



The States We Make

We don't just make waves, we are waves.

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“When we wake up from our confused state of mind, that is enlightenment.”

— **Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche**

Home

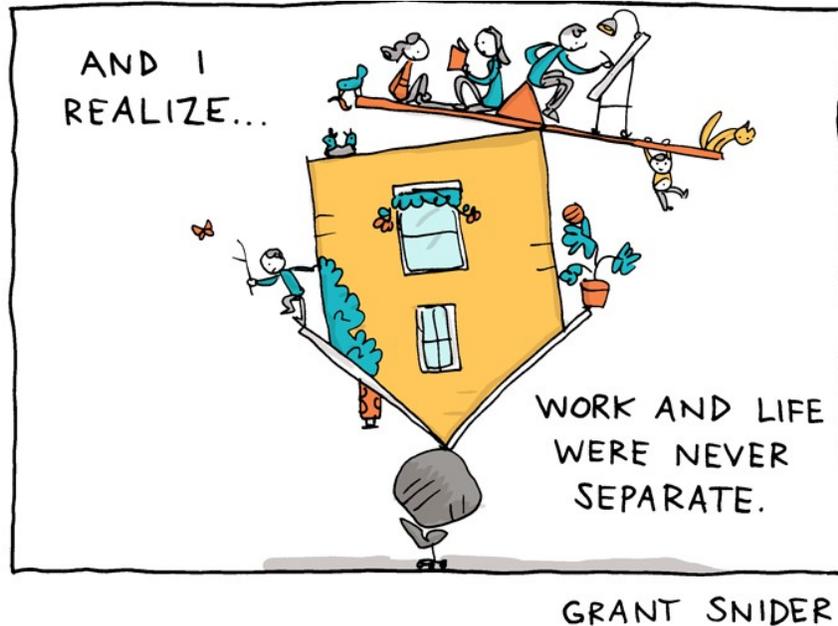
Consider us to be architectural beings. There is a vision that begets a design, construction that creates a container, and a variety of living entities that consider us their home. The whole affair represents the experience of being. The quality of life for the entities depends on the success of the accommodation and the original design.

This is a metaphor for our state of being. There is a design, but it's a design of memories and associations, not blueprints and mechanical specifications. A structure is built in the realm of

neurology, behavior, and environment. This is a structure of psyche and spirit, not structural engineering.

Living entities inhabit this structure. They are parts of yourself, persistent but not always evident. Your personality consists of whatever crowd shows up, generally made from your familiar cast of characters. Your being is the family home represented by whatever parts of yourself are awake at the moment.

The container you create is the mental house that you inhabit. It can be pleasing and tastefully adorned. It can be average and uninspired, or it can be a total wreck on the verge of collapse. As your wide range of moods demonstrates, you are not particularly unified.



Family

Your mental inhabitants are the people who are at home in your mind. Some talk to you a lot and others are largely silent. Some have a "take charge" attitude while others are so hidden or lost you may have forgotten about them. They are the relationships between your memories entered through experience and the ideas hosted or banished by popular vote among your attitudes, enhanced or retarded by genetic aptitudes, learned skills, and luck.

You can exercise intention in creating your personality at any one moment, but it's unclear how much effect you have and it isn't necessary. After all, you are the self that you're presenting, and you have a personality even without trying. Your ability to control yourself depends on how much distance you can achieve. You can refine yourself.

It's a good idea to reflect on who you are and how you're coming across. If you have no distance, then when you reflect, everything seems just fine. Your attitudes are justified and your jokes are funny. The more distance you can bring to bear while still seeing yourself in context, the more you'll appreciate how you're seen by people with a different point of view.

I once joined a group of six young Mongolians—men and women—who shared a taxi that only fit four comfortably. We crammed five of us in the back seat. My friend was in the front seat and I was unacquainted with those layered on top and beneath me in the back.

This humorous violation of personal space was interesting because, as an American in Mongolia, I was not familiar with the culture and our communication was poor. I knew the others thought it was funny but not why, and I was unsure of where to put my hands. I didn't know how my expressions were read or my comments interpreted. I had lots of ideas and they were probably wrong.



GRANT SNIDER

Creation

We build our state; we design, construct, and inhabit it. This will happen automatically if we don't think about it, and even when we do think about it a lot happens without our being aware of it. The more we are aware of it, the better our creations turn out. At least we're more likely to take responsibility for them.

The design is emotionally based on what we want at the moment. With a dash of reflection and a large dollop of rationalization, we construct our state by pulling the equipment that we think will be useful from our memories: caution, courage, stillness, silliness, love, along with a few unwashed feelings. We are the herd and the shepherd, the fox, the hounds, and the hen house.

Be self-confident and trust your intuition, and, at the same time, question everything you do. You can do both without sacrificing either if you can hold two points of view at the same time.

One point of view is your thinking mind. The other is an arm's length connection to your higher self. The connection is arm's length because your higher self has little tolerance for your ego. They are of different dimensions. Your higher self will not fit beside your ego, it does not speak the language of your mind, and is not interested in most of the chatter with which we busy ourselves.

Your thinking mind shifts among your different perceptions with the rhythm of your attention. You are alternately automatic, intellectual, emotional, and sensory. Behind this calliope of thought forms, your higher self presides, but only presides if you're humble and without pretension. Your higher self is aware of a larger world than you are.

Most of the time, we're too busy. We take ourselves too seriously for our higher self to take much interest. We're not listening and we're not open to suggestions of a deeper nature. Your higher self doesn't involve itself in most of your affairs primarily because you don't invite it. Inspiration doesn't come unless you ask for it.

I frequently invite the advice of my higher self. I can only do this when I slow myself down. My higher self looks at the biggest picture. It looks for things that can obstruct my ability to get things done. I think slowly. That can get me into trouble unless I plan ahead. If you're in a rush or under pressure, then you're giving primacy to current and present needs. That may be required under the circumstances, but it precludes greater care. It limits the kind of associations you can make with the past and future.

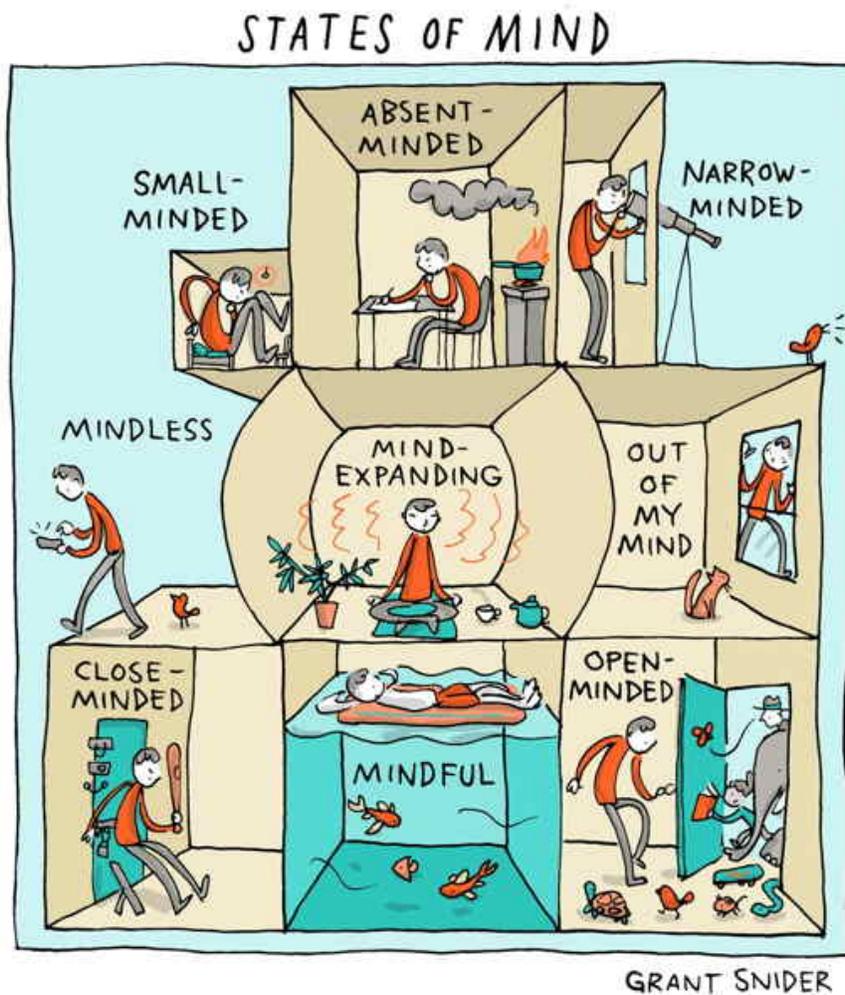
A weekend trip with my college outing club in the dead of winter brought us to the base of the largest mountain in New Hampshire. We'd been delayed and it was after midnight. We hiked through deep snow under a full moon, along an unbroken trail at a temperature well below zero. We couldn't see the trail. It then became evident that we were not on the trail. This was well before the days of GPS navigation and we were lost.

In truth, we were not completely lost. You can't be completely lost unless you lose your memory, but most of the group didn't know where they were to start with. It was getting colder, they were tired and they didn't know what to do.

If we followed our footsteps back to the cars we'd have to abandon the trip and spend the whole night driving home. The followers relied on the leaders and the leaders were lost. Without the intuitional guidance systems that some of us have, people started to panic. Do you ever feel like this?

There weren't a lot of choices and there wasn't a lot of pressure so the situation had plenty of room for contemplation. For me, the wilderness is all about contemplation and the wilder it gets, the more thoughtful I become.

It must have been the contrast between the beautiful night, the wondrous woods, and the crying coeds that give this distant memory such staying power. I don't even remember how it all turned out except that we eventually found our way.



State

It takes different kinds of attention to keep ourselves in balance. We build our state in stages and we can get confused at any stage: its design, construction, and our own personalities that we let in. All of our faculties can be put into play at each stage but, for the most part, we do it automatically.

Be aware of what you design, the mind components out of which you frame it, and those parts of yourself that inhabit it. The chances are that you designed your state of mind to accommodate these parts of your personality to begin with. The state of mind in which you would sit on a bed of nails is not the state of mind with which you prepare breakfast. We prepare our schedule but do we prepare ourselves?

Your future depends on your state of mind, or the states of mind you create for yourself. Your state defines the world line on which you travel. This world line takes you into the future. While you cannot remake the past reality, you can choose the person you'll be and the perspective you'll see. You may or may not be fully "in the now," but does that tell you all you need to know to connect the past and future?

Your state is your preparation for the future, an architecture across time. Realize that the farther you look ahead, the more paths exist and the more freedom you'll find, if you can see it.

You can always change the design of your state of mind. The memories and associations from which it's built can and will change if you're open to new experiences. The population of your personality, the whole-cloth attitudes you accommodate, are yours to mold. You are not their servant; don't follow their orders. They don't have access to your higher self, only you do.

If there is any real magic in this world it is your ability to conjure and dispel entities within yourself. You can change your state with a wave of your hand. You can manage the elements of personality that will inhabit the mind that you construct.

You cannot dictate the dominance of your moods, the hierarchy of your personalities. You must help them to work together. There will be dominant voices you're attached or subservient to, and they will not all agree. Your best hope is to bring them together to resolve their differences. To do this fully requires releasing those who might otherwise frighten you, which is why we never do it.

Your higher self can guide your parts, but it can't control them by brute force. What your parts decide must be their decision, at least they must think so. Your creation of the proper state provides a home for the family of your parts. Your state of mind can be your higher self's vision of the future.

“A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done,
his aim fulfilled, they will say, ‘We did it ourselves.’ ”
— **Lau Tzu**

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