

Consciousness of Connection: Awakening From Despair to Awe

International Forum on Consciousness
May 20–21, 2021 • Virtual Event
www.btc.org/forum

ABSTRACTS

Your Transcendent Brain

Heather Berlin, DPhil, MPH

Your sense of self is a construct of your brain. And even if you have a healthy sense of self, it can still be therapeutic to lose it in controlled ways. Each of us can dissolve our egos and “let go” in a number of ways, including through creativity, psychedelics, meditation, and flow states. These experiences of awe or self-transcendence can be so profound that a person’s life is transformed and imbued with new values and purpose.

Led by my search for the scientific basis of consciousness, I will discuss what we know scientifically about the neuroscience of spiritual and transcendent experiences and the exciting new advances in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. These experiences, whether naturally occurring or induced with drugs or brain stimulation, may have therapeutic benefits that go beyond their value as generators of meaning and symbolism.

Our brain defines who we are. It can be the source of our ultimate triumphs, or our ruin and downfall. By learning to know yourself, and learning to let yourself go, you will gain a greater appreciation for the fine art of losing control and become the best version of yourself.

Becoming a Healing Leader: Moving from Force to Power

Michael Gelb

When a stone is tossed into a still pond the water ripples out in circles. This was one of Leonardo da Vinci’s favorite themes for drawing and contemplation. Leonardo observed that “everything connects to everything else.” In *Power vs. Force*, Dr. David Hawkins writes that to become more conscious is “the greatest gift anyone can give to the world; moreover, in a ripple effect the gift comes back to its source.”

Hawkins presents a scale with a progression from lesser states of consciousness (the realm of Force) to more evolved states (the realm of Power). The realm of Force is the province of shame, guilt, apathy, dependency, fear, desire (craving), anger, and pride. The realm of Power is the basis of Healing Leadership and includes the following levels (with the quantitative measure assigned by Hawkins):

1. Courage (200). We face the truth in our lives.
2. Neutrality (250). The beginning of nonjudgmental awareness.
3. Willingness (310). Every experience is embraced as an opportunity for growth and learning.
4. Acceptance (350). We accept full responsibility for our lives.
5. Reason (400). Deliberate, clear systems thinking
6. Love (500). Forgiveness, compassion, and unconditional love.
7. Joy (540). As William Wordsworth expressed it, "With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy, we see into the life of things."
8. Peace (600). This is "the peace that passes all understanding."
9. Enlightenment (700–1000). Timeless, nondual, abiding in permanent grace.

In this experiential session you will be guided through archetypal postures and movements that evoke each of these levels.

Expanding Consciousness, Connectedness and Inclusive Business Practices (a project with Bennet Zelner)

Rachelle Sampson, Ph.D.

What if work was a place where people could show up fully, grow and even heal? Where all stakeholders - including employees, the environment and broader community - were considered crucial elements in organizational value creation and decision-making? What if business organizations served as sites of social and environmental healing? In this project, we focus on the role that organizational leaders might play in fostering such a transformation following their own personal transformational experiences. Specifically, we ask whether psychedelic experiences, held in a container of support and guidance

around the translation to business practices, can shift how decisions are made in an organizational context.

We hypothesize that such experiences may facilitate change in leaders – and consequently organizations – by leading to greater feelings of connectedness and self-awareness. We examine the impact of these experiences on the time horizons, as well as the weight accorded to different stakeholder groups, used in decision-making. By studying the impact of guided psychedelic experiences on leaders and their subsequent decision-making perspectives, we aspire to identify and design best practices for translating deeply personal, healing work into transpersonal and environmental solutions.

Consciousness and Connection: The Awe of moving from an isolated Me to an integrated MWe

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

Awe is a direct experience in which we feel a sense of being part of something larger than a private, individual self and facing a reality that is difficult to comprehend at first glance. This presentation will explore how modern culture encourages a view of identity and belonging, who we are and what the self is, as being located in the individual, centered only in the body, what can be called a “solo-self.” Could it be that the centers of experience—the ways in which energy and information flow in our lives—include more than just the body alone? Might the subjective sensation, the perspective, and the agency, the SPA, of experiences that identify the self actually include both the inner center of that flow of energy and information, and the relational centers—in our connections with other people and with the planet—the natural world? If this is true, that we have an inner Me and a relational We as the centers of self-experience, how might we transform the view of the solo-self only in the body to a more integrative view of self? Integration can be defined as the linking of differentiated parts of a system; in connecting the unique features of the differentiated components are not lost. If we use the symbols of our inner and our relational selves as Me plus We, then we can integrate these as MWe. MWe is the way we might consider our selves to be as we address the huge challenges of humanity—how we collaborate for the greater good in the face of a viral pandemic; social injustice and racism; polarization and misinformation; and environmental destruction. It may be that the misleading excessive differentiation of the solo-self exacerbates, or may even cause, each of these pandemics in our current world.

Psychedelics and Earth Codes: what psilocybin has taught me about the laws of life

Rosalind Watts, Ph.D.

When psychedelic therapy is effective for people with depression, it often leads to a sense of 'connectedness' to self, others, and nature. People sometimes describe feeling for the first time that they are part of an interconnected web of life. This newfound sense of connectedness seems to be a key mechanism of psychedelic therapy, and one of the reasons why an increasing number of people hope that psychedelics could help to bring about wide scale healing of our hearts, our communities, and our ecosystems. This talk will reflect on what psychedelics can teach us about the laws of life, or 'Earth Codes'. Earth Codes relate to the patterns, cycles, and rhythms of nature. For example the pattern of nature is 'interconnectedness and balance', the cycle of nature is darkness and light, and the rhythm of nature is slow but constant change. In many ways, modern life is at odds with these codes, and psychedelic experiences can show us this discrepancy. In this talk, the Earth Codes will be discussed in light of clinical findings from the psilocybin for depression trials at Imperial College London. Ethical questions will be woven into discussion of clinical outcomes and patients' perspectives as we consider how listening to the Earth Codes can help us build a psychedelic therapy movement that can change the world by restoring us to its fundamental laws.

Skincentric Ecology. Aliveness as Invocation

Andreas Weber, Ph.D.

In my presentation I want to explore an animistic approach to understanding other beings in a cosmos which is alive. In animistic worldviews, the cosmos is full of persons: tree persons, deer persons, cloud persons, river persons, and others. This notion has been notoriously difficult for western thought. The difficulty, however, stems from the western view of human agents as subjects in an object-only world. If we see the world from an embodied-relational viewpoint, things change. Autopoiesis theory, and more strictly Biosemiotics and Biopoetics, conceive of biological agents as selves. They show how deeply "empirical subjectivity" pervades the world, and how profoundly it even englobes everything otherwise considered as inorganic. Metabolism e.g. is a way through which one being becomes incorporated into another, and it is so literally, not metaphorically. Metabolism is a way how stone becomes me. Metabolism is the perspective from which we can understand that we all share one same breath. To realize ourselves as alive means to realize ourselves as family. Describing our shared

participation as “empirical subjectivity” therefore, shares important similarities with animistic understanding and practice. The ensuing attitude to the world would then not be empirical, but “poetic” objectivity, an understanding of the world through its sharedness among living bodies. Our own aliveness opens up the door to an intimate knowledge of the world from the inside of experience.