

REPORTED
AWAKENINGS

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WISER MASTER CLASS

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INTRODUCTION

From 7th May to 6th August 2017, Wiser ran a 13 week pilot research group to measure the efficacy of the Wiser Master Class (Parts 1-3). One element of the study was investigating whether participating in the group could lead to profound experiences that would be identified as one of ‘awakening’, and a preliminary survey of the qualities of that.

Participants simply worked through the master class, following the instructions as given in the videos, and at the end of the 13 weeks we asked them to self-report on the occurrence of any profound or significant experiences during the master class practice period, including the emotional and mental states involved (rated from 1-10 in intensity), whether the occurrence involved the correction of a false belief about existence or reality, and finally whether they personally believe this was an ‘awakening’ or not.

The Master Class explicitly references awakening and discusses it at length, primarily as the falsification of an existential belief that prevents a deep and profound participation in the true nature of existence or reality. In conjunction with any personal opinions the participant may already hold about the phenomenon, this was the definition of awakening that participants had as a frame of reference (granting that this is historically recognised as a state that is not simple to talk about), but participants were allowed to judge in their own terms what they considered to be an awakening.

The pilot program consisted of 13 participants. The data is currently being analysed, but here is a quick take on some of the awakening data for those that can’t wait until November for the complete report.

The aim of the pilot study is primarily to inform study design, including problems that occur as a result of self-reporting, the criteria used for identifying a phenomenon such as awakening, and the problem of verification through appeals to authority. For an in-depth analysis of these problems and the proposed solutions in future study design, see the forthcoming *Wiser Research Strategy*.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Three participants had an experience they would personally describe as an awakening during the research program.

One participant described a change as follows:

There has been a significant change in the way I relate and see everything. This...crept up on me during the first half of the research programme. I now experience an abiding sense of peace, goodness, well being and beauty.

Their subject sense of awakening was described as:

(1) Abiding sense of peace, well being, love, beauty and joy. This varies in intensity but is always there.

(2) A significant change in the quality/nature of the perception of moment by moment experience.

(3) Significant reduction of anxiety/fear about the future and any sense that I could ever be lonely.

(4) Feelings that everything makes more sense.

(5) A greater love for everyone and everything and desire to align my personal life with this.

For a second participant, they described a profound or significant event as an awakening with the defining characteristic of:

Participating in creation,

which has resulted in a more *positive outlook* and an *effortless success* in their life activities.

A third described that in the past:

I regarded appearance to have a substantial reality in my life. This would cause me to contract, adopt the appearance and feel helpless about its apparent effect on me....I came to 'see through' appearance and see that it was beneath my nature to react in this way. In the end the apparent distinction between appearance and reality faded and I was left with a greater sense of unity in my experience.

And saw the situation as one of awakening, because:

There has been a permanent abiding shift in my experience. Initially I felt it as a great release from the hold that appearance had over me, and the anxiety that I felt as a result of it. I had a further experience of seeing a nameless void from which light appeared to flow outwards. This void seemed to merge inwards in union with my body. I felt an overwhelming peace and well-being as a result. There has been an abiding sense of unity since this took place. Many things have come up that would have caused me anxiety in the past, but are now seen through as having no real basis, and I abide in this sense of unity instead.

A fourth participant stated that the profound experiences they had during the research group did not in their view amount to an awakening, but that several days after the end of the group, they did experience an awakening.

Of those participants who did not subjectively identify their profound experience as an awakening, several identified a change in perspective away from one that they now considered to be mistaken:

Reality seemed indifferent and mechanical before with only a few insights into beauty and meaning. During the research group this view shifted towards a benevolent reality with growth being an inevitable outcome. I always have the choice to participate in this growth and benevolence or reject it which requires effort.

This participant rejected the notion of an awakening, because:

Although there was a shift in perspective, it seems subtle and it did not occur very sudden. Just living life getting easier and less burdensome.

Another described a change in understanding as follows:

Of the nature of roles (the playing out of problems), how they originate and how we play them. The degree to which reality is providential. I always had the belief of reality being the way it has to be, "life gives you what you need" sort of thing, but exploring the dialectic and using analogy it is much clearer that reality is in a continuous dialog with you and is there to guide you.

However, they felt they did not experience any turning point.

Another group of participants described greater understanding, but made no reference to becoming aware of a misunderstanding or stumbling block, e.g understanding of the fire analogy changed, understanding of the relationship between the mind and sense of self changed.

Some of these participants seemed uncertain exactly what could be described as an awakening, one saying:

If we are talking about the classic stages of awakening, I did not experience that in this program; however, if we are defining it more broadly as a deepening or enriching of understanding or a shift in perspective, then there were many had during the course of the program.

Another stated:

Nothing as profound as what I have previously experienced. I had lots of mini insights all of which have greatly helped me in my understanding of how to approach my progression. Maybe I did have an awakening. I don't know. It's a taboo subject.

The remaining participants did not see themselves as experiencing an awakening or a fundamental shift of perspective due to the profound experiences in the course.

INTENSITY OF EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL STATES

We examined the emotional states associated with the most profound experience during the research group, naming and rating each one. One participant misunderstood the process to describe five different experiences and their results have been removed from analysis.

In this pilot, we asked participants to identify as many as five emotional states; but most identified rather fewer (mode 2, mean 2.8). Ratings for the most intense state were high; in four cases, a 10, in another four, a 9. These included participants who did not self-identify as experiencing an awakening, nor reported a fundamental shift of perspective - for example, two reporting Bliss at the maximum 10 intensity, others reporting Clarity at 10, or Euphoria 9. This is suggestive that intensity of experience may not be sufficient to indicate a self-identified awakening.

EXCLUDED SELF-REPORTED AWAKENINGS

During the research program there were several students working through the Master Class independent of the research group. A number of these students self-reported the occurrence of an awakening during this period, both through the sit record on the website and via email, none of which were included in this study.