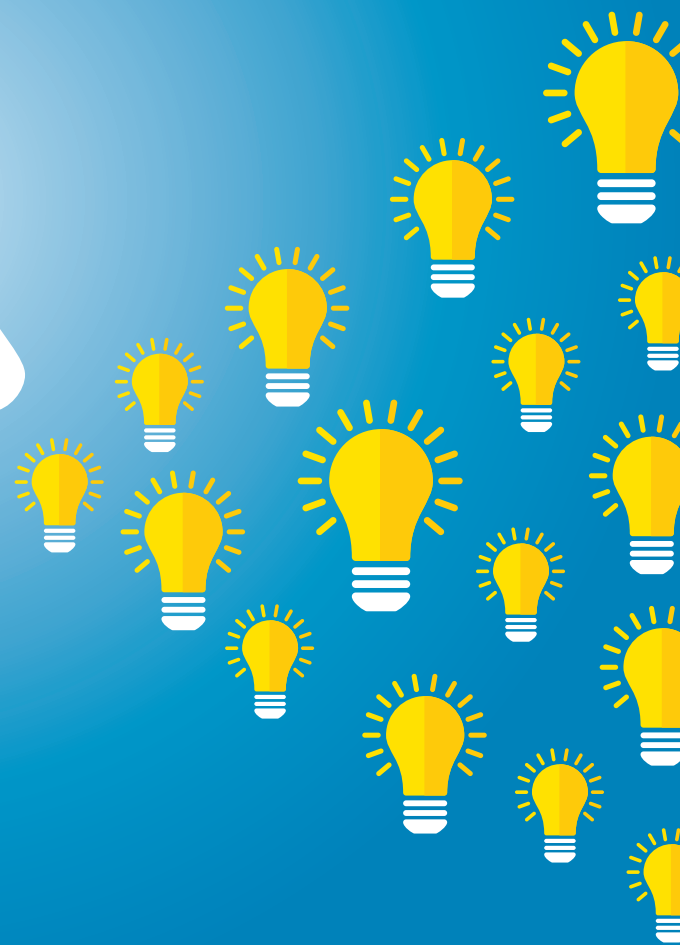


LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

How to see through all those stories we
unknowingly spin that keep us in
resistance—and pain

By Mary O'Malley



We spend our lives living in an imaginary self, listening to the stories in our head whose foundation was created when we were young. This storyteller, who talks all day long, thinks about life rather than living it and struggles with most everything. When a challenge shows up in our lives, we try to control it, fix it, get rid of it, or judge it—wanting it to be different than it is. This happens whether the challenge is small (like getting upset because the traffic light is taking too long to turn green) or much bigger (like losing a job, getting cancer, or dealing with the death of a loved one). Our challenges are here to teach us, helping to not only see but also *see through* this storyteller we all took on when we were young.

Slowly and surely, human beings are waking up in greater numbers than ever before, and we are beginning to realize that what heals this struggling self is consciousness. Becoming a conscious (or awakened) being is learning how to see and be with “what is.” That’s why Rumi’s “The Guest House” is such a popular poem. To paraphrase, Rumi tells us that every morning (I say “every moment”), a new arrival shows up (such as fear, anger, sadness, loneliness, despair, happiness, love, or joy). Rumi invites us to meet each of these arrivals at the door laughing (which I can’t quite do all of the time) because each has been sent as a guide from beyond to clear us out for some new delight.

Rumi is telling us that living consciously is not being a victim to what is happening but actually bringing curiosity to what is showing up—*all of it*. Since our attention is usually caught in the stories in our head, we have to be reminded again and again that we are not these struggling selves we mistakenly believe we are. Who we *really* are can see and be with whatever we are experiencing. It is the difference between saying “I am afraid” and “Fear is here.”

The House of Your Mind

Imagine that you are living in a huge house with a family. You have aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, children, and siblings, and you are constantly trying to keep all of these people happy. When Uncle Joe gets angry, he upsets the family. When Cousin Clara is crying all the time, the children become anxious. Then there is Daughter Deanna, who is always smiling and laughing,

and she drives everyone crazy because she is such a Goody Two-shoes.

Well, that is what it’s like to live inside your struggling self. You are living in the house of your mind with all these parts that you think belong to you. What you don’t realize is that not only are these parts not your family, but it isn’t even your house! In other words, you are not your struggling mind. These voices are merely parts of you that you absorbed from those around you when you were young, and they got frozen inside.

Throughout the past 14 months, I have been walking alongside my son on his journey with cancer as well as dealing with a host of other challenges. I woke up in the middle of the night not long ago and found Great Uncle Dread was here. My mind initially reacted and said, *I am going to get up and go into the kitchen and eat something* because numbing myself with food was how I took care of this deep, painful part of me when I was young. Then I said to myself, *What about taking a few minutes and just being with this dread?* As I brought my attention into my body, I once again discovered this place right below my stomach that I had been afraid of for so many years. That night, as my attention came into the physicality of my dread, recognizing and acknowledging it, the tightly held energy let go and transformed into joy.

Each of your wounded parts that have gotten frozen inside of you (like dread, loneliness, not being enough, or deep fear) have their own view of the world. Your sad part has a different view than your angry part. Your confused part has a different view than your judgmental part. Your scared part has a different view (and a different experience) than your despairing part. The question is this: How can you learn to be with each of these parts so they can finally let go and heal? That doesn’t happen in fixing them, changing them, or rising above them. Instead, when your attention and your experience come together, those hurt parts will naturally let go.

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R

is *Recognition*



Being caught in your separate, struggling mind always tightens you. Rather than being at the mercy of what is tightening, you can become curious about it, recognizing that you are caught. I call this becoming a tightness detective. The easiest place to see how much you struggle and tighten around life is in your body. Do you often feel a fist in your solar plexus? Is there a hole in your belly? Is there an elephant sitting on your chest? Is your neck or back aching? Rather than seeing these sensations as problems, think of them as an alert system, helping you to recognize when you are caught in the world of struggle.

Simply recognizing that you are tight might not seem to make much of a difference, but as a moment of consciousness, it's actually quite powerful. You are relating *to* what you are experiencing rather than *from* it. Even if you are with the tightness for only a second, those moments accumulate and that is how—slowly and surely—you can look and unhook from your struggling self.

A

is *Acknowledgement*



Once you recognize these tight places, you can learn to say to that lump in your throat or that fist in your solar plexus, *I see you*. The tightening in your body is fueled by parts of yourself that you disowned long ago. They are trying to share their world with you, just as children express what they are feeling through their bodies. And all of the parts are just like you; they long to be acknowledged. The more you do this without judging what you are experiencing, the more these parts let go.

RALI: A Four-Step Process

I use a very simple technique to bring my attention and my immediate experience together so I can see and be with what is. (I use the acronym RALI—pronounced “rally”—to make it easier to remember them.) Although the process is simple, doing this work is like learning a foreign language. You need to put the time and effort into learning the language of consciousness, just as you would

in learning French, Spanish, or Italian.

You'll use the first two steps the most because they get the bound-up energy moving. It is almost certain that your mind will try to do the next two steps to *make* something happen, but that usually only leads to frustration. When the door of your heart opens and you truly *want* to be with what is asking for your attention, those last two steps will unfold naturally.



is *Listening*



After discovering the healing power of recognizing and acknowledging, you can give your tight or frozen parts what they needed and did not get when you were young—someone to just listen to them. Be very patient with this step, especially with the parts that you have hated, been afraid of, or have judged. Say to your anger, sadness, or loneliness: *When you are ready, tell me about your world.* For a while nothing may happen, but when you are caught, and you recognize and acknowledge what you are experiencing, you will find that whatever part is there will tell you how it experiences the world. The more your parts are heard, the more they can relax.




is *Invitation*



The more you recognize, acknowledge, and hear from these parts of you, the more important it becomes to offer them a different view. They are used to experiencing life in the way they did when they were frozen inside of you when you were young. It can be a huge revelation when a part begins to see life differently. For example, you might say to the part of you that feels it is bad and wrong, *You are okay exactly as you are* or *You have always done the best you knew how with the conditioning you were given.* It's important to offer this invitation to see things differently only after you have listened to these internal parts—otherwise, you are just overriding that part's experience of life.

It's also helpful to invite your attention back into this living moment after you have been exploring the different parts of your conditioned self. Notice the sounds around you, or the rising and falling of your breath, or see something in front of you as if you have never seen it before. The more you explore what puts a veil between you and this living moment, the easier it is to see the huge difference between being in your stories about life and being with the real thing.

The next time you're challenged by internal dialogue laced with worry, judgment, anger, or any other less-than-uplifting emotion, take a moment to realize that what you're hearing in your head is not coming from your true self, but rather from a hurt child who is reaching out for healing. Then rally behind the RALI technique, and watch your storyteller relax and let go, and your authentic self gradually emerge. *That is true alchemy.* 

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