

## Core Teachings by Eckhart Tolle

Original text can be found at: <http://www.tolleteachings.com>

1. You are not your thoughts. You are the awareness behind the thoughts. Thoughts are often negative and painful, yearning for or fearing something in the future, complaining about something in the present or fearing a matter from the past. However, the thoughts are not you; they are a construct of the ego. Awareness of your thoughts without being caught up in them is the first step to freedom.

2. Only the present moment exists. That is where life is (indeed it is the only place life can truly be found). Becoming aware of the "now" has the added benefit that it will draw your attention away from your (negative) thoughts. Use mindfulness techniques to fully appreciate your surroundings and everything you are experiencing. Look and listen intently. Give full attention to the smallest details.

3. Accept the present moment. It is resistance to the present moment that creates most of the difficulties in your life. However, acceptance does not mean that you cannot take action to rectify the situation you are in. What is important is to drop resistance so that you let the moment be, and that any action arises from deeper awareness rather than from resistance. The vast majority of pain in a person's life comes from resistance to what is.

4. Observe the Pain-Body. Years of conditioned thought patterns, individually and collectively, have resulted in habitual emotional reactions with an apparent personality of their own. During "Pain-Body attacks", we become completely identified with this "pain identity" and respond from its agenda -- which is to create more pain for ourselves and others. Observing the Pain-Body is awareness itself arising, as it allows humans to separate from this unconscious identification with pain.

In Eckhart's view, love comes into existence when you know who you are in your essence and then recognize the "other" as yourself. It is the end of the delusion of separation, which is created by excessive reliance on thinking. This shift in consciousness for most people is not a single event but a process, a gradual dis-identification from thoughts and emotions through the arising of awareness.

## How to Transform a Pain-Body Moment

When your pain-body arises, you can learn what the most common triggers are that activate it. The next time you suddenly become upset about something, pay attention to what just happened in your environment. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Did someone say something that caused you to react?
- What was it they said?
- What was the tone of their voice?
- Do they remind you of someone from your childhood that hurt or humiliated you?
- Did something happen that caused you to react?
- Is this something that often upsets you?
- Do you notice a pattern of reactivity with regard to this kind of event?

When these kinds of triggers occur, you can immediately see them for what they are and by doing so enter a heightened state of alertness. Within a second or two, you will also notice the emotional reaction that is the arising pain-body, but in that state of alert Presence, you won't identify with it, which means the pain-body cannot take you over and become the voice in your head. If you are with your partner at the time, you may tell him or her: "What you just said (or did) triggered my pain-body." Have an agreement with your partner that whenever either of you says or does something that triggers the other person's pain-body, you will immediately mention it. In this way, the pain-body can no longer renew itself through drama in the relationship and instead of pulling you into unconsciousness, will help you become fully present.

Every time you are present when the pain-body arises, some of the pain-body's negative emotional energy will burn up, as it were, and become transmuted into Presence. The rest of the pain-body will quickly withdraw and wait for a better opportunity to rise again, that is to say, when you are less conscious. A better opportunity for the pain-body to arise may come whenever you lose Presence, perhaps after you have had a few drinks or while watching a violent film. The tiniest negative motion, such as being irritated or anxious, can also serve as a doorway through which the pain-body can return. The pain-body needs your unconsciousness. It cannot tolerate the light of Presence.

### **The Secret to Breaking Free of the Pain-Body**

**How long does it take to become free of the pain-body?**

It depends both on the density of an individual's pain-body as well as the degree or intensity of that individual's arising Presence. But it is not the pain-body, but identification with it that causes the suffering that you inflict on yourself and others. It is not the pain-body but identification with the pain-body that forces you to relive the past again and again and keeps you in a state of unconsciousness. So a more important question to ask would be this: "How long does it take to become free of identification with the pain-body?" And the answer to that question: It takes no time at all. When the pain-body is activated, know that what you are feeling is the pain-body in you. This knowing is all that is needed to break your identification with it. And when identification with it ceases, the transmutation begins. The knowing prevents the old emotion from rising up in your head and taking over not only the internal dialogue, but also your actions as well as interactions with other people. This means the pain-body cannot use you anymore and renew itself through you. The old emotion may then still live in you for a while and come up periodically. It may also still occasionally trick you into identifying with it again and thus obscure the knowing, but not for long.

Not projecting the old emotion into situations means facing it directly within yourself. It may not be pleasant, but it won't kill you. Your Presence is more than capable of containing it. The emotion is not who you are.

When you feel the pain-body, don't fall into the error of thinking there is something wrong with you. Making yourself into a problem – the ego loves that. The knowing needs to be followed by accepting. Anything else will obscure it again. Accepting means you allow yourself to feel whatever it is you are feeling at that moment. It is part of the isness of the Now. You can't argue with what is. Well, you can, but if you do, you suffer. Through allowing, you become what you are: vast, spacious. You become whole. You are not a fragment anymore, which is how the ego perceives itself. Your true nature emerges, which is one with the nature of God. Jesus points to this when he says, "Be ye whole, even as your Father in Heaven is whole."<sup>1</sup> The New Testament's "Be ye perfect" is a mistranslation of the original Greek word, which means whole. This is to say, you don't need to become whole, but be what you already are – with or without the pain-body.