

# The Hub of the Matter

Developing our seventh sense

(Based on concepts of Daniel Siegel 2010)

We are all aware of our five basic senses (touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing). Daniel Siegel suggests our sixth sense is to do with being aware of what is going on within us – that is “to perceive our internal bodily states” (Siegel 2010 p xiii<sup>1</sup>).

Our seventh sense is quite subtle, and is to do with being aware that we are aware, and having, for example, feelings and empathy for others: Siegel calls this sense Mindsight (Siegel 2010; and see C1). The essences of these Seven Senses are illustrated schematically in Figure 1.

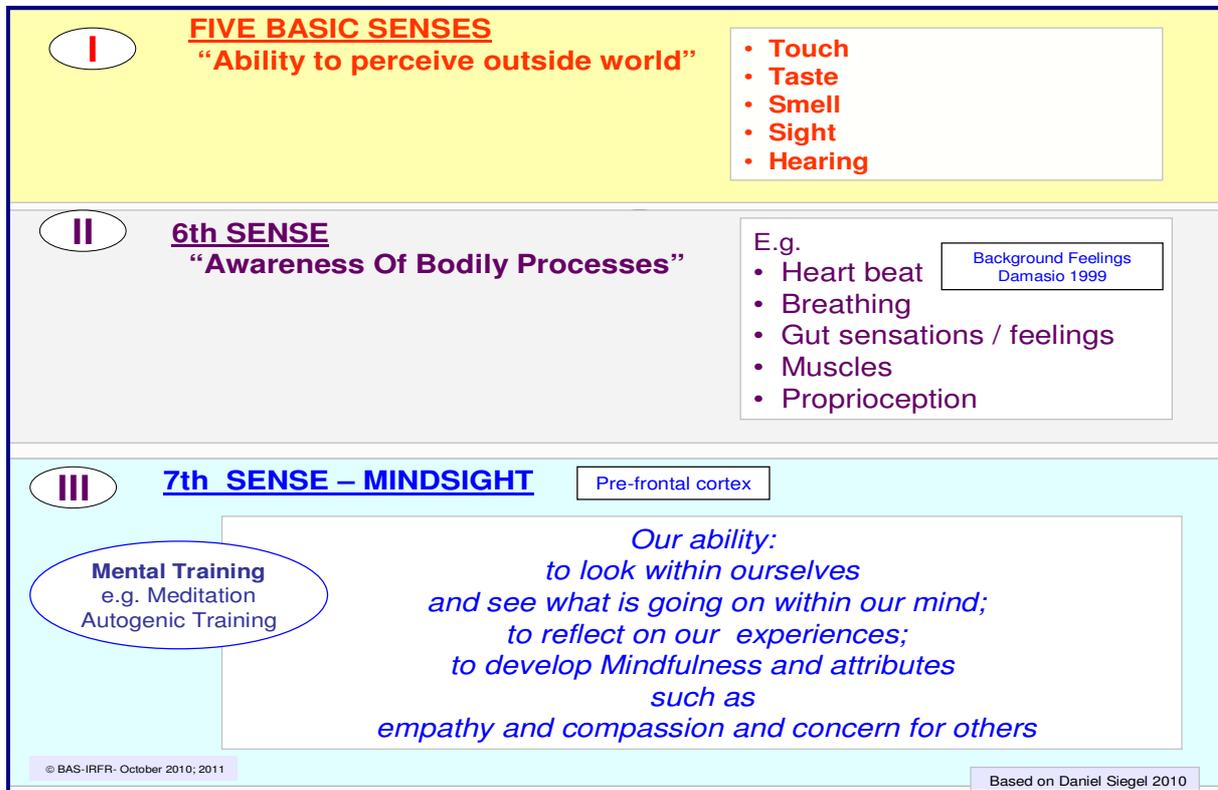


Figure 1  
Mindsight and the Seven Senses

Now as human beings we may sometimes be deeply troubled by the ups and downs of life – and the ups and downs of our own feelings. We can become deeply troubled because we tend to identify with our prevailing emotion: for example, we may say “I am angry”; and in that moment we feel we *are* our anger. This can be very distressing, and we may sometimes feel that we just do not have a firm / secure base (cf. Bowlby 1988).

### Surface waves and the deep still ocean within

A helpful metaphor for life can be to reframe our feelings and upsets and disturbing thoughts as simply waves on the surface of a big ocean; however, our own essence is not to do with these surface disturbances, but rather is deep down in the ocean where all is still and tranquil. Thus we are not our anger, for example: a more accurate and mindful description would be to say: “Anger is arising within me: yet I am not my anger.”

We each have this deep inner centre deep down in the ocean – and part of our response-ability in life is to tap into this tranquil centre. This can be done by developing Mindfulness (C1 & C2) through some form of specific Mental Training.

### Mental Training and our inner HUB

An alternative metaphor to the ocean and surface waves is the idea that our inner essence is like the hub of a bicycle wheel: the outer rim of the wheel represents all that is going on for us – and the Six Senses

<sup>1</sup> This sixth sense overlaps with the “Background Feelings” of Damasio (Damasio 1999 – pp 286-287).

described above. We can observe these six senses in a gentle, caring and compassionate way from our central hub (akin to the deep still water in the metaphor above regarding the ocean). The central hub<sup>2</sup> is the domain in which we develop mindsight, our Seventh Sense.

In order to develop our Mindfulness we practise some form of Mental Training such as Meditation, Autogenic Training, or Positive Mental Training. All of these practices embrace focusing our attention on some object, often within. In a body scan this may start, for example, with the feet, and then gently move to include other or all parts of the body.

In the context of our metaphor of the wheel and the Hub, we mindfully become aware (from our central being – the Hub) of what is going on at the outer rim: for example, we become aware of our feet; our heartbeat; our breathing; our feelings; our thoughts. All of these are located on the outer rim: and we connect with each one of these myriad entities through the spokes: however, we focus on them with Mindful Awareness from our central and safe Hub.

Note the implications of becoming mindful of what is going on in the outer rim: we are not our thinking, we are not our anger or fear; we are not our intruding thought: for our base is separate from them, in our Being which resides in the Hub. This means that we can, through Mindfulness / Mindsight, begin to distance ourselves from the surface ripples and disturbances, to mix our metaphors. Figure 2 schematically illustrates this concept.

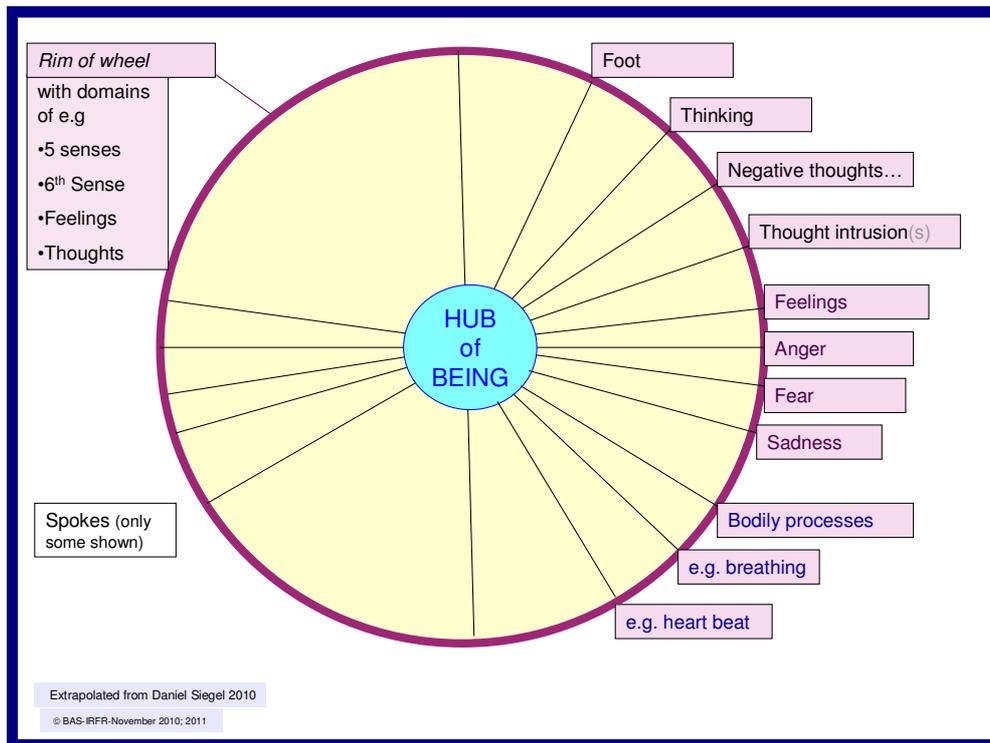


Figure 2  
The Wheel of Mindsight

#### Comments on Figure 2

- i. The central blue area is our central HUB of Being.
- ii. From this central Hub, we can through Mindfulness become aware of whatever is going on.
- iii. Whether it is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, we accept it non-judgementally.
- iv. So, in a body scan we may focus on the feet. In an Autogenic sequence we focus on, for example: the right (or left) arm; on the breathing; etc.
- v. If a distracting thought arises, once we become mindful of this we can simply note in our mind “distracting thought”, and return to our focus – e.g. “It Breathes Me”, and thus the breath.

The hub can be seen as a visual metaphor for the Pre Frontal Cortex

Siegel 2010 p 89

<sup>2</sup> We could equate this central hub anatomically with the Pre-Frontal cortex; but the Hub also embraces what is Heart-Felt (see handout in RGMC AT course: Zz-33: Jen and our original nature – available on request).

Intention and Attention

In order to develop Mindfulness (Mindsight) we have to have the intention of practising Mental Training. [An athlete who wishes to run the marathon has to have the intention to practise Physical Training.] Intention, though, is not enough: we have to practise; and we can only develop our skill in Mental Training by paying attention. What do we pay attention to? We can start with the body scan and our feet; later, we may start our focus on our limbs, and then our breathing. We may in time also become aware of certain feelings, and here we can stay with them accepting (acknowledging) whatever is arising without judgement. From our central being, our hub, we begin to perceive these various factors (foot; breathing; heartbeat; feelings; thoughts) as being on the rim, and thus as not being the same as our inner Being. Our inner Being (Hub) is a safe place to which we can at any time return. With Mindsight, we can real-ise that a “thought is just a thought” – it is not necessarily a fact. Kabat-Zinn has said this about Mindfulness:

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally

Kabat-Zinn 1994; p 4

A diversion - metaphor

One day recently (November 2010) I drove to see Maggie (my wife) who is in hospital having recently fractured her femur. So my intention was to see her. In order to get to her safely, I had to pay attention while driving. If I began to feel that I was late, this is like a thought interference: my task was to get to the hospital safely. If I then begin to think that I ought to be driving faster, that is also a form of thought interference, and may also upset my attention. So rather than speeding, we simply pay attention to each moment as it unfolds.

Disturbing Emotions depersonalised

The metaphor of the ocean and the Hub can enable us to reframe whatever distressing or disturbing events or feelings may be going on for us. Thus, to recap: if we are beginning to feel angry, it can be very easy to identify with the anger – and allow the anger to take us over. However, we can from our central Hub-Being acknowledge, non-judgementally, that “anger is arising within me”<sup>3</sup>: but the fact that we are perceiving the anger as being out on the outer rim of the wheel immediately distances it from us, and this helps us to depersonalise the anger (or allows the anger to become depersonalised). Note that we are not denying the anger: rather, we are acknowledging that it is there. This very acknowledgement is found by many to in itself reduce the potency of the anger.

Developing Skilful Means

We can develop Mindfulness and Mindsight through regular practice. In essence they are skilful means that enable us to deal appropriately with the ups and downs of life. In particular, it is helpful if we can increasingly be aware of the Present Moment: so if, for example, a negative or a positive feeling is arising within us, we accept and acknowledge it without judgement. We can also develop our awareness of the Present Moment when we are out for a walk – say going to the shops or to catch a bus. Rather than let our mind dwell on our worries, we can use this precious, never to be repeated, time to do a sort of ‘Walking Meditation’, right now in this Present Moment. So, for example, we can become aware and mindful of our feet as we walk; we can be in that moment with maybe a blue sky and white clouds, or wonderful autumnal leaves on the trees.

In general terms, regular Meditation / Autogenic Training / Positive Mental Training are excellent ways in which we can develop these skills: this will also be associated with developing our Resonance Circuits which are crucial for empathy and Well-Being (C2).

Note that the themes on this web-page C4 overlap and complement the concept of Affect Labelling – see B12.

References and sources and related themes /

<sup>3</sup> Note that this is a form of Affect Labelling – B12

## References and sources and related themes

<b>Bowlby, John: 1988. A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory.</b>	ISBN 0-415-00640-6
<b>Creswell, J. David; Way, Baldwin M.; Eisenberger, Naomi I.; Lieberman, Matthew D. 2007 Neural Correlates of Dispositional Mindfulness During Affect Labelling – Psychosomatic Medicine 69:560–565</b>	
<b>Hanh, Thich Nhat: 1993 (1990). Present Moment, Wonderful Moment.</b> Rider Books; 1993;	ISBN 0 7126 4737 1
<b>Kabat-Zinn, Jon: 1994 / 2004. Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness Meditation for everyday life.</b>	ISBN 0-7499-2548-5
<b>Kabat-Zinn, Jon 1990 (2006). Full Catastrophe Living: How to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation.</b>	ISBN 0-7499-1585-4
<b>Lieberman, Matthew D.; Eisenberger, Naomi I.; Crockett, Molly J.; Tom, Sabrina M.; Pfeifer, Jennifer H.; and Way, Baldwin M. 2007. Putting Feelings into Words – Affect Labelling Disrupts Amygdala Activity in Response to Affective Stimuli.</b>	Psychological Science: 2007; Volume 18; Number 5: 421 – 428)
<b>Siegel, Daniel. 2010. Mindsight - transform your brain with the new science of Kindness</b>	ISBN 978-1-85168-761-9

## Linked themes in this Autogenic Dynamics section

A3	Towards a concept of happiness and well-being
B4	Emotional Triggers and the Refractory Period
B12	Affect Labelling, Autogenic Training, and reducing Emotional Distress
C1	An overview of Mindsight, Mindfulness, and Attunement
C2	Resonance Circuits, Mirror Neurones, and Mindfulness
D1	Reflections on foundations for mindful living