

When Your Mind Became Your Security

On the particular trap of capable people: the instrument that made you effective is also the wall between you and what you feel.

The opening idea of *The Untethered Soul* is still the most useful sentence in it. You have a voice inside your head. And underneath the voice you have a heart, and the heart is where the energy actually moves. The voice is not there to tell you the truth. The voice is there to keep you away from what is moving in the heart. The story is the mind protecting you from the feeling.

That much is common to everyone. What is not common is how well it works.

For some people the mind is a fairly clumsy bodyguard. The story it tells is thin, the feeling breaks through anyway, and they get their reckoning early. For other people — the ones who are quick, who are good at analysis, who have spent decades being paid for judgment — the mind is an extraordinary bodyguard. It can control the situation. It genuinely can. And so nothing breaks through, and the reckoning arrives at fifty instead of twenty-five.

“People who are really smart, their minds are really adept at controlling the situations, and you become comfortable in the control that the mind offers. And it becomes your source of strength, your source of security, and it becomes a habit that's really hard to break.”

TIM O. DAVIS · FRIDAY TEACHING CALL

This is why I think the most capable people often have the hardest interior road, and it has nothing to do with them being less sincere.

Look at what happens over a career. You solve things. It works, so you do it more. The mind's control becomes not just a tool but the place you stand — your source of strength and your source of security, the thing you reach for when the ground moves. Then it stops being a choice and becomes a habit, and a habit at that depth is very hard to break, because breaking it feels like dismantling the reason you have succeeded at anything.

So when the mind starts running — rumination at two in the morning, picking through the same details and facts and data for the fourth time — you do not experience that as avoidance. You experience it as diligence. That is the whole trap in one line. **The avoidance is indistinguishable from the work ethic.**

And all the while you know, somewhere lower down, that the actual event is not in the analysis. You can feel it in the chest. You are aware that you have not processed something, and you are aware that what you are doing right now is not processing it. That awareness is uncomfortable enough that most people escalate the thinking to get away from it.

I want to be careful here, because the correction is not to distrust your mind. It is a magnificent instrument and you need it. The part of the mind that builds buildings and air conditioning and solves impossible logistics is not the enemy, and I would send you straight to it in an emergency — use it to find help, to find someone who has been through this, to arrange the practical scaffolding. That is not fear. That is a logical, productive response built next to the fear rather than driven by it.

The correction is narrower. It is to stop asking the mind to do the one job it cannot do, which is to feel something on your behalf so that you do not have to.

And here is the part that saves people, so I will say it carefully.

When you first notice all of this, the natural conclusion is that you have been suppressing everything your whole life and you are therefore starting from zero. That is not what is happening. Nobody goes from fully suppressed to fully open. What actually changes is a proportion. You were releasing almost nothing and holding almost everything, and now you are gradually arcing up — a little more released, a little less held, and then a little more again. It is a slope, not a switch.

The evidence is small and it is not dramatic. You catch yourself mid-story. You feel something in a meeting and let it be there without immediately building a case around it. You take one breath before the response that would have been automatic. You notice you are ruminating and, instead of respecting the rumination as work, you go wash your face and come back.

None of that will show up on anything you are measured by. It shows up in how you land on the people who depend on you, which nobody puts in a report, and which everyone can feel.

Quote lightly cleaned for punctuation; two consecutive sentences from the same passage joined.

THE PRACTICE

You are not going from suppressed to free. You are moving the proportion — a little more released, a little less held, week over week.