

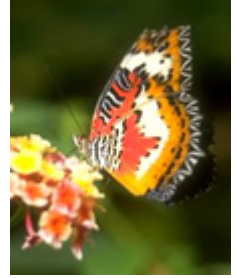
Exploring Blind Spots By Padme Nina Livingstone

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What is a blind spot anyway? Simply put, it's whatever is in the way of clarity. Blind spots are like the dust and stuff that messes up our glasses, car and windows at home. You know how it is when you look through glass after it has been thoroughly cleaned? You notice all the dust, spots, and gunk are gone. Everything you see seems fresh and clean, spotless. We can experience that kind of inner clarity when we shed light on a blind spot that's been creating difficult situations in our life.



I had a simple blind spot the other day when I went shopping for charcoal at Abundance Coop. The charcoal had been piled by the front door the last few times I was there, but when I looked this time, I didn't see any. I asked a store worker if we were out and she said there were two bags there earlier. I followed her to the front of the store, where I thought I had looked, and there they were! Just where I had a blind spot! I got teased a bit for that one!

In a more complex situation, a blind spot may be a prejudice against a person because he unconsciously reminds us of something unpleasant about our father. He may actually be kind-hearted man, and a loving father with his children.

Have you ever been repeatedly attracted to people who are selfish, irresponsible, or neglectful? Perhaps they have been more deeply confused, and behave in self-destructive and violent ways with themselves and others. A blind spot may create an unexplained attraction again and again, to the same kind of unhealthy friend or lover.

What is a blind spot anyway?

Or, we might be cut off on the highway and have an anxiety attack after it's over even though we are not hurt. Whatever's behind the anxiety attack could be called a blind spot.

It often takes time to get to know what's in the way of clarity. Often our immediate judgments are colored by unconscious memories and experiences that get in the way of our clarity. Blind spots can darken our perceptions, so that we don't actually see the world as it is. And we live much of our life without being aware that we even have them!

An Excellent Question

You might ask, "How can I see my blind spots when I'm blind to them?" An excellent question. And the question itself is the beginning of the path to clarity. For we must first recognize the fact that we have blind spots, realize we want to shed light on them, and then wonder about what's next.

How can I see my blind spots when I'm blind to them?

What Happens?

When we notice we have a blind spot, we usually respond in one of two ways— either with habitual fear or with curiosity.



With habit, we instinctively recoil from a blind spot with fear. We may argue with it, “It’s not the right time.” Or “I could never do that.” Perhaps we fear the end of a relationship if we explore our blind spot. Or, we may even fear the end of our life, as we ignore the body’s messages about illness and do nothing about it.

Whether we call it fear, self-judgment, or a sense of shame, a moment of awareness of a blind spot can be uncomfortable. We quickly shift the experience to something more comfortable and familiar, by ignoring or covering up our awareness with busyness, entertainment, eating, or whatever else we may find to fill the space.

Cycles of avoiding and ignoring come to end when we have had enough pain and wonder what we might do differently. It helps to see the blind spot as an opportunity pointing our way to less pain and confusion, and to be curious about it.

It's easier to take on one blind spot at a time.

It’s been said the angels set closed doors before us, or blind spots, and they have all the patience in the world, as they wait for us to open one door at a time. It’s up to each of us to be curious about what’s on the other side, and open each door when we are ready.

Great curiosity may be aroused when we notice how blind we are. With enough courage and clarity to keep us from getting entangled in our habits of self-blame, etc., we may understand blind spots as opportunities for adventure and discovery. We can then begin to experience awareness of blind spots with more openness, and take the time to bring curiosity to what’s happening.

Finding Patience

It’s good to understand that uncovering blind spots is a process that takes time, so we can have the necessary patience to keep going. We all have so many blind spots, there is a lifetime’s worth of discovery ahead.



It’s also important to remember, that it’s easier to take on one blind spot at a time. Becoming overwhelmed by thinking, “I have to do them all now!” doesn’t work to do anything except stress us out as we push against reality. One blind spot at a time, one moment at a time, is a compassionate intention that really works. Intention helps when we realize we feel stuck, because then we wonder what’s behind the feeling.

There may be times when a cascading effect takes place; like when I realized my parents did a lot of complaining about other people and I had innocently taken on their habit. For me, that awareness shed light on how passing judgment on people all the time has effected my life in many ways. It took time to notice when the mind goes to judgment and complaining, and how subtle it can be. Actually, when the complaining and criticism quiets down, a comforting silence remains. I feel open, in the moment, and attentive to who’s in front of me, without “my parents” in the way.

Finding Help

Just as I went looking for help at Abundance Coop, we often need help from others to guide us in the right direction, to help us see what’s there. Notice who shows up as you open to this exploration. I am far from

original in reminding you that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. Byron Katie's Loving What Is can be tremendously helpful in uncovering blind spots. I use the tools Katie recommends with my helping clients everyday.

In the end, and it may very well be in the end of this life, we have either embraced the gift behind our doors, or successfully nurtured our blind spots. If you don't open the doors in this life, many people believe they will be waiting for you next time around.

Might as well open that door and shine light on a blind spot.

Might as well open that door, and shine light on a blind spot.

By the way, don't worry about which one should be first—any door that opens lets light shine on a blind spot— and is a good one, and so is the next, and the next, and the next.

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