

Our SUBJECTIVE Experience EXPLAINED (See-Hear-Feel technique) by Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Mental images, mental talk, emotional body sensation.

00:00:18 So in general, if you look from the side, mental images tend to be sort of centered

00:00:28 here, but they can be around your surroundings, and they can also be back where your body

00:00:35 is.

00:00:36 But memory-planned fantasy tends to sort of be up and in front.

00:00:40 Talk tends to be posterior and up, and then the emotional body is primarily down with

00:00:47 the body.

00:00:48 So very, very roughly speaking, you've got a triangle like this.

00:00:58 It's an oversimplification, but it's a way of thinking about it.

00:01:00 This is the center of the inner space, but the inner space can be broad, it can be quite

00:01:08 wide, actually.

00:01:09 So emotional body space is just the space of your body.

00:01:13 Some people have emotional centers, places in the body where pleasant or unpleasant emotional

00:01:19 sensations would likely be most prominent.

00:01:22 Some people don't have emotional centers.

00:01:24 If you have emotional centers, then bringing yourself to your emotional body means some

00:01:29 awareness strongly in those centers and some awareness peripherally over the body.

00:01:34 If you don't have emotional centers, then just awareness in your body in general is

00:01:39 to be in emotional body space.

00:01:43 Talk space is typically ill-defined, but most people sort of point at their ears, their

00:01:47 head, this area, it's the phallic.

00:01:50 So abstractly and in an oversimplified schematic view, we can think of image space, talk space,

00:02:02 emotional body space.

00:02:04 Our descriptive word for visual thinking is mental image, but our label is see in.

00:02:12 Our descriptive word for auditory thinking is mental talk, but our label is

hear in.

00:02:19 And our descriptive word for emotional body sensation is emotional body sensation, however

00:02:24 the label is feel in.

00:02:32 So whenever I think about this system, I sort of get this image of the triangle.

00:02:41 But I also get the phrase that this system is reactive, proactive, interactive, and occasionally

00:02:54 inactive.

00:02:59 If you get this, you will have such a handle on life.

00:03:06 Such a handle on life.

00:03:10 Because every heaven and hell that you will experience between now and the moment you

00:03:15 die will somehow involve the four things that I just mentioned within this system.

00:03:24 It's reactivity, it's proactivity, it's interactivity, and it's occasional inactivity.

00:03:33 So let's see what that means.

00:03:36 It means if you have external sounds, external sights, and physical body sensation, it could

00:03:43 trigger one, two, or all three of these at the same time.

00:03:47 So it reacts to the physical senses.

00:03:53 Producing what?

00:03:54 Well if that reaction is unconscious and solidified, it produces the sense that there is a self

00:04:03 that hears, sees, and is physically contacted.

00:04:10 So if you're in pain, and this system is reacting to the pain, judging it, awfulizing it, and

00:04:20 having rhythmic reactions such as fear, tear, irritation, helplessness, and so forth.

00:04:32 So that's the self, alright?

00:04:36 That's this system reacting to a physical contact, a physical world.

00:04:42 So as a reactive system, when it activates, and it's not experienced with concentration,

00:04:51 clarity, and equanimity, it will convince you that you have a limited self that is seeing,

00:04:57 hearing, and in a physical world.

00:05:02 So on the other hand, we're not trying to get rid of this activity.

00:05:07 It can activate to the max, but as long as there's clarity, concentration, and equanimity,

00:05:12 in other words, as long as you have a complete experience of self.

00:05:16 And by the way, equanimity is none other than total self-love and total self-

acceptance

00:05:22 in this regard.

00:05:25 So if it reacts and you experience it fully, then you love it to death.

00:05:31 It's so active that it's no longer there as a thing.

00:05:35 So there's ...

00:05:36 Okay, so.

00:05:40 So that's the reactive system.

00:05:43 Every single time you're convinced there's someone inside of you that's a self experiencing

00:05:52 an other that is alien and it.

00:05:56 At some subtle level, the system is reacting to the physical world.

00:06:02 It may be subliminally below the threshold of awareness, and our job is to clarify it

00:06:08 and unblock it and love it.

00:06:13 That's the reactive.

00:06:14 Proactive.

00:06:15 Oh, you've noticed this.

00:06:16 It's called monkey mind.

00:06:17 When it's not reacting to the outside world, it starts spinning memory, plan, fantasy,

00:06:28 problem solving.

00:06:30 Fantasies basically two kinds.

00:06:34 Fantasies that you run to scare you, and fantasies that you run to entertain you when there's

00:06:40 nothing else going on.

00:06:43 In neuroscience, this is well known, it's called the default network.

00:06:49 Default meaning it's what people fall back on when you don't ask them to attend to something

00:06:53 in an experiment.

00:06:54 They would tell people, okay, now just rest now.

00:06:58 Okay, we're having you watch that target, that visual target now, do nothing, just rest.

00:07:04 And then they discovered they're not resting.

00:07:07 There's all this distinctive activation going on by way of default.

00:07:12 So what's happening is monkey mind.

00:07:15 Is memory, plan, fantasy, problem solving, etc.

00:07:23 So I call that the proactive system, meaning that the system will just go off on its own

00:07:29 and spin memory, plan, fantasy.

00:07:32 Convincing you that there's a past, convincing you that there's a future, convincing you

00:07:37 of many, many things.

00:07:41 So that's the proactive side of the system.

00:07:44 Once again, we're not trying to get rid of that.

00:07:48 We're trying to have a complete experience of that.

00:07:51 Then the system is interactive.

00:07:54 That means a mental image could trigger an emotional body sensation.

00:07:58 Mental thought could trigger an emotional body sensation.

00:08:03 Emotional body sensation could build until you just have to make a comment about it,

00:08:10 or have a picture of it.

00:08:11 A mental image could trigger a comment.

00:08:14 A mental thought could make a picture to accompany it.

00:08:20 So the arrows point both ways.

00:08:21 This is the interactivity of the system.

00:08:24 And once you become familiar with the system, you can start to track how this will trigger

00:08:29 this, and then this will lead to this, etc., etc.

00:08:34 So that's the interactivity.

00:08:39 And becoming clear about this is knowing yourself at a sensory level, at a system theoretic

00:08:47 level.

00:08:48 This is the system theoretic paradigm for thoughts and emotions.

00:08:56 Then the last phrase is occasionally inactive.

00:09:01 Actually more than you might imagine.

00:09:03 For brief moments, the system turns off hundreds and hundreds of times during the day.

00:09:10 When you just hear, just see, just experience physical touch, for just a second, the system

00:09:18 actually evaporates.

00:09:21 But people usually don't notice it.

00:09:23 So it doesn't help them.

00:09:24 They don't realize that the self winks in and out of existence during the day.

00:09:31 So when it goes inactive, we have a no-self state.

00:09:38 But unless you consciously experience it, it won't be liberating.

00:09:44 So we want you to be able to notice when it's active and inactive.

00:09:49 So that's the subjective system, and that's what we're going to work on today.

00:09:57 I'm going to show you how to work individually and collectively.

00:10:05 So if we draw a column, we're going to use in as an abbreviation for inner arising.

00:10:18 We use see to refer to visual experience.

00:10:23 It's a verb of visual perception.

00:10:26 Hear is the verb of auditory perception.
00:10:30 Feel is the verb for somatic perception.
00:10:33 So see in for mental images.
00:10:36 Hear in for mental thought.
00:10:39 Feel in for emotional body sensation.
00:10:41 We can work individually, and then we could broadly float.
00:10:46 We'll call this focus in, within the whole system.
00:10:52 So let me say that most people have quite a bit of hear in.
00:10:59 That's where we're going to start.
00:11:03 So we're going to know hear in each time the mental talk arises.
00:11:10 When the mental talk comes to an end, gone.
00:11:14 That's the period at the end of the sentence.
00:11:18 And then if there is no mental talk, hear rest.
00:11:21 Sometimes people find that by placing attention in talk space, it sort of
like turns off the
00:11:28 mental talk.
00:11:29 That's not suppression.
00:11:30 It just is.
00:11:31 It just happens that way.
00:11:33 So you'll hear rest.
00:11:34 You'll listen to that restful state.
00:11:37 Otherwise, hear in, gone.
00:11:39 Some people find that after the gone, there'll be a restful state.
00:11:44 Some people find that there's immediately a new arising of the next word or
phrase or
00:11:50 sentence.
00:11:51 So you'll hear in, gone, hear rest.
00:11:52 That's how we can work individually with this.
00:11:55 This is actually pretty straightforward.
00:12:00 Mental images and emotional body sensations require a bit of clarification.
00:12:07 First and foremost, if you're new to practice, you may not have many mental
images.
00:12:18 And that's not a problem.
00:12:19 You just may not have many of them.
00:12:22 So we're going to have you focus on the dark, bright, in front of, behind
your closed eyes,
00:12:29 which is, you'll recall, is see rest.
00:12:32 Focus on that if you don't have any mental images.
00:12:35 But if you do have mental images, we'll note that as see in.
00:12:39 If all or even part of the mental image drops away or drops off, then gone.
00:12:47 You'll note the vanishing of all or part of the image.
00:12:51 If you don't have many mental images, then fine, you'll just be see rest, see

rest until

00:12:55 they occur.

00:12:56 Remember, however, that if you have memory, plan, or fantasy, you probably are seeing

00:13:03 the memory scene, probably seeing the fantasy and so forth.

00:13:09 We don't call it imagination for nothing.

00:13:13 But it may be very vague and fleeting, just a ghostly impression.

00:13:18 That's see in.

00:13:20 People often think that, oh, mental images, it must be clear like a photograph or like

00:13:26 looking at a physical object.

00:13:28 Only for some people, the great majority of people, the mental images are these vague,

00:13:34 wispy, diaphanous impressions of form that disappear very quickly.

00:13:42 And that's see in, that's image.

00:13:45 Remember also that if you are aware that you're in any particular place, if you're convinced

00:13:50 you're in a room with people at a certain location, you probably get some vague image

00:13:57 of your surroundings that's see in.

00:13:59 And when you have body sensations, you probably get a sense of your overall body and your

00:14:04 appearance.

00:14:05 In addition to the sensations of the body, there's the image of the body.

00:14:09 Once again, often rather vague and ill-defined.

00:14:13 That's see in also.

00:14:16 So that's that.

00:14:20 Feel in is, there's a lot to be said about this.

00:14:30 So at any given instant, somewhere in consciousness, you may experience emotion.

00:14:43 The alternative is at any given instant, you're not experiencing any emotion.

00:14:50 If you're not sure, assume you're not experiencing any emotion.

00:14:55 So at any given instant, you may have an experience of emotion.

00:15:04 That emotion may be well-defined qualitatively or ill-defined qualitatively.

00:15:08 It may be intense or it may be subtle.

00:15:13 Quite where that emotion is occurring may be well-defined or it may be ill-defined.

00:15:18 However, at any given instant, you either have an emotional experience or you don't.

00:15:25 If you're not sure, assume you don't.

00:15:29 If you are having an emotional experience, it is possible that part of that

emotional

00:15:34 experience will involve body sensations, a change in your body.

00:15:40 If so, our label for that body sensation is feel in.

00:15:47 It is possible that you have an experience that you'll say is emotional, but it's mental

00:15:52 only and does not affect the body.

00:15:55 In which case, there is no emotional sensation in the body.

00:15:59 The emotion is completely mental.

00:16:01 That could happen.

00:16:02 In that case, when we work with this, and you're having a mental emotion, but there's

00:16:11 nothing that impacts your body.

00:16:14 Your body is emotionally restful.

00:16:20 So we'll call that feel rest.

00:16:25 If you go to your body and try to figure out which sensations are physical and which are

00:16:32 emotional, you may be able to do that, but you probably won't.

00:16:36 It will probably just be crazy to try to figure that out.

00:16:42 Somewhat depends on the individual.

00:16:44 The way that I set up this category, feel in, is not specifically I'm asking you to

00:16:54 go to the body and figure out what's physical, and more generally what's emotional.

00:16:58 If you can do that, fine, but most people, it's like, it doesn't compute.

00:17:05 However, here's something anybody can do.

00:17:09 At any given instant, you ask yourself, am I experiencing emotion?

00:17:14 Somewhere.

00:17:15 Well defined, ill defined, okay, am I experiencing emotion?

00:17:20 The answer is yes.

00:17:22 Is any part of that experience, does any part of that experience involve body sensation?

00:17:27 The answer will either be yes or no.

00:17:29 If you're not sure, the answer is no.

00:17:32 If the answer is yes, that's feel in, and that's what to focus on.

00:17:37 If the answer is no, then when we play this technique, your body is emotionally neutral.

00:17:42 That is a flavor of rest.

00:17:44 There are basically three flavors of rest that can come up in the body.

00:17:49 Physical relaxation, emotional neutrality, and the sense that there are parts of the

00:17:55 body that aren't there, or that your body is disappearing.

00:17:59 Those are the three basic flavors of feel rest.

00:18:03 When we do this, if there is no emotion in your body, then feel rest.

00:18:09 It is quite common for people to, when they try, when they do see in, that they mostly

00:18:16 just see rest.

00:18:17 It is quite common when people do feel in, that they mostly just feel rest.

00:18:22 In other words, the synthetics don't activate.

00:18:25 This usually activates, but sometimes it doesn't even.

00:18:29 Now, are you going to make it a problem that there is nothing but rest within this system?

00:18:36 Please don't.

00:18:38 Someday it will activate, I promise you.

00:18:41 Now, so a common complaint is, well, when I do formal practice, and I try to work with

00:18:52 my subjective experience, it's all rest.

00:18:56 The system doesn't activate.

00:18:59 It goes inactive during formal practice.

00:19:02 Or this part might be active, but these other two parts aren't.

00:19:08 During formal practice, I can never get the feel in or the see in going.

00:19:14 So I have a, but then in daily life, of course, it is going, but I don't have the wonderful

00:19:19 situation of being in formal practice to work with it.

00:19:23 So what should I do?

00:19:25 So what is my standard recommendation for this situation?

00:19:31 Do nothing.

00:19:33 Yeah.

00:19:37 Or, in other words, of course, the do nothing is okay.

00:19:41 You can just accept the fact that nothing is happening.

00:19:47 But let's say that you want to be in a formal practice situation, and you want to be able

00:19:53 to at will activate and control the direction and intensity of the subjective reactive system.

00:20:02 Okay, which would be a way of working smart, a way of training where you're in control,

00:20:09 so that when the reactive system gets activated in daily life, you sort of train yourself

00:20:16 in ideal situations.

00:20:18 Well, what I recommend is that you expose yourself to emotive sounds or emotive sights

00:20:27 that activate the system.

00:20:29 Sound is the best, because you can do it with your eyes closed.

00:20:32 It's easy to detect the images.

00:20:34 So I usually recommend something like flipping around the TV and then getting

things that

00:20:41 activate pleasant or unpleasant.

00:20:44 Feel in, you'd be amazed how many images you have if you listen to the soundtrack of a movie.

00:20:51 Your mind would just immediately try to see what's going on, okay?

00:20:56 And so it activates the whole system.

00:21:00 And that way you train yourself to work with the system, and you can have the best of both

00:21:06 worlds, because you're in a formal practice situation, and you're in control of the type,

00:21:13 duration, and intensity of the stimulus for the system.

00:21:19 So if you come to me and say, I'm not getting a carryover into life, I'm going to ask you,

00:21:32 well, have you tried media practice?

00:21:34 Have you tried training for life's impacts in stillness?

00:21:41 I call that working smart.

00:21:44 So at the retreat, if not much activates when we explore this, that's fine.

00:21:48 We'll just do the rest of the thing.

00:21:50 But there are ways to intentionally activate it, and not necessarily in negative directions

00:21:55 either, just all sorts of interesting things can be done.

00:21:59 So that's the subjective system.

00:22:02 Yes?

00:22:03 Can we, while training here for a life situation, can we imagine ourselves in those situations,

00:22:08 and then that system gets activated?

00:22:10 I understand.

00:22:11 That, the intentional, as a general principle, intentionally controlling the system is only

00:22:20 something we do as focus on positive, which we'll be starting in the afternoon.

00:22:25 However, I said as a general principle.

00:22:27 People will sometimes ask, well, can I activate it by sort of thinking about a certain something?

00:22:33 I would say it's OK to do that occasionally.

00:22:36 I wouldn't make that the centerpiece of your practice.

00:22:39 Yes?

00:22:40 In terms of feel, you're talking about the emotional body.

00:22:43 What's the distinction between a headache and the emotional body, or is that part of

00:22:48 the emotional body, or that thing?

00:22:50 OK, good.

00:22:51 That's a good question.

00:22:52 The way you know it's an emotional body sensation is by following that little procedure that

00:23:00 I just gave you.

00:23:03 In other words, if you ask yourself, am I experiencing an emotion?

00:23:10 And then you go to the body and see if any part of that is in the body.

00:23:16 In other words, you didn't have an emotion, then an emotion arose.

00:23:22 What changed in the body, that's the emotional body sensation.

00:23:27 The places to look are reactions.

00:23:30 If there's a sound and you're smiling, that's an emotional sensation in the body.

00:23:39 If there's a sound in the environment and you're irritated by the sound, and it's not

00:23:45 just mental comment about it, but you actually have an irritation in the body, that's emotion

00:23:51 in the body.

00:23:52 In general, I will give you a list of a dozen or so common situations where there is likely

00:24:04 to be an emotional sensation in your body.

00:24:08 Anger.

00:24:09 When you experience anger, where do you usually experience it in your body?

00:24:14 Are you asking me?

00:24:15 Yeah.

00:24:16 How would you answer?

00:24:18 OK, good.

00:24:19 So that's an emotional body sensation.

00:24:21 Fear.

00:24:22 That's an emotional body sensation.

00:24:25 Sadness.

00:24:26 That's an emotional body sensation.

00:24:31 Joy.

00:24:32 That's an emotional body sensation.

00:24:37 Enthusiasm, interest.

00:24:41 Not sure?

00:24:43 OK.

00:24:44 Shame, embarrassment.

00:24:47 OK.

00:24:48 You got it.

00:24:51 All of those are emotional body sensations.

00:24:54 Physical pain?

00:24:55 No.

00:24:56 That's a physical body sensation.

00:24:58 However, if it causes an emotional reaction, then that could happen.

00:25:04 So how do you work with that?

00:25:06 Let's say I start to sit, I mean I came in with some physical pain, I start to sit and

00:25:13 then I have emotional reaction to physical pain.

00:25:15 It's not something I bring up, it's not something that starts when I sit.

00:25:19 Am I making any sense?

00:25:22 Are you asking how to work with the pain or ...

00:25:26 Or the emotional reaction to it.

00:25:29 OK.

00:25:30 So in other words, let's say that you're doing the feel-in technique.

00:25:38 OK.

00:25:39 So you are ... the instruction is if you have what seems to be emotional body sensation

00:25:45 you focus on.

00:25:46 So now the pain, what flavors of emotion does the pain cause you?

00:25:52 Fear.

00:25:53 Fear.

00:25:54 Now you're very precise.

00:25:56 So now you're going to be aware that the pain is one thing and the fear reaction to the

00:26:01 pain is another thing.

00:26:03 You're going to note that as feel-in.

00:26:06 The fear reaction.

00:26:07 That sensation.

00:26:09 Then what does note mean?

00:26:11 Note means acknowledge and then focus on that sensation.

00:26:14 As you focus on that sensation you attempt to accept that sensation.

00:26:19 The fear sensation.

00:26:21 Remember I said reactive?

00:26:23 So you're looking for the body reacting to the body.

00:26:27 In this particular case.

00:26:29 And then what do you do with it?

00:26:31 Just try to make friends with it as best you can.

00:26:35 Now, that's only one way to focus of course.

00:26:38 You might want to focus on the mental images triggered by the pain.

00:26:43 Or the mental talk triggered by the pain.

00:26:45 You also might want to focus on the pain itself.

00:26:47 Or you might want to focus away from the pain onto a rest state.

00:26:51 All of these are options.

00:26:53 Just be clear which one you're doing.

00:26:56 Did that answer your question sufficiently?

00:26:59 OK.

00:27:00 Excellent.

00:27:01 Yes.

00:27:02 I just want to clarify if we were working with this procedure.

00:27:05 And we were having a lot of rest in C-in.

00:27:10 And a lot of rest in feel-in.

00:27:13 We would not be noting that because we're not focusing on the rest.

00:27:17 There's actually four procedures on the board.

00:27:21 So let's be clear what we're talking about.

00:27:25 This is one option.

00:27:27 This is another option.

00:27:28 This is another option.

00:27:29 This is another option.

00:27:31 Right.

00:27:32 OK.

00:27:33 So if you're doing this, the instruction says,

00:27:36 if you don't have any activation, note the corresponding restful state.

00:27:41 But if you do have an activation, then note the activation.

00:27:45 Of course, if you did it for a while and there wasn't any activation,

00:27:48 then you might want to switch technique because you're essentially not just noting the restful state.

00:27:54 OK.

00:27:56 Same thing for here.

00:27:58 The instruction says it's crystal clear.

00:28:00 As long as you're doing this procedure, which could be for two minutes or two years,

00:28:06 however long you want to be doing it, if there's mental talk, you're in.

00:28:10 When it disappears, go off.

00:28:12 If there's no mental talk, you're at rest.

00:28:15 And you just do that.

00:28:17 And then if it doesn't seem productive, you do something else.

00:28:21 Crystal clear?

00:28:22 Excellent.

00:28:23 Yes.

00:28:24 If you're in the rest state and you want to activate more active state, you recommend, like, turn on the TV.

00:28:33 Can you use your imagination?

00:28:35 Can you pretend you're in a traffic jam?

00:28:37 Actually, that question was just asked a few minutes ago.

00:28:40 But I'll answer it again.

00:28:43 In general, you are passive with regards to these things.

00:28:53 You just let them, when you do this technique.

00:28:57 So you are waiting for activation to occur.

00:29:00 If it doesn't occur, then you just note the corresponding restful state.

00:29:06 However, if you find that the system hardly activates when you do practice in stillness,

00:29:13 and you want to do something to sort of stimulate it so that you can observe it and practice up with it,

00:29:20 then I recommend media practice.

00:29:22 You can listen to a TV or something like that to get things stirred up.

00:29:25 But that would just be a sort of special thing that you would do to help train your skills.

00:29:33 Is that clear?

00:29:35 As far as intentionally bringing something up in order to have something to focus on with this, that was asked over here.

00:29:43 I said it's okay to do that occasionally, but it's not really the way to do this.

00:29:51 Okay. Good. Yes.

00:29:55 Sorry, I had a brain lapse. What does in at the top stand for?

00:29:58 Inner activation.

00:30:00 So this technique is see in here and feel in. Focus.

00:30:06 Focus in. Thank you.

00:30:08 Focus, as it stands now, when something is prefixed by focus, it means broadly float within that theme or that sensory modality.

00:30:20 Otherwise, we see the specified in the box.

00:30:25 Okay, good. Good to go.