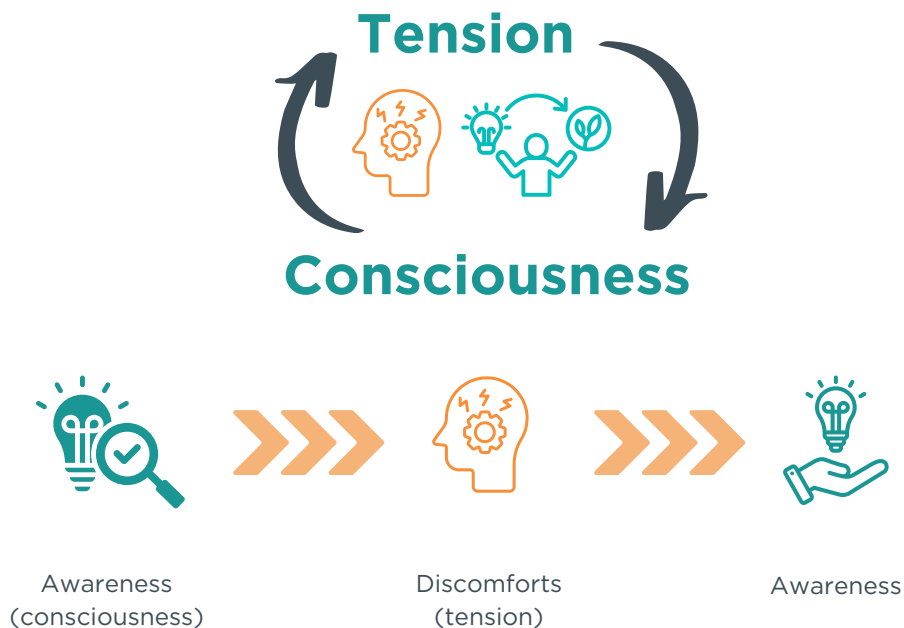


## Tension Creates Consciousness: Consciousness Creates Tension

This learning cycle sounds simple: If we can stay present, open, and centered in the tension, there are massive new opportunities for growth. This new learning and awareness, in turn, creates new tension and new opportunities for growth.

Tension, often viewed as discomfort or conflict, paradoxically serves as a catalyst for heightened awareness and growth. It challenges our beliefs, core values and learned behaviors.

Understanding this interconnected relationship is essential to understanding the human experience, and yet fully embracing it can be profoundly difficult, requiring resilience and courage.



**Tension (Discomfort)** the state of being stretched or strained. It manifests in various forms—physical, mental, emotional, psychological, or spiritual—and is experienced through different modalities, including cognition, emotion, body, and intuition. In simpler terms, tension is akin to a state of dis-ease; it arises when things feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar, challenging, or frightening.

**Consciousness (Awareness)** the state of being aware of and able to perceive one's surroundings, thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Encompasses the ability to recognize and respond to stimuli both within oneself and in the external environment. It is the foundation of all cognitive processes and is essential for decision-making, learning, and adapting to change.

To optimize our growth and **awareness (consciousness)**, we need to learn to be present with **discomfort (tension)**. If we can stay open amid this cyclical, interconnected dynamic there is massive new potential and possibility: new ways of being, thinking, and understanding.

# Why do we avoid tension?



## Ignorance is Bliss

- Sometimes it feels easier, safer, better to keep our heads in the sand.
- Reflecting on atrocities in the media.
- Achieving awareness often leads to internal dissonance (ignorance is bliss).



## Distractions Abound

- Introspection can be hard in general, but particularly in an age of constant stimulation.
- It is easier and safer to get distracted.
- It can feel scary to confront our true selves.



## Lack of bandwidth

- We lack the time, energy, and attention span to do something that is hard.
- Stillness or space to think can feel like a luxury, yet they are essential for reflection, introspection, and connecting with our innermost thoughts.



## Overwhelmed by Awareness

- It can be overwhelming to see, experience, and know all that is happening around us.
- Can highlight the need for significant changes in behavior, relationships, or life direction, which can provoke resistance.
- Might create a sense of urgency to address issues immediately, adding pressure and stress to already existing responsibilities.



## Conflict Avoidance:

- Many of us learned at a young age that conflict is bad.
- With that mindset, we avoided direct conflict, which in reality likely made things worse.
  - What can we learn from conflict?
  - How can we be better (still, open, peaceful) with conflict?
  - What can we realistically do to be more comfortable with tension?

# Why do we avoid tension?



## Ignorance is Bliss

- Sometimes it feels easier, safer, better to keep our heads in the sand.
- Reflecting on atrocities in the media.
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## Protecting the Status Quo:

- It is hard to “unknow” or “unsee” something.
- New insights, ways of seeing, ways of being, can disrupt the status quo, societal norms, or our identity



## Lack of bandwidth

- We lack the time, energy, and attention span to do something that is hard.
- Stillness or space to think can feel like a luxury, yet they are essential for reflection, introspection, and connecting with our innermost thoughts.



## Cognitive dissonance

- A psychological state of internal tension or discomfort that occurs when a person holds two or more conflicting beliefs, values, or attitudes simultaneously.
- Cognitive dissonance often is uncomfortable and often drives individuals to seek relief.
- For Example by
  - Rationalizing or justifying behaviors that align with one belief over another.
  - Ignoring or downplaying the conflicting information to ease the tension.

**In everyday life, consciousness is about bringing awareness to our experiences, feelings, and thoughts. It means being fully present in the moment, mindful of how life is unfolding around us. Consciousness involves being aware of what we know, see, and do, cultivating a deeper connection to the present.**

## We experience tension...



Across all domains: head, heart, body, spirit.  
When we are physically uncomfortable.

When we experience new things, act differently, or operate outside of our comfort zone.



If we are apprehensive about how we are perceived by others, particularly in professional or social settings.

Observing and navigating differences with others.

When actions don't deliver expected results, leading to uncertainty.



### If tension is so vital for growth, why does it feel so hard?

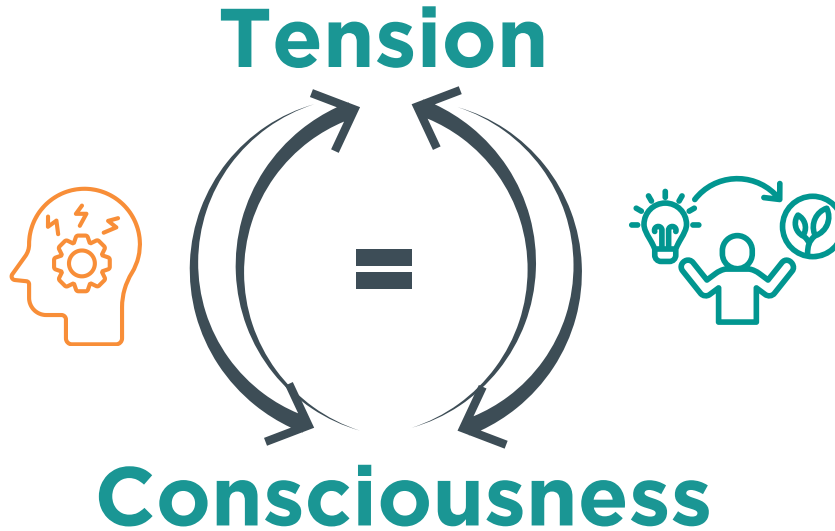
Being in and with tension is hard: we are naturally wired to resist change, to avoid pain, and seek comfort and stability. Societal pressure to “fit in” makes us wary of tension and conflict.

## We experience consciousness...

Bringing awareness to our experiences, feelings, and thoughts.

Practicing mindfulness in everything we know, see, and do.

Being present in our lives.



### Consciousness

Arises from complex brain processes and neural interactions.

Evolves to enhance survival through adaptive behavior and social interactions.

Is individual, or collective universal force and can be a manifestation of the whole.



## Unconscious Ways we Undercut our Growth By Avoiding Tension & Consciousness

### **Bias for Action**

We prioritize doing over simply being present.  
We rush to take action, seeking quick solutions.  
We oversimplify complex issues, making black-and-white judgements.  
We rely on assumptions without deeper reflection.

### **Living Distracted**

Our lives are cluttered with too many things: commitments, projects, books etc.  
We indulge in excess: drinking, eating, shopping, surfing, scrolling.

### **We judge others, or turn a blind eye to maintain harmony**

We avoid uncomfortable truths and difficult conversations.  
Society often rewards this avoidance, reinforcing patterns that hinder personal growth.  
Often rewarded for not addressing conflict, taking action, turning a blind-eye.



**With awareness of where there is tension, we can make different choices. Good things come from discomfort, pressure, and tension.**

## How to be with tension

### **Notice the tension in and around you**

See, feel, observe  
Notice your instinctive response or wiring: fight, flight or fright?

### **Notice it across domains - (head, heart, body)**

What do you feel?  
How do you physically react?  
What do you think?

### **Build your capacity to be and stay present**

Feel the internal dissonance, the desire to take action  
Stay fully present vs checked out

### **Expand with Curiosity**

Open into not knowing  
Engage more deeply with your consciousness  
See conflict, grief, anger, hurt - don't rush to fix it

## Open to Consciousness by

### Observing With Curiosity

Explore Being with and in our experiences can - what do you notice, what else can you see, what else is possible?

Non-attachment. It just is...

### Making New Meaning

Step back to observe old habits, assumptions and meaning. Rename what is happening, explore how to stay in and with it... different stories create different reactions.

### Unhooking, Unhinging:

Our story, assumptions, meaning. Fresh eyes, new insights, new perspectives.

Non-attachment. It just is...

## Questions about Tension to consider:



- When is it good, when is it bad?
- When do we feel it?
- Why do we resist or avoid it?
- What can be learned from being with it?
- What does it mean to sit and be still with tension?
- What can be learned through tension?
- Why should we want to experience more tensions?

## Questions about Consciousness to consider:



- When is it good, when is it bad?
- Why do we resist or avoid it?
- What can be learned from being with it?
- What does it mean to sit and be still to foster consciousness?
- Why should we want to experience more consciousness?
- What can be learned through consciousness?
- What can we realistically do to be more conscious?

## Ideas into Action



### AWARENESS:

- Notice where you see, feel, or experience tension.
- Observe and name it.
- Notice what happens in tensions?
- How do you/others react?
- What assumptions or judgments are made?
- What does the tension trigger?
- Where is it comfortable/uncomfortable?
- Are you rewarded for acting? Punished for being?
- Notice how you and others avoid tension?

### ACTIVATION:

- Explore ways of being with and in tension, without reaction. How long you can be still, stay open, and continue to observe/be with the tension.
- Can you build your capacity to be present in tension?
- Being can open us to new ways of engaging, thinking, and being - to new levels of consciousness.
- Tune into all your senses: Eyes, heart, head, spirit, smells, intuition

### AGILITY BUILDING:

- Seek candid input from others. If it is uncomfortable, explore the disconnect.
- Be open to feedback as you continue to learn this process.

### ACCOUNTABILITY:

- Get laser-clear about what matters to you
- Reconnect with your values weekly/monthly- are they still aligned?
- Examine your calendar and bank statements: where are you spending your time and money?

### INTEGRATE/ACCELERATE:

- How does it feel when you have this new awareness?
- What questions do you find yourself asking now vs before?
- How have these shifts created ripples into your life/family?

**Take time to truly be with your thoughts and feelings. Notice patterns that emerge. Invest in understanding yourself on a deeper level.**

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