



INFO SHEET: Where do sensations come from?

The different parts of your brain operate sequentially, a bit like an assembly line. This is the mechanism behind the 'mind-body connection'.

Step 1: Cognition Occurs when there is input - when you see, hear, taste, touch, smell, or think something. This step simply flags that something is happening.

Step 2: Re-cognition Involves determining what is happening and evaluating it (+/-). For example, 'A bus is hurtling towards me...this is bad.'

Step 3: Sensation (Body) At the moment of evaluation, matching (+/-) physical sensations arise in the body.

Step 4: Reaction (Emotion) You like pleasant sensations and want to prolong/increase them. You don't like unpleasant sensations and want to end/decrease them.

Notice that your thoughts/story aren't in the picture yet. Normally we are not aware of these four steps, and so remain at the mercy of our emotional reactions - living as slaves rather than masters of our minds.

The first three steps are hard-wired and untouchable, but by bringing awareness and acceptance to sensations, we can manage our reactions and create choices were there were none.

The Elephant & the Rider



The old yogis made the analogy of the elephant as the subconscious mind, and the rider as the conscious mind. The subconscious includes Body/sensations and Emotions/reactions, and the conscious is Thoughts. The rider thinks that she is in charge of things, and to all appearances, she is. But when the elephant decides to do things her own way, the rider is powerless. So when we go on a diet, or join a gym, or try to stop smoking, the reason it often doesn't work out long-term, is because of the elephant in the room (namely, reactivity and pleasure-seeking). Practicing Mindfulness is a way to tame the elephant and harness that power.