bundles of thoughts (i.e., the past, present, and future bundles). These thoughts are often accompanied by emotions. For example, when we think a thought that is threatening from the future bundle, fear is experienced in conjunction with the thought. These bundles constitute the *structure* of the simulated self.

The structure of the simulated self is similar to the structure of a building. To speak of a building's structure is to say that the building has a floor, walls, and a ceiling. Every building has the same structure. To speak of the building's structure is to say nothing of the content of the building. The content of a building varies from one building to another. Your house has a couch, a bed, family photos on the wall, and other personal effects. Your place of work may have completely different content including a desk, machinery, or file cabinets. Similarly, a church has different content than both your house and your place of work.

The structure of the simulated self is the same for everyone. Every separate self is a time-bound, thought-based story created and maintained through identification with appearances (i.e., with thoughts, emotions, sensations, states, and experiences). Everything seems to be happening to a "me" in this story. The story is supported by a physical contraction in the body (i.e., the "self-contraction"). The time-bound, thought-based aspect of the self is the triangle of the simulated self that we discussed earlier. It is made up of the three bundles mentioned above. But saying that it is made up of the three bundles says nothing about the content of that thought-based story.

In this Chapter, we are discussing *content* rather than structure. The actual content of the false self is different for everyone. Here, our goal is not to rearrange the content, find better content, get rid of the content, tell a better story, or psychoanalyze the story. Our intention is merely to illuminate the actual content of the core story. In this illumination, it may be possible to see the particular appearances that make up the "core story" of who you think you are. In recognizing these appearances, the invitation is always the same:

**Recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate sensations. See that the appearances within your core story are not separate from awareness.**

This recognition is all that is needed. It solves the identity crisis fully and finally. We come to know that we are not stories. We are not thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, or experiences. These appearances are temporary movements of the awareness that is our real identity. And yet we do not wage war against these stories, including our own story or anyone else's.

A simple working definition of core story is “a one word or one sentence phrase that best sums up the actual content of the simulated self.” The core story is a highly personalized conceptual loop that appears to persist throughout one's life. The loop continues so long as there is an energetic clinging to specific appearances (thoughts, emotions, states, sensations, experiences, etc) that constantly reinforce the story. This persistent reinforcement maintains the illusion of the time-bound, thought-based separate self. Recognizing present awareness as the clear, empty, cognizing space within which these appearances come and go resolves this identity crisis. It is then realized that a misperception was occurring. We thought we were time-bound stories. Instead, our real identity is the timeless space in which those stories were appearing. We see that there is no path to what we are. We already are what we are. This recognition is all that is needed.

### **Identifying the Core Story**

Every person has an individualized core story. There may be many facets of the story, many details, embellishments, and subplots. But there is always at least one core story.

That particular core story is the central lens through which the person views and interprets life.

Let's take Mary, a fictitious character, to illustrate “core story” and how it creates suffering, seeking, and conflict.

Mary is a victim. That is her core story. From the view of Mary's core story of victimhood, life treats her poorly, other people have good lives, she is a victim of past circumstances, and the future seems bleak (more of the same). Each of those thoughts is a focus point that supports her core story. There are specific emotions that arise in conjunction with those thoughts. For example, when she thinks of how awful her past has been, she feels resentment, lack, and loneliness.

Mary's core story is much like a movie being projected from her mind. Her interpretation of life does not feel like a story. It looks and feels very much like reality. To Mary, life actually does treat her poorly, other people have good lives, she is a victim, and the future seems bleak. To tell Mary that she is “pure awareness” does not register with her. She is not looking presently from the perspective of pure, timeless awareness. She is looking from the perspective of a time-bound, thought-based lens

(i.e., core story), the content of which can be summed up in the phrase, “I am a victim.”

Until Mary identifies her particular core story, she is destined to keep interpreting life through its lens. She is destined to stay within the conceptual loop of victimhood. Without her core story, she is no one. So the movie of victimhood that is constantly being projected and the painful feelings that arise in conjunction with that movie provide a familiarity. She is clinging to the pain because it is all she knows. Life without the story, and its corresponding pain, is inconceivable.

The people and circumstances in Mary’s life act as a mirror for Mary. In order to remain a victim, Mary must continue to see others as ‘not victims.’ For example, Mary will view her friends as being more fortunate, more attractive, or more skillful than she is. There must also be perpetrators in Mary’s life in order for her to remain a victim. This is the mirror of dualistic relationship. It is an important tool in recognizing separation. For example, every spiritual person needs others that are deemed “unspiritual.” Every attractive person needs unattractive people. Every know-it-all needs others who don’t know. These are the stories we tell about ourselves. Other people are merely the mirrors that reinforce our core stories.

It can be helpful if Mary writes down the focus points that make up her core story. As she writes down the central viewpoints that make up the story, she is now looking at a piece of paper that holds the details of her own story. She went from looking through the lens of victimhood to looking at a piece of paper that contains the focus points. She sees for the first time that what she took to be a self is really just a set of viewpoints that appear within awareness. That seeing alone allows her to rest as awareness rather than continuing to emphasize the focus points for a sense of self.

“Victim” is only one of many possible core stories. Maybe you will see yourself in one of the core stories in the list below. Maybe your story is not among these. In any event, it can be helpful to identify the exact content of the most central viewpoint that defines you. Here is the list:

Seeker

Finder

Know-it-all

Attractive person

Unattractive person

Caretaker

Fixer

Victim

Controller

Spiritual person

Unspiritual person

Enlightened person

Unenlightened person

Employee

Employer

Mother

Father

Son

Daughter

Wife

Husband

Athlete

Teacher

Angry person

Nice person

Mean person

Survivor

Doctor, secretary, engineer (or other career label)

Free spirit

Healthy person

Sick person

It is so tempting to cling to, analyze, manipulate, and want to change these stories—to make them better. But moving to manipulate the appearances just reinforces identification with them. Only the story would seek to change the story. Only the story seeks future for completion or a happy ending. Only thought would move to get rid of, improve, or do anything with thought. The invitation in this chapter is not to manipulate the appearances within your core story. It is to simply see the story for what it really is. This seeing is how true insight arises. The story is a self-centered loop that just wants to continue looping. It wants to continue in its dream of separation and time. This continuation happens by manipulating appearances. The invitation in this chapter is similar to shining a flashlight into a dark room in order to see the furniture. We don't want to move the furniture around. We aren't trying to tell a different story. We are illuminating the story—shining the light in the room to see the content. Once the content of your core story is seen, it is seen to be an appearance in what you are. What you are is the pure, naked awareness that sees the core story. This seeing is all that is needed.

**Remember, keep it simple! Above all else, recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate sensations. See that sensations are not separate from awareness.**

# CHAPTER NINE:

## The Mirror of Relationship

*I cannot exist by myself. I exist only in relationship to people, things, and ideas.*

*Relationship is the mirror in which we see ourselves as we are. All life is a movement in relationship . . . . In that relationship which is the mirror in which we can see ourselves, we can discover what we are, our reactions, our prejudices, our fears, depression, anxieties, loneliness, sorrow, pain, grief. We can also discover whether we love or [whether] there is no such thing as love. –Jiddu Krishnamurti*

In Living Realization, we do not say that nothing exists. We say that no thing exists separately. Things exist as separate things only because of their relationship to each other. Relationship is duality. And duality is a product of thought. It comes straight from our language. Language is thought. So when we say “things,” we really mean “thoughts.” What Krishnamurti is ultimately pointing to is the recognition that all relationship is a movement of language, which is the same as saying it is a movement of thought. Test this out for yourself:

*When you look around the room you are in right now, how do you know there are separate things? The only way to know that something appears to exist separately is through thinking. So a table appears to exist as a totally separate “thing” only when the thought of it appears. When you look into the room with bare naked awareness (i.e., without thought), you see the appearance of lines, textures, and colors. For example, the so-called table is one color and the items on the table as well as the floor underneath the table are different colors. But in looking at the room with bare naked, non-conceptual awareness, the thought “chair” does not appear. The thought is a concept. And so there is no way to know the chair as an independently existing “thing” without labeling it a “chair.” “Things” come into existence as separate and apart from each other only through emphasizing concepts. Concepts come straight from our language. So when we look at the room without our language, we look from what we really are in the deepest sense—pure, naked, non-conceptual awareness. Language appears and disappears within awareness. Language is not mirroring or simply reporting a dualistic reality “out there.” It is helping to create it. And once a “thing” appears, we know it as a separate thing only by its relationship to other things. Therefore, a chair is a chair because there are other things that are not chairs, such as a table or the floor.*

Why is this discussion even important? Why not just recognize present awareness as the clear empty space that is looking right now? Why get involved in looking at the realm of appearances? The invitation in this chapter is not to think about how things exist in relationship or to analyze the realm of apparent phenomena. The invitation here is similar to the invitation in the chapter regarding “Core Story” and in all other chapters. **Recognize present awareness right now. Don’t move to manipulate appearances. See that the appearances are not separate from awareness.** We are discussing the mirror of relationship not to encourage you to manipulate the thoughts that appear, or to psychoanalyze your relationships or other people, but rather to assist in the seeing that the entire realm of duality is an appearance in awareness. Thought appears and disappears in awareness. That is to say, the notion of separate people is a product of thought appearing and disappearing in what we really are—awareness. That present *seeing* is all that is needed. No further analysis is necessary.

This seeing is profound! It reveals that conflict in relationship is a product of emphasizing thoughts rather than recognizing spacious awareness as our real identity. As will be discussed in more detail below, this seeing reveals that much of your thoughts about others have more to do with defining a self as against those others. There is no separate self without an “other.” The two ideas are mutually dependent upon one another. They appear together and get their individual meanings only in relation to each other. As the sense of “self” appears, the sense of “other” appears in conjunction with it. Just as you only know a “chair” as a separately existing thing through the concept “chair” and its relationship to other concepts that are “not chairs” including “table” and “floor,” you can only know a separate self by comparing and contrasting this “self” to an “other.” This creates the false appearance that people exist as totally separate “things.” Conflict appears as we seek to distance, compare, and differentiate ourselves from “others.” This conflict is a direct result of buying into a separation that is illusory (that is a product of thinking).

### **The Play of Opposites**

One of the simplest ways to begin looking at relationship is through the play of opposites in our language. Every word in our language (i.e., every thought) gets its meaning at least in part from what it is not. Every idea has an opposite and gets its meaning by implicit reference to that opposite. “Black” is black not because it is a certain appearance by and of itself. Nothing exists independently. It is black partly because of what it is not—white. Similarly, “up” is up partly because it is not “down.” “Left” is left partly because of its relationship to right. The list is endless. Here is a non-exhaustive list of opposites:

You/me (or self/other)  
Us/them  
Black/white  
Negative/positive  
Good/bad  
Birth/death  
Dark/light  
Cause/effect  
Silence/sound  
Moral/immoral  
War/peace  
Hot/Cold  
Up/down  
Left/right  
Here/there  
Past/future  
High/low  
Mean/nice  
Beautiful/ugly  
Loud/quiet  
Rest/movement  
Acceptance/rejection  
Fast/slow

There is also an entire play of opposites within our language dealing with the split between presence and absence. Stated another way, some words imply the presence of a thing. Their opposite is the absence of the thing. As you can see, many of the following opposites are used in spiritual teachings. It is important to see that even our most cherished spiritual terms are still the product of emphasizing thought and therefore duality.

Presence/absence  
Something/nothing  
Spiritual/unspiritual  
Self/no self  
Choice/no choice  
God/Godlessness  
Practice/no practice  
Path/no path  
Form/formlessness  
Matter/space  
Existence/non-existence  
Being/non-being  
Duality/non-duality  
Time/timelessness

Awareness/appearances  
Consciousness/content of consciousness

Do you see that a word has no meaning without reference to other words, especially to its opposite? Words find their meaning through relationship. Letters are placed together to make words. Words are placed together to make sentences. Sentences are placed together to make paragraphs and so forth. Although this may seem obvious and somewhat elementary, it is often overlooked in our everyday life. We then buy completely into dualism, not recognizing that it appears only because thought appears. Stated another way, duality isn't real. It isn't "out there" in the world. It's "in here" in the mind. And even that is play of opposites. Out and in appear together as opposites. This is why awareness is often called "non-dual." Awareness is prior to thought. It is the simple awake non-conceptual presence that is reading these words right now. It is not "of thought" at all. As non-dual awareness is realized, even "out" and "in" are seen to be purely conceptual.

The moment we look to thought for a sense of self or for understanding of any kind, we have entered this world of binary opposites. We have entered into a realm of duality. Therefore, we have entered into relationship.

The tendency in many spiritual and self-help programs is to assume that duality is real—to assume that there are actually two objects (e.g., self and other) that must somehow negotiate with one another. Shortly after that assumption is made, you are given advice on "how to act" in relationship with others. In Living Realization, the invitation is only to recognize your real identity as awareness and to see that the appearances "self" and "other" are appearances of awareness. There is something that sees both the thought "me" and the thought "other." That which sees those thoughts is what you really are. Thoughts don't see, nor do they speak, kiss, laugh, work, hear or anything else. Because people are "thoughts," people can't truly love each other. No two thoughts ever meet. Thoughts don't meet. Thoughts are never actually in conflict. It just appears that there is conflict as we take ourselves to be thoughts. Thoughts don't love each other either. What you are is awareness. Awareness is love. Love is not divided or broken. Thoughts merely appear and disappear in awareness. That is all they do. They come and go within the space that we are. Thoughts give rise to the illusion of separation. This is why it is often said that the realization of awareness is the realization of unconditional love.

Let's be a little more specific about how separation appears, and therefore how conflict arises in relationship. Essentially, each person is a set of ideas. We aren't speaking just of the "I" thought. In an unconscious or unseen sense, we really believe that we are various dualistic stories and that our sense of self is tied into thought. Here is a

non-exhaustive list of those stories we take ourselves to be and the stories we tell about others in our illusion of separation:

I am a good person

She is a bad person

I am a spiritual person

He is an unspiritual person

I am attractive

She is unattractive

I am sad

He is happy

I am right

She is wrong

Religion X is the truth

Religion Y is not the truth

Democrats have it right

Republicans have it wrong

God is real

God is unreal

Science has the answers

Science does not have the answers

America is a great country

America is an awful country

I'm a Muslim

He is a jew

We are Chinese people

They are Irish people

These are all thoughts. Nothing else. They have no reality “out there.” Separate things and people don’t exist except through thinking. Do you see the play of opposites happening in these stories we tell about ourselves and in our opinions about the world? In order to be a good person, there have to be “bad people” out there. In order to be attractive, there have to be unattractive people. In order for you to hold an opinion, there has to be someone else who holds an opposite opinion. For example, in order for my opinion that America is great to have any real meaning, I must be able to define that opinion as against something else out there—namely, the opinion that America is not great. Every position needs an opposite. To be a Muslim, there must be others who are not-Muslims (e.g. there must be Christians). Without an opposite, there is no identity. No separation.

We find individual identities through thoughts. This is self-centered or ego-centric thinking. It’s the self v. other paradigm. We also often join groups or define ourselves as part of a larger collective identity such as a race, association, church, nation, philosophy or political party. This is group-centered or ethno-centric thinking. It’s the us v. them paradigm. It’s still identification with thought. There is nothing wrong with thinking nor is there anything wrong with being a member of a group. Separation and conflict appear when we emphasize these thoughts for our identity rather than recognizing awareness as our real identity. We keep separation alive by making sure there are others who we can define ourselves against, who we can disagree with, and be in conflict and war with. We pick a dualistic word and marginalize its opposite. For example, throughout history Christians have marginalized the “others,” namely non-Christians. Russians have marginalized the others,’ namely non-Russians. Whites have marginalized others, namely blacks. The list goes on. Do you see what we are doing with language? We draw conceptual boundary lines. We treat those boundary lines as real, rather than conceptual. All boundary lines are potential battle lines.

From the viewpoint of being a separate self, outwardly judging an “other” is the way in which you separate yourself from the other. If the outward judgment is that people are controlling, this implicitly means that you see yourself as not controlling. The list is endless. If my spouse is wrong, I’m right. If my boss is a jerk, I’m a good guy. If I’m a victim, others are perpetrators. If I’m unfortunate, others appear fortunate. In order to be rich, others have to be poor. In order to be spiritual, there have to be others that are labeled “unspiritual.”

By simply seeing this play of opposites as it appears in awareness, identification relaxes naturally. As identification relaxes, conflict disappears. This is perfect proof that conflict arises only when there is identification with thought. When conflict arises, there is usually an emotional component also. We experience conflict with “others” as thoughts *and emotions* in the body. See this for yourself. Envision someone in your life with whom you are in conflict. Bring up painful scenarios in the past between you and the other person. Now stop thinking about the other person for one moment and feel into the body. What appears as an “other” out there in the world is really experienced very intimately within what we call “mind” and “body.” The only way to know an “other” is through thought and emotion. Now, drop the ideas “body” and “mind” and simply recognize a non-conceptual space within. That space is awareness. It is what you truly are. Within that space, all relationship and conflict play out. In recognizing that you are this space, the thoughts and emotions that give rise to conflict are allowed to be just as they are. The thoughts and emotions are seen as inseparable appearances of awareness. This means that the thoughts and emotions are not happening ultimately to a person. They are happening in a space. And the thoughts and emotions are none other than the space. In other words, there is no way to find a definite boundary line between the appearances within the space and the space itself. That seeing is acceptance. It is seen that there is no one there in conflict with self, other, life, or the world. It is all simply appearing exactly the way it is appearing.

It is important to say that the realm of duality (i.e., the realm of thought) is harmless and beautiful once there is no longer identification with it. In Living Realization, we do not make thought into an enemy. We are not inviting you to not have opinions or knowledge. We are not inviting you to stop thinking. Only another thought would say that anyway. The recognition of awareness in no way excludes thinking. The invitation here is to recognize present awareness as our real identity and see that thoughts have nothing to do with identity. Thoughts are inseparable appearances of awareness. There is no need to manipulate any appearance. In that seeing, thoughts are not manipulated in any way. All thoughts are allowed to be just as they appear. This is the same as saying that all people are allowed to be because people are thoughts. This seeing is perfect, unconditional, natural acceptance. In no longer seeking identification in thoughts that appear, thoughts have a practical and useful function. They are no longer weapons of conflict. They are tools of communication.

Awareness is what we are. Opinions, ideas, and individual stories are appearances in what we are. This recognition reveals that conflict is illusory. It reveals that what we are, which is non-dual awareness, has never been divided. Our real identity is love. This is what Krishnamurti was pointing to in the quote above. By seeing the ways in which thought

gives the appearance of duality, we see that our real nature is undivided awareness, which is the same as saying our real nature is love. Love is what is looking right now before we mistake ourselves for thought. Love has never been broken. And so the universe has never actually been fragmented into parts that need to be reconciled through thinking. Thinking is what creates the illusory duality. We cannot think our way into love. We are love. This seeing ends conflict.

**Remember: Recognize present awareness right now. Don't move to manipulate any thoughts. Let them be as they are. See that separation is a product of thought. See that all thoughts are inseparable appearances of awareness.**