

# 1. Thresholds of the Mind by Bill Harris

## *Thresholds of the Mind*

By Bill Harris

### **Principle On:** Letting Whatever Happens Be Okay

*The amount you suffer in life is directly related to how much you are resisting the fact that things are what they are.*

Whenever there is suffering or discomfort, there is resistance. There are no exceptions to this rule. All suffering, all discomfort, regardless of the appearance, is the result of resistance to something. Being addicted or attached to things other than they are is a losing strategy. You will find that when you needs and attachments are changed to preferences, you can let go of your need for control over the uncontrollable. Then, when what is is not what you want it to be, you do not suffer over it. External events and other people do not control your happiness and peace. You will escape suffering only to the degree you are willing and able to let whatever happens be okay.

What exactly is resistance? In other words, what precisely are we doing inside when we resist something? We are making what cognitive psychologists call internal representations (internal pictures, internal dialog, internal sounds, and other representations of sensory experiences. Internal representations can be two general types: what we want, or what we do not want. When we resist something, we are making internal representations of what we do not want. These negative internal representations automatically generate negative emotional responses (in other words, suffering), which is why resistance does not feel good. Learning to let whatever happens be okay means, in part, becoming aware of those times we are making internal representations of what we do not want, and then changing our focus to what we do want. You work toward the outcome you want, but unattached to the results.

The key, then, to handling challenging situations, thoughts, and feelings is not in resisting them, but in accepting their existence as completely as you can.

Once you have done this, you can say to yourself, "Given that this is the situation, now what? Going forward, how can I create what I want?"

### **Principle Two:** Threshold

*You have a personal threshold for what you can handle from your environment, relationships, business, etc.*

What exactly do people do when they go over their personal threshold?

They begin to focus on what they don't want! Your threshold, then, is the point at which you shift from letting whatever is happening be okay, to resisting what is.

You don't have to focus on what you don't want when over your threshold, however. You can decide, despite the feeling of intensity created by being over your threshold, to focus on what you want. When you do this, your threshold moves higher, and you evolve emotionally and spiritually.

### **Principle Three: Responsibility As Empowerment**

You are responsible for every feeling or behavior you have, every situation or person you attract into your life, and every situation or person to whom you are attracted in the sense that all these things are generated by your internal processes.

Everyone who has been on a personal growth path for any length of time has been told that "you are the creator of your world," or "you are not a victim," or some variation thereof. Most would agree with those statements. However, in the real-life situation where something happens we don't like, many people begin blaming something outside of themselves for what's happening.

This is not to say that you are to blame for every feeling or behavior you have. Taking personal responsibility is not about blame, but rather about personal power. If someone or something outside of you is the cause of how you feel or behave, you are powerless a victim. If you, or at least your unconscious processes, are at cause, you have power to do something to change the situation to one that is happier and more peaceful.

### **Principle Four: Conscious Change**

It is not possible to continue a feeling, behavior, or way of being that does not serve you, or in some way is not resourceful for you, and also do so consciously.

Become conscious of how you are creating your results in your life. As you observe that creative process, with awareness, what does not serve you falls away.

Being conscious means not operating as an automatic response mechanism.

It means being able to observe what is happening, on all levels simultaneously, at every moment, and to choose an emotional, mental, or behavioral response based on what is the most resourceful choice in that moment.

Most people are running on automatic. They have rules, set procedures, or automatic responses for what to think, what to feel, and what to do in various situations rules, procedures, and responses they learned when they were too young to know any better. Often these responses were learned through physical or emotional pain and are deeply embedded. Others are just things we accepted because our parents or teachers told us they were true when we were young and these people seemed infallible to us.

Here, though, is the big benefit of being more conscious: It is impossible to do something that does not serve you, or is in some way not resourceful (i.e., destructive) to you, and do it consciously. You can do something destructive to yourself (expressed through feelings, beliefs,

values, behaviors, etc.) over and over, as long as you do so unconsciously (in other words, without continuous conscious awareness. But begin to do the non-resourceful feeling, behavior, belief, value, etc. consciously and it will begin to fall away. You just can't consciously do something that isn't good for you.

The trick, of course, is to remain conscious, which is one of those things, like riding a bicycle or tying your shoes, that seems difficult until you get it and then seems so easy you wonder why you ever thought it was hard. For this reason, as you unravel the mystery of what it means to be conscious in your own life, don't let yourself be discouraged. Keep going, keep trying, and above all keep watching. because at some point you'll be doing it, and it will all make sense.

#### Principle Five: Witnessing

The ability to step aside and watch yourself as you feel and act is an acquired skill that takes time and practice to develop. But doing so will profoundly change your life. This skill is the antidote to resistance, which means it is your primary tool to end suffering in your life.

The next time you feel uncomfortable, mentally step back and say to yourself, "There I am, feeling angry" (or whatever). Then, watch yourself being angry. All feelings are sensations in your body, so notice where in your body you feel it. Notice if the sensation stays in one place or moves around. Be curious.

Decide not to care what that feeling does. Just watch. Notice that you cannot be stuck in your suffering if a part of you is watching. If you are curious and watching, you cannot resist, and if you don't resist, you don't suffer.

If resistance is your middle name, as it was for me. please take very seriously this simple instruction to watch with curiosity. It takes some practice a conscious decision to do it because the habit of resisting is deeply ingrained very much an automatic response. But with practice watching in this way becc effortless, and soon you find yourself moving easily through any situation you encounter.

Excerpts from "Thresholds of the Mind"

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In 1989, Bill Harris started Centerpointe Research Institute on his kitchen table with equipment borrowed from friends. Centerpointe became one of the fastest growing companies in the personal growth field.