

Final Frontier

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I am an educator of over 25 years who has always been fascinated with cognitive science, the study of thinking and learning. The brain, with its miraculous abilities and infinite potential is often considered the gatekeeper to our consciousness. We think of the brain as the boss of the body and we rely heavily upon it to make most of our decisions. For years, I was consumed with the marvels of the mind and I centered my work around it. I wrote courses about it. I even got my masters in brain-based instruction. The brain, I argued, was the final frontier. And for years, I believed I was right.

We learn that the brain does a great job of keeping the body functioning, and that it also does a good job of getting in the way of happiness. From Hedonic Adaptation (never being satisfied with what we have), to Negative Bias (our tendency to focus on negative things over positive), and our compulsion to compare (usually ourselves with others), the brain is a master creator of separation. Whether through anxiousness, judgement, frustration, envy, revenge, or anger, the mind is the stem of our fear. And if gone unbalanced, our minds will serve up a menu of toxins for your body to feast and disease upon.

Fear-based thoughts turn into toxic emotions that destroy the body and beyond

My students also work closely with the HeartMath Institute (HMI), the premier researchers of heart rate variability and the role that it plays on our physical, emotional, and intuitive potential. The heart, we learn, forms in a fetus first and is electromagnetically five thousand times more powerful than the brain. It is the seat of intuition that draws from outside of ourselves and sends more information to the brain (afferent waves) than the brain sends to the heart (efferent waves). The heart's complex neural network makes it a mind of its own. Just think, you can go completely brain-dead and still be alive, but when your heart stops pumping, it's lights-out for you. **The heart is its own consciousness and it is universes more intelligent than the one that sits on our shoulders.**

At my micro school, Aspire Academy, our students study energy and the ways it shows up in nature, music, and especially through our thoughts and emotions. We study across disciplines and we enroll in Yale University's *Science of Well-being* course where we review research on happiness and how we can best cultivate it.

The mind thinks. The heart knows.



The battle of divided sides is a losing game for us all

As the country jostles back and forth from Right to Left. From fight to fret and protest to prey, my prayer is that the binary wars of right and wrong cease to be our model of decision making.

I think about my brilliant students who appreciate the discussions we have about topics that are important to them. Unlike a debate where we prepare ourselves for mental and emotional battle, our conversations are not a war of words. There are no winners or losers. In fact, the outcome of our discussions are usually a synthesis of ideas and often the creation of new understandings and innovation. It is compromise, compassion and creativity at work where both the brain and the heart are called to action.

There is no way that we can solve global problems like climate change, pandemics, or even cancer if we don't find better ways to legislate and learn.

Innovation usually means there's been collaboration. And collaboration requires compromise. Our heavy reliance upon the limited intelligence of the mind has brought us to where we are now: separated systems of win or lose and decision makers blindly supporting their teams at all costs. Personal intuition and integrity is lost to self-preservation or the celebration of victory. If we could only stop being slaves of the mind and start letting our hearts be the masters of our destiny, we'd actually solve some of the problems we've created.

The HeartMath Institute measures human energy across the globe. And they show us how communities and cosmos are affected by conscious connection and coherent intentions. They show us that our collective compassion can cure anything from anxiety to racism and all kinds of disease. And this, we learn, is only the beginning. We at Aspire Academy are humbled to be included in HeartMath Institute's beta testing group that is piloting the *Coherent Classroom* experiment that measures the impact of elevated emotions and our collective abilities to transmute hurt to health. It is miraculous to witness the healing power of our hearts and we are excited about the bigger implications.

As Collective Consciousness awakens more and more, we will see the fall of old institutional structures that have led for centuries through systems of separation and submission. Debate will be replaced with new conversations that beget solutions and foster inclusion, understanding and compassion rather than arguments that slant, cheat, and distort evidence for a win. Antiquated school systems that teach only to the head while ignoring the heart will have to change too.

Mother Nature is crying out from coast to coast as She watches violence become our fuel. **We must think with our hearts, not just with our minds.** And bridging the two worlds will be the longest journey humans will ever make.

