

Developing a third eye perspective

When I was in graduate school studying to be a counselor, our professors taught us how to listen using our third eye. That is an odd expression. How can you listen with an eye and who has three eyes?

I learned that developing a third eye means learning to watch yourself even as you pay attention to the person who is talking. When watching myself, sometimes I had an emotional reaction to what clients said. My third eye noticed my reaction and then asked whether my reaction was a natural response that anyone would have. Most of the time it was, but sometimes clients reminded me of incidents in my own life. This reminder could trigger a flood of memories and emotions (good or bad) which may have little or nothing to do with the client. In these cases, it was critical for me to identify them quickly and then put them aside so that I can hear the client themselves with a clearer mind and heart.

I did not realize it at the time but developing a third eye has been extremely helpful in my own life – far beyond a therapeutic setting. My third eye helps me better understand my own reactions to everyday life and develop more thoughtful (less reactive) responses especially in emotional situations. My third eye keeps me safe. It helps me see things as they unfold and deal with emotional situations more rationally. I still experience my emotions, but my third eye allows me to choose to reveal them or not depending on the situation. That can keep me from showing vulnerability when it isn't safe or help me share vulnerability when it is safe and appropriate.

But it does something even more important. My third eye allows me to grow spiritually by keeping me in the present moment. While it is easy to get caught up in memories of the past or imagination for the future, the third eye can only focus on the present moment – what am I saying, doing and feeling right now. Remaining in the present moment keeps me grounded in reality. Let's face it, this present moment is the only thing that is actually real. Thinking about the past or the future are things that happen in my head, but which aren't real to anyone else. Too often my memories or imagination get distorted by a narrowed focus and I lose perspective. Focusing on my third eye grounds me.

Developing our third eye not only helps us cope with the real world, but it is also a spiritual practice.

Much of our spiritual journey is spent learning to engage with God directly and intimately. It is too easy for our images of God to become our gods. When that happens, we begin to pray to our ideas *about* God, rather than engaging *with* God.

Our third eye watches our conversations and openness with God and warns us when we stray. God uses our third eye to gently call us back where we can re-engage with God in real time. Sometimes reengagement means opening our hearts, minds and souls to God's loving presence and then allowing that presence to soak into us transforming our perspective into God's perspective. Other times it means opening our hearts to a new direction or practice toward which God is drawing us. Still other times re-engagement means letting go of our images of God even when there is nothing to take its place. We wait in the stillness as God prepares the soil of our soul for new seeds. All of these ways of engaging God are only possible when we encounter God in the present moment, and that is only really possible when we develop our third eye.