

THE HEAD VS. THE HEART - WHO'S IN CHARGE?

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Many of us are really good at thinking things through, figuring things out. We are good in our heads, we rely on them to live in and thrive in the world. We rely on the talent of our mind to make things happen and to keep our world orderly and safe.

And many of us are "feelers," heart people. Our emotions tend to lead us. We listen to our feelings and let them help us make our decisions. That is what we have learned to trust and is the place from which we react and respond to our world.

They are both very important, yet for many of us, one is much more dominant than the other. When we let one dominate, our decisions and our way of responding to the world are unbalanced, incomplete, lopsided. The head has one piece of information to give us as an observer and analyzer of the events and experiences of our lives. The heart has another piece of information to give us about how to feel, receive and interpret these events and experiences. Decisions and responses need to come from listening to both, getting input from both, not letting one always be in control.

The rational, logical head people tend to not trust their hearts. They tend to dismiss and ignore their emotions. They probably hold the belief that if they listen to their hearts, they will get hurt or it will get them in trouble. Usually it is past experiences that have taught them that lesson.

The more emotional, feeling heart people, likewise, tend not to trust their heads. They feel and react but usually have not learned how to listen to their heads. For their own reasons, they have not learned how to trust those voices.

When we only let our heads rule, we miss the valuable information that our hearts provide - who feels safe, what we love, what we're passionate about, whom we're attracted to, who makes us uneasy or uncomfortable. Without the heart, we are able to make lots of decisions, but we are likely to ignore how we are feeling about those decisions.

When we only let our hearts rule, we miss out on valuable head information - weighing the pros and cons of a situation, thinking about what is good for us, figuring out how to best take care of ourselves, deciding how to proceed, getting a more objective assessment of a situation. Without the head's input, we miss out on the ability to take charge, on having a sense of knowing why we do what we do and of knowing how to truly act in our own best interest.

So the task is to learn how to let both voices have input and be heard. They are not enemies, but for many of us, they aren't even acquaintances! They need to learn how to dialogue with one another and how to work together.

The first thing to do is identify how you respond to the people and events in your life. Are you mostly a head person, mostly a heart person, or some combination of the two? You might want to ask a few people who know you well for feedback on how they see you.

If you are a head person, take some quiet time to bring your awareness to your heart. Close your eyes and bring your focus inside, to the heart area. What image do you see? Does it have a voice? What does it say to you? What does it feel like in there? You might want to journal about it, or draw it, or meditate on it.

If you are a heart person, do the same thing. Take time to bring your awareness inside your head. What image do you see? Does it have something to say to you? What does it feel like in there?

After you've done that, see if you can create a dialogue between your head and heart. Let each one tell its story of how one got so strong and the other so weak. Find out how they feel about each other - do they know each other? like each other? trust each other? admire each other? etc. And then just let it flow and see what you learn about these two very important parts of yourself. (One effective way to do that is to let your dominant hand write/speak for your dominant style and your non-dominant hand write/speak for your non-dominant style.)

Take time to do this. It is not a one time exercise. What you are trying to do is develop a friendship between two estranged parts of yourself. And, as with any strained relationship, it takes time to nurture it, heal it, and develop trust between those two parts.

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