

WHAT IS THE SELF? ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Can you explain to me what is the self?

00:00:08 So you have thoughts, correct?

00:00:11 Yes.

00:00:12 And have you noticed that those thoughts tend to occur constantly?

00:00:16 Always.

00:00:17 Right?

00:00:18 A lot of thoughts.

00:00:19 You also have body sensations.

00:00:23 Now have you ever noticed that some of those thoughts are visual, like you have memory,

00:00:31 plan, fantasy, scenes?

00:00:33 Yes.

00:00:34 But some of them are auditory also, right?

00:00:36 You hear dialogues, monologues.

00:00:40 And your body, some of the sensations are purely physical.

00:00:45 But when you have strong emotions, pleasant or unpleasant, you also experience them as

00:00:51 changes in your body sensation, right?

00:00:54 So you have mental experience that consists of visual and auditory thoughts, and it's

00:01:02 continuous.

00:01:04 And you have body sensations, some of which are physical, some of which are emotional.

00:01:11 And they're pretty continuous too, right?

00:01:13 So you're constantly pulled to mental states and body states.

00:01:19 And nothing mysterious so far.

00:01:21 No, no.

00:01:22 Anyone can see that.

00:01:24 You've probably also noticed that when a thought arises, you tend to say, this is me.

00:01:31 This thought is me.

00:01:33 Right, right.

00:01:35 And how about your body experience?

00:01:37 We even said your, right?

00:01:39 These sensations, they're me, right?

00:01:42 Especially if they're emotional.

00:01:45 A broken leg is me, but a broken heart is, in some ways, even more me, an

emotional sensation.

00:01:54 So you've noticed how moment by moment, there's a lot of thoughts, but we can analyze them

00:02:00 sensorially into something visual and something auditory.

00:02:05 And you've noticed how moment by moment, you have physical sensations for sure, and sometimes

00:02:10 emotional.

00:02:11 It's incessant.

00:02:12 And you've also noticed that as soon as a body state or a mind state arises, you tend

00:02:18 to say, this is me.

00:02:20 These are my thoughts.

00:02:21 This is my body.

00:02:23 So to sum it up, you're going to get different answers depending on who you ask.

00:02:29 And those answers are all legitimate.

00:02:32 They're different perspectives on the word self.

00:02:37 But for me, the simplest way to think about self is, self is a moment by moment experience.

00:02:46 And that experience consists of mind and body.

00:02:52 And mind is mental image and mental talk.

00:02:56 Body is physicality and emotionality.

00:02:59 So your mental images, your mental talk, your physical and emotional experience is what

00:03:06 you identify with moment by moment.

00:03:10 And that is the ordinary experience of self.