

# CULTIVATING THE WITNESS

One way to get free of attachment is to cultivate the witness consciousness, to become a neutral observer of your own life. The witness place inside you is simple awareness, the part of you that is aware of everything — just noticing, watching, not judging, just being present, being here now.

The witness is actually another level of consciousness. The witness coexists alongside your normal consciousness as another layer of awareness, as the part of you that is awakening. Humans have this unique ability to be in two states of consciousness at once. Witnessing yourself is like directing the beam of a flashlight back at itself. In any experience — sensory, emotional, or conceptual — there's the experience, the sensory or emotional or thought data, and there's your awareness of it. That's the witness, the awareness, and you can cultivate that awareness in the garden of your being.

The witness is your awareness of your own thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Witnessing is like waking up in the morning and then looking in the mirror and noticing yourself — not judging or criticizing, just neutrally observing the quality of being awake. That process of stepping back takes you out of being submerged in your experiences and thoughts and sensory input and into self-awareness.

Along with that self-awareness comes the subtle joy of just being here, alive, enjoying being present in this moment. Eventually, floating in that subjective awareness, the objects of awareness dissolve, and you will come into the spiritual Self, the Atmān, which is pure consciousness, joy, compassion, the One.

The witness is your centering device. It guides the work you do on yourself. Once you understand that there is a place in you that is not attached, you can extricate yourself from attachments. Pretty much everything we notice in the universe is a reflection of our attachments.

Desire creates your universe; that's just the way it works.

So your first job is to work on yourself. The greatest thing you can do for another human being is to get your own house in order and find your true spiritual heart.

– Excerpt from Ram Dass' newly released book  
*[Polishing the Mirror: How to Live From Your Spiritual Heart](https://www.ramdass.org/cultivating-witness/)*  
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