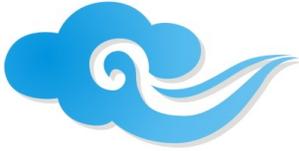


# 11 - WAKEFULNESS



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## Wakefulness

Being awake and being alert differ in how they feel, and in their purpose.

Awake is a state of being aware and responsive, but it only requires minimal degrees of either. You're awake stepping out of bed, or stepping off the high diving board, though your sense of being present differs. Waking up sets a low standard.

It depends on what you aim to do, or where you're going with it. If you're tossing around in bed late at night neither asleep or awake, or waiting for motivation to get started, then getting out of that "excluded middle" is what you want. "Waking up" means activating your thinking mind, something you struggle to do in those halfway states.

Being alert is relative. You're alert relative to what's going on around you. Being attentive or paying attention, both to what is happening, and what might happen. Being awake and engaged with something in particular, such as driving or listening, with a degree of control and response. You're awake, but not alert, when distracted, entranced, or depressed. Being alert sets a higher standard than being awake.

I'm approaching these states in terms of frequencies, and the frequencies of being alert differ from the frequencies of being awake. Alertness requires waking up, and it requires clearing the brain fog, but it requires more than that.

## Stages of Wake

We can distinguish stages of sleep according to brainwaves, and your subjective report upon waking up. Could we distinguish stages of wakefulness according to brainwaves, and your subjective report? That's basically what we do, but we don't call these "stages" of being awake, we call them states of awareness.

What if they really were stages? What if there are different levels of wakefulness that are normal, healthy, and necessary, and you progress through them, in order, to reach higher levels of wakefulness? If this were the case, then we would not say that people are different and some are more "with it" than others. We would say some people wake up more fully, and others inhabit a dysregulated wakefulness. We might send them to "Wake Labs," to be fitted with breathing machines, drugs, implants, or the like.

I conjecture all states of alertness build on a basic state of wakefulness. Obviously, being alert requires being awake. From teaching people to manage their brainwaves, I have observed a basic, awake states. Just as there are distinct brainwaves in sleep, there are basic brainwave patterns for being awake.

I take this point of view not because it's proved, but because we can talk about frequencies of wakefulness, and we're free from the discussion of "higher consciousness." We're talking about wakefulness, and wakefulness exists on a spectrum of sensitivity and engagement. We can train ourselves to be more awake and more alert.

You began this project focusing on sleep, and it's fair to assume that's your interest. But I suggest you cannot understand, perfect, or manage your sleep patterns without also accepting responsibility for your patterns of wakefulness. We've got two issues here, the first is better management of our awake state so that we can sleep better, and the second is better management of our asleep state so that we can be more awake.

I feel we have already addressed the first of these. We've explored patterns, habits, intentions, and expectations in order to improve our sleep. Here I want to explore the spectrum in the other direction, toward greater alertness.

Let's consider two parts, or aspects, of wakefulness. The first is being awake and maintaining wakefulness. The second is being alert and maintaining alertness. For both cases we focus on frequency and intention.

## Frequency and Intention

Just being awake doesn't amount to much. It's like being in neutral, not in drive. Your motor is running, you're not going anywhere. A person who's awake but not alert is in a daze and, until

they come out of it, they aren't responsive. Waking up is the first, and important step to being conscious.

There are many states of alertness and I'm considering only one, the state of physical engagement with your environment. This is not high spirit or intellect, and it has a kind of tunnel vision. Driving, running, and other automatic actions involve complex coordination that can be finely tuned, but these states don't involve inspiration, creativity, memory, or analysis. They don't require brilliance.

We could take these exercises and explore higher states of alertness, and we'd move to and through higher states of awareness. I don't know if the techniques we use here will be sufficient. Perhaps somewhat. Let's first focus on building awareness into alertness. This is the topic of the first exercise called "On Becoming Alert."

It would be nice if we could dial in alertness by turning a knob. We can chemically amplify arousal, but alertness is more than one dimensional. When we're falling asleep many things are happening, and if we're not falling asleep it's because many things are not happening. Just as we've worked on many dimensions to make sleep happen, so we have to build a foundation if we're to become more alert.

Building a naturally alert and wakeful state when you feel that you're falling asleep takes work, and it doesn't happen instantly. Build the foundational frequencies of alertness, and alertness will come online, it will crawl out of the fog, but give it a chance. Things have to fall into place.

And there's always the possibility that you really do need a rest, a nap, or a break. Be reasonable. This is all about how your body works, when it works correctly. If you cannot shake the need to sleep, then don't. If you're driving, pull over. Close your eyes. Your mind and body may need to drop into lower frequencies before rebounding into alertness.

## Higher States

All our states need preparation and require patience. They are different combinations of frequencies, and each frequency needs to find its cadence in you. It is literally a resonance, like a spinning top, it needs to find a balance without resistance. And it's the lack of combining the necessary tempos that keeps you from these states, be they deeper sleep or higher awareness.

In the first exercise we build a basic alert state on three frequencies. Play with these tempos yourself and you'll experience other states of alertness. Speed them up, slow them down. The results will move you along a scale, all with similar structures. You'll find views that are higher and lower, wider and narrower, all within the sense of who you are, and how you present yourself. These are normal states.

There are other states too, and other frequencies, and those states also develop with time, patience, and practice. There are frequencies you may need to let go of, which you cannot. Much attention is given to reaching new heights of liberation when the problem is releasing old lows of bondage. These too are frequencies.

I'd like to explore this idea. I'd like to see if we can find and feel the underlying frequencies of our attention and release them, but we cannot leave ourselves with nothing, so we'll have to substitute something else.

In the next exercise, I make the small request that you locate some of the frequencies of who you are and let them go. We all have these frequencies. They are what make some people resonate with you, while other people are dissonant. They are what make you comfortable and open with some, and impatient with, or indifferent to others. They can turn you on, or turn you off.

I think you know what these frequencies are, at least you'd certainly know them if they were not there. You'd feel lost. You might feel annoyed, or frightened by their absence. I'm asking you to feel alone, because that's what it feels like when you let go of who you are. That's what it feels like when you cease broadcasting your signature frequencies.

Maybe you can't do this. Maybe it's too much to ask. That's your choice. Know only that this is an offer. Join me in the experiment.

To make it easier I'll give you other frequencies. Frequencies I suspect are outside your range of personality. Some very high and others very low. I'm using tones here, rather than tempos, because I can't drum fast enough, or slow enough to get outside the tempos of your personality.

The object of the second exercise called "Invitation" is simple to state, but hard to do. The object is nothing, being nothing, and feeling from nowhere. I don't know what this will mean, if you'll accept it, or what it will give you, but I know that changing your awareness will require something new. If you intend to find something, and you can, then you will.

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## Exercise: On Becoming Alert

*Drop into a relaxed state. Open the spigot of a huge bucket of warm energy above you, letting a slow and scintillating syrup warm your head, run down your back and glue you to your chair. Glue your hands down, glue your eyes down, like it's a warm weight down your legs and feet, on and into the earth.*

*You're half here and half somewhere else, somewhere nearby. Remain present and listening, watching. Let your tongue lie heavy, your jaw drop, and your throat feel warm.*

*Let that warmth spread down your neck to bloom and blossom across your shoulders, penetrating warm oil into the hinges and ribs, down your arms to dissolve the bones in your wrists and hands. All warm now, and flexible, smooth, calm, and heavy.*

*Unlike our other exercises aiming toward sleep, let's assume you're already somewhat sleepy. Relaxed at least, and also somewhat mentally tired. Certainly you can remember or pretend that state where there was just too much happening, too much to remember, too much going on, and it seemed like you were looking for a brief time out. Just a foothold, or even a brief pause to collect yourself. You can always use a pause, so take a moment now to just unburden yourself of all that's going on in and around you.*

*Fold yourself in, like an omelette, a blintz, a crepe, an hor d'oeuvre, or a burrito, with your shell on the outside and your energy inside yourself. Draw your mental curtains and let's reboot ourselves, starting from our resting state, maybe that's eyes closed or eyes open, maybe it's drifting and half way here, or maybe it's present and slightly spaced out, following the textures and landscapes of my voice.*

*Take a breath, feel your lungs expand... and then exhale and let your chest contract. On the next breath I'd like you to feel the slight pressure of your heart beating as you inhale. It's not the sense of a full cycle, but rather a pulsing pressure, like someone leaning lightly on the other side of a door that you're leaning on. A kind of rocking motion. Feel that as you inhale and notice how that sensation fades as you exhale.*

*(begin 1 Hz beat)*

*Pay attention to your pulse when your inhale and feel its texture. Its texture is the tone of a muscle, like when your arms are tired your pulse may be sharp edged. Relax your chest, your breath, to soften your pulse. Make the load light and the rhythm smooth. Tension is a fast frequency and you want to build awakesness on the slower frequencies: the breath, the pulse, and double times, as we explore.*

*Start with your pulse, about once each second. Settle into this as your basic wake state, a state of sensation without outside thoughts. Keep thoughts out, sense only the pulse too slow for words. Let your eyes make small circles, in time with your pulse, and with each pulse drop into the sensation of your shoulders... of your upper arms... your lower arms... your hands. The sensation of your neck... your upper back... your lower back. The sensation of your chest... your stomach... your gut... your pelvis... your hips... your thighs... your knees... your calves... your ankles... and your feet.*

*Thoughtless sensations, awake and aware of your body's feelings. Not yet responsive to what's happening around you, not yet alert beyond listening and looking, looking out of a fog. Now we'll speed up, and as we speed up watch how a curtain rises and you find yourself on stage, in the act, in the round, all around you.*

*(speed up to 4 Hz beat)*

*As the tempo rises find yourself waking up more, engaging with a finer texture, more verbal, more inquisitive, attentive, furtive, and alert. There's a quarter note buried in the pulse, our first level of alertness. The quarter note of basic attention.*

*There is nothing special in the world about this frequency, but there is in us. It's the clock speed of broad thinking. The speed of basic talking, natural talking and a common movement. Remember it in the rotation of your joints walking down a city sidewalk, sense it in the joints of other people walking down a city sidewalk. Some faster cities: New York, Tokyo. Some much slower: Venice, or Kingston, Jamaica.*

*One-two-three-four... Automatic movement, robot attention, programmed limbs. Our basic dance speed. You can drive or walk at this tempo, make breakfast, or sort the mail. Feel it in your eyes, a comfortable tension in your arms, an electric energy, a pressure bouncing like a wave between your wrists and your biceps. You're ready, engaged, focused on the ripples on the surface of wakefulness.*

*This is the rhythm of basic attention, but alertness wants more, a faster click, a smooth shifting of gears. But not just this, this is not enough, it gets old, boring, dull in its incessant beat. It lacks surprise, both having and reacting to it. A snap, a click, a spring, a trigger, a fuse, gunpowder kept dry and loaded. We need discernment, armed to react.*

*(speed up to 8 Hz beat)*

*Alert combines three speeds that are happening at the same time, it's got polyrhythms like music. There are always at least three: an awake speed gives you presence, a faster aware speed is engagement, and a fastest speed of being armed and ready, responding like a reflex. At least these three: present, engaged, and ready to react.*

*(beat a tempo of 4/4, accent on the first, and every 4th measure beat a measure of 16th notes)*

*This faster speed is not persistent, not constant. If it were constant we become deaf to it. It must be intermittent. You can feel it in the background, a backbeat, a syncopation like a fuse or trigger. It's not an action but a reaction. Not a plateau but a jump. You have it reserved, but only engage it on occasion. It keeps you armed and discerning. It keeps you mixed in motion. Otherwise you'll settle into a robot trance, and we often do settle into trance, but that's for sleep, not staying awake.*

*(Return to the 1 Hz beat)*

*Now you're awake... one... two... three... feel your pulse on each inhale, moving you forward like a stroke of the oars, your lungs creaking like the oar locks. Row! Beat... beat... beat... beat. Row! Beat... beat... beat... beat. There is no exertion.*

*(Add the quarter notes, syncopated 4/4 on the downbeat)*

*Clear lungs of air wake you up, and your heart pumps awakesness through your torso, into your head, down your arms and legs, into your hands and feet. You are awake, present, listening. Lay it out like a base, like an undercoat, a foundation. You're in control.*

*(Syncopate further building a rhythm on one, three, and four. Scatter in 16/th notes.)*

*Wake up... get up... hiccup... Imagine you're an eagle, and the air vibrates beneath your wings. Laid out flat, air pressing against your skin. Hear these beats in the land below you, in the cushion of air beneath you, in the heat rising, circling and soaring. Hear the rhythm in the land alive.*

*Wake up... get up... rise up... Imagine you're a horse, and the solid earth vibrates below your pounding hooves. Muscles like spring boards, rebounding a polyrhythm on your spine, compression on a spring, waves. The drum head of the earth, played with your feet, echo and resonance. Resistance and resilience.*

*(Slow the beat back to quarter notes)*

*Swallow the rhythm into your being. You can feel the beats in the timing, take the tempo into your tissues, into the texture of your pulse, into the strike of your muscles, the tension of your tendons, the vibrations across and beneath your skin, across the facia and the membranes.*

*Entrain these beats into your awareness, into your brain and its electricity. Tempos buried under thoughts, you ride atop awareness, attentive, responsive. An eagle on the wing, a horse of the hoof, and the person of your mind.*

*Place these tempos in your hands and feet, play them in your fine, motor muscles. Store them in your muscle memory, from where you can always retrieve them. Let them sink into your muscles like oil into thirsty wood, turning it golden and translucent. You are golden and translucent.*

*Whenever your alertness flags, feel the oil texture of your attentive rhythms. Lubricate your action and reaction to be audible again. It takes a few seconds, but you can do it. Whenever next you're tired, begin the unwrapping of these tempos and textures. Bring yourself back to tempo and rhythm, without effort or strain.*

*(Quiet the drumming)*

*Let the warm, liquid energy drain off you, like warm water evaporating on a hot, dry day. Replace your awareness of the world around you. This day, this room, this time. Counting up, one... two... three... Back to now, feeling clear, able to recall and rebuild alertness with the simple tapping of your rhythms with your fingertips.*

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## Exercise: Invitation

*Take a deep breath and sink into relaxation. Sink into that halfway state we've visited so much. Halfway between presence and absence. Aware of your body, quiet in your mind, open in your feelings.*

*Take a stairway ten steps up to an elevated garden, a garden in the air. And as we take these steps to higher ground feel the world fall away as the horizon falls away. The sky grows big as its color turns from cyan, to navy, to dark blue and, finally when we reach the 10th step, to black.*

*One,*

*Two, take a deep, easy breath.*

*Three,*

*Four, let it out and relax like steam on a winter day.*

*Five,*

*Six, open to those creatures that control the sky.*

*Seven,*

*Eight, to float up, into the air, where the plants reach.*

*Nine,*

*Ten, into a thin, black sky, under a blazing sun.*

*I'd like you to relax in a different way. I'd like you first to recognize who it is that relaxes, and have them sit within you separately, beside you. I'd like you to look at yourself as you have been all these years. Look at that constant part that has always been you, that has hardly changed since you were six. At least you know it's the same you now as then, even if others don't that's who you are.*

*I'd like to ask you who is it that wants to be more than you are now, or have been. I'd like to speak to that part of you that wishes you were something more, or something different, or would feel more comfortable if you lived in a different place or time.*

*If there is a part of you that knows what I mean, please ask that part of you to come forward comfortably, and give it space to do that, and accept it and its wishes, for now, and without judgement.*

*This part of you is natural, valuable, and wise. Ask this part of you to stay with us, and stay beside us through this exercise. Let this part of you know that we will hear it without prejudice, and honor its role and goals. Let this part please take my left hand so that I am beside you.*

*Now I'd like to ask you who it is that wants things to be stable and supportive, to stay as they are, and to grow and mature, and for that part of you to come forward. To make themselves present without hesitation, and without any judgement on anyone's part.*

*And this part of you is natural too, and valuable, and wise. Ask this part of you to stay with us through this exercise. Accept this voice that is yours, that is you, without criticism or hesitation. Let them have space, respect, honor because that is their due. Let this part please take my right hand so that, again, I am beside you. I am beside both of you. Between you, holding a hand of both.*

*These are two people of different inclination, two points of view, but more than that. These are two guides down two paths that would have led you differently, had you listened to one and not the other. But you broker both, and take their direction to make them proud in alternation, but also exasperated as you sometimes ignore them. You think you can be judge and jury, balancing the happy middle road? You really can't expect to follow both, not as long as they're different people.*

*What do you have? What have you wrought for yourself?*

*I turn to my left hand to that you who has dreamed so large, and wanted so much more. Are they courageous or foolish, and how much have you followed them, and how do you feel about it? Never mind, I don't want your opinion, I want theirs.*

*I turn to them and I ask them to tell you, in their own voice, of all that you could be and might yet become. What have you wrought for yourself?*

*Look to this person to discern the texture of risk and adventure. In whose company do they incline you? What are the tempos in those people who are packed to travel, who pull up their steaks like yesterday's vegetables? Do adventurers make you nervous? Do you feel comfortable around them?*

*When following your adventure, what is your mix of frequencies? How do you listen, act, and react? Where is your resistance? What is your vibe, your exuberance, your ponderance?*

*I turn to my right hand and that you that builds the stable and supportive, the sensible you. The you that plans for the future you think most likely. This is your practical side, but more than just a side it is a person, with loves and lives, with private thoughts and secret feelings.*

*Pragmatic and practical, but frightened too, admit it. You give them more power than circumstances warrant. So few of our fears ever come to pass, navigating a river of phantoms most of whom we never meet because they never were.*

*When following your reasonable and practical self, what is your presentation? Who are you that feels comfortable among your peers of similarly reasonable and practical guides and guideses? What are your vibrations? What places in your body encourage you to remain with the comfortable? What kind of people-energy makes you uncomfortable or, better said, who makes your practical self comfortable?*

*Now I would like both of these people to let you go, and while I continue to hold their hands I'd like you to drift out of their bodies into some other tones. Some tones that are both higher and lower than the frequencies of either of your two guides. And as I do...*

*(Start tones)*

*I'd like you to grow larger, break your earthen dam of friends and familiars, and let in the stranger, the traveler, the hermit, and grandmother.*

*Let fall away your familiar frequencies of both of you, rhythms and tempos between which you've made most of your decisions, and take these as a gong bath of greater visions, and grander frequencies.*

*Drop your dichotomy of decisions, your duality of the alternatives of adventure or restraint, and replace their boundaries with something quite different.*

*Replace your familiar low frequency of extensions with this note that's even lower, and as it's lower it's wider and longer. It takes in more, and is more durable. A bigger space, a richer place, a vast space lit only by tea lights. An encounter of another kind, and let it resonate in you and make you grow bigger.*

*Replace your high frequencies, your discernments and reactions, judgements and reflections, with these even higher frequencies. Higher and ringing to the point of celestial. Perhaps too thin to breath, too ringing to remember, but let them resound nonetheless to entrain you.*

*Let it be clear to understand and accept the most distant and unlikely of events and possibilities, hopes, dreams, and the most enduring of rewards. The most meaningful and otherwise impossible, or maybe not impossible when tuned to a pitch this high. Open these vertical spaces, higher than the sky you thought was the limit.*

*Let these tones, the high and the low, break in the unusual to your otherwise familiar frequencies of adventure and stability. Let these tones, the highs and the lows, be the apex of a triangle, whose two base angles are the two of you whose hands I hold, the evolver at my left, and the preserver at my right.*

*With these higher high tones and lower low tones call from within yourself another you, a greater visionary to see beyond the sky you've known, and deeper in the firmament than you've thought possible. The frightening possibility that you might be more than you ever thought you could be, and be secure and content with far less.*

*With their free hands let the two of you, whose hands I hold, reach out to this transcendent vision, to clasp one of this visionary's hands in each of theirs, and so we form a circle, the three of you and me. Your two familiars both connected to the visionary, who is made of frequencies that were before outside your range.*

*Let them all come together now, all merge together. The adventurer, the protector, and the visionary who is resplendent. Molt the shells that limited your size before, and grow into these bigger spaces. Let all of them listen to each other with curious attention and let each ask the other, more earnestly than before, what can each do for each other, to make your goals realized for the continued betterment of you? You who are the democratically decided re-presentation of them.*

*You will work better with the poles of your own dichotomy, but much more than that. You will work beyond the poles of your dichotomy, going further and perpendicular to hear the music of higher spheres, and become yourself a transmitter of insight, transformation, and potential to those around you, who came before you, and who come after.*

*With this let our small group of four merge into two: you and I. And return to now and here. Back from the black sky garden, to the steps down to the firmament of blues and greens and yellows.*

*The world we take for granted is not the limit of your potential any more than you are limited to mold upon its surface. You have elevation, and you have feet. Let the ringing in our ears remind us of how much more we can always be.*

