

Stuck in a Groove

By Mel Schwartz

For those of us old enough to remember LP records, we might recall that when there was a scratch on the album, the needle would sometimes get stuck in the groove. And the same sound or lyrics would keep replaying. In the groove, the tone arm couldn't find its way into the next groove. This is exactly what happens with our thoughts. They tend to keep reiterating the same messages, time and again. When they do so, we summon old memories and feelings and we struggle to engage change.

The replay of old thoughts and feelings indicates that we aren't truly present. The past is not dead in these circumstances, but alive and kicking in the present as we continue to replicate the past. This is such a wasteful way to live our lives as we move from moment to moment, wanting for change, but not understanding how to achieve it. The continuous repetition of old thoughts and feelings robs us of new experience. As well, it deprives us of the discovery of new ways of being. The groove is where fear reigns supreme. Coming out of the groove is where self-actualization appears.

I have been looking at this dilemma for some time now and have learned that it is altogether possible to learn to liberate ourselves from the doldrums of the groove. To that end, I have developed a process which I call emergent thinking whereby we can learn to identify the habitual thoughts that trick us into false realities. Engaging this process we work to identify the thoughts that create our grooves. Learning to witness and observe the thoughts, rather than attaching to and becoming the thought, is where liberation commences. If you have carried a thought like, "I'm not good enough or smart enough," you don't see it as a thought, you accept it as the truth. It becomes your dominant belief and scripts your experiences and life dramas. That is where thought tricks us. The liberation comes from being able to reflect that it's only a thought.

The old thinking defends its territory, so to speak as it clings to maintain control and dominate over your beliefs and actions. This is what I refer to as the literal nature of our thought. The deception is that our thoughts instruct as to the truth of what is. In reality, they are creating that truth and imprisoning us within those confines.

In order to come out of the groove, or *ungroove*, requires the ability to invite in and embrace the dissonance of new thinking. New thinking is most unfamiliar and although we theoretically seek it, there's an entrenchment in the comfort of the familiar zone. What we seek in terms of change requires that we embrace what is unknown. As noted earlier, the dilemma is that if we avoid what's uncomfortable or awkward then we remain in the habitual groove. If the new thinking and behavior feels uncomfortable, then we have a signal that the discomfort is moving us out of the groove. This experience is what we commonly refer to as change.

Learning to come out of the habitual groove enables us to consciously choose differently and live our lives in a more participatory and engaged manner.

On a larger note, it is not as simple as changing your thoughts, but more literally changing your thinking. By this I'm suggesting the manner in which we think. Our thinking is filtered by a mindscape of beliefs, meta-programming and worldviews. Think of these as filters through which we see. Changing the filter reveals new realities, as taking off very dark sunglasses and replacing them with a lighter tint transforms what you see. I am more interested in how someone thinks than in what they think. Thinking that is tied to an old, outmoded worldview is terribly restrictive and encumbers our lives in illusions of separation and despair. This thinking that is rooted in cause and effect and ingrained in the illusion of separation has little choice but to script an accompanying life experience. Issues of control and fear dominate this paradigm.

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