





One Mind:

How Our Individual Mind is Part of a Greater Consciousness and Why it Matters

An interview with Larry Dossey, MD

Anything we love can be saved.

- Alice Walker

1. What is your book *One Mind* about?

It is about the nature of our mind. I show that our mind is not confined to our brain or body, as we have been taught, but it extends infinitely outside them. Our minds have no boundaries or limits, so they merge with all other minds to form what I call the One Mind. This greater mind appears to be boundless in time, so it is immortal and eternal. It is also a source of great wisdom and creativity. This picture is based on many lines of evidence as well as a variety of people's experiences, which I explore at length in the book.

How do we know this? We know this because of two main reasons. First, people have experiences in which minds interact and share information at great distances. They could not do this if they were isolated; they must be united and connected. Second, there are hundreds of actual experiments that confirm these interactions. So: experience and experiments show that our minds are connected in ways that go beyond separateness.

My book is about how our individual minds are not just individual, but connected in the One Mind. It is about our relationships — how our minds are connected with one another and with all of life on earth, and why this is crucial for our survival. I am saying that you, your spouse, children, siblings, your lover, your ancestors, your descendants, even your mother-in-law and your dog and cat, are all members of a larger consciousness: the One Mind.

During the 20th century, we took the mind apart. I am putting it back together. We have been taught that our mind is fragmented, that it is divided into the preconscious, the sub-conscious, the unconscious, and the collective unconscious. This book looks through the other end of the telescope. It shows that our individual minds are part of a greater whole, a dimension of consciousness that encompasses all minds — past, present, and future, human as well as non-human.

Why is this important? This realization is our best hope for our survival on earth. Only by realizing, at the deepest emotional level, our connections with one another and the earth itself can we summon the courage necessary to make the tough choices that are required in order to survive. So this book is about



staying alive — saving the earth and our own skins.

The benefits are enormous. If our individual minds do not have boundaries and mix with all other minds, this means we have access to all possible wisdom and creativity. And since the One Mind is infinite not just in space but also in time, it must be, in some sense, immortal. So the One-Mind view provides us indirect assurance of the survival of bodily death.

The One Mind facilitates our connectedness and oneness with all else, therefore our love for all else. The One mind helps us re-sacralize the world.

a second." This experience carries with it the sense that one has apprehended ineluctable Truth. (Source: Lawrence LeShan, *Landscapes of the Mind*. Guilford, CT: Eirini Press; 2012: 91).

There are allusions to the idea in the New Testament. St. Paul spoke of "the peace of God that passes all understanding." As mythologist Joseph Campbell put it, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is within. Who is in heaven? God. This means, Campbell said, that God is within each person — infinite, boundless, immortal, one.

My book is about how our individual minds are not just individual, but connected in the One Mind.

2. How did you conceive this idea?

The concept of the One Mind has been around for a long time. We can trace it back 3,000 years to the philosophy of ancient India, where it was called the Akashic Records. It is echoed in the Hindu concept of the union of the human and the divine: tat tvam asi of "thou art that."

Many traditions honor the experience of the One Mind. It has been variously called satori in Zen, samadhi in Yoga, fana in Sufism, and Christ consciousness in Christianity. Other terms include cosmic consciousness, illumination, awakening, enlightenment, and so on. The experience of the One Mind, however it is named, involves a direct apprehension of the universe and all in it as being One with no real dividing lines or divisions in it. Everything is connected with everything else. Partition and separation are illusions. As psychologist Lawrence LeShan wrote, *"There is no separation between entities, neither by time nor by space. The whole universe is perceived as 'a one without*

The American transcendentalists advocated a One-Mind concept — Emerson's idea of the Over-soul. The Swiss psychologist Carl Jung's idea of the collective unconscious is a version of the One Mind. William James, the founder of American psychology, was a proponent of a single, collective mind.

Many great scientists in a variety of fields have endorsed the idea. It has surfaced in modern physics in the writings of Nobel Prize winner Erwin Schrödinger, whose wave equations lie at the heart of quantum physics. The eminent physicist David Bohm also strongly supported the idea of a single, over-arching mind that includes all individual minds.

So the idea of the One Mind began millennia ago and persists to the present day, and it is supported by some of the outstanding figures in modern science and psychology.

Up to now, the concept of the One Mind has rested mainly on philosophy, spiritual insights, and reports



of people's personal experiences. Not anymore! We have an abundance of empirical evidence pointing to the One Mind. But the evidence is little known. In One Mind, I try to bring together the numerous threads of evidence supporting the idea.

There are basically two types of evidence. One is empirical evidence, which includes actual experiments. Another type of evidence is experiential and personal — the reports of thousands of individuals that affirm what the experiments are telling us. These two types of evidence reinforce each other.

3. What is the big deal? What difference does it make whether I believe in the One Mind or not?

The consequences are profound. Currently, we are taught that our consciousness is produced by the brain and is limited to the physical brain and body. This means that when we die, our mind, our consciousness, is annihilated. Nothing about our consciousness survives.

The One Mind is a wholly different view. Its premise is that our consciousness transcends the physical brain, body, and the present. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that our mind is nonlocal in space and time. "Nonlocal" is just a fancy word for "infinite." If something about our mind is infinite in space and time, then it is omnipresent in space and time and therefore immortal. Although the brain and body will perish, consciousness endures because of its nonlocal nature.

Therefore the One Mind redefines death. With the One Mind, immortality is back on the table. So the concept of the One Mind is not trivial. It is about our origin and destiny. It is about survival, which many people consider the greatest issue of all.

The One Mind concept also says we are intimately connected with every living thing that has any degree

of mind or consciousness — which, I believe includes all living creatures to same degree. This makes possible a sense of relatedness and sharing that goes beyond the "merely human." Our relations include all life on earth. This makes possible a degree of emotional connectedness that can spur us to the kind of action that is required for our survival as a species on this planet.

A new ethic and a sense of urgency arise. Just as a parent chooses to protect his or her own children, we sense, through the One Mind, that we must protect our relations with whom we share consciousness, which includes all of life on earth.

The new ethic makes it possible to expand and revise the Golden Rule. We no longer say, "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*" Now we say, "*Be compassionate to others because in some sense they are you.*"

The One Mind makes it possible for us to access the wisdom we need to confront the formidable problems we face as an endangered species on earth. Anyone's wisdom can be our wisdom, because of our intrinsic connectedness with all other minds.

4. You are a physician. Does this have anything to do with your interest in the One Mind?

Yes, definitely.

During my early career as an internist, I experienced several events that turned my views of consciousness upside down and inside out. I found these experiences unnerving.

I was a typical believer that mind and brain were essentially the same. But when I began experiencing precognitive dreams, gaining information from the future before the event happened, I began to question the dogma that says these events can not happen. It



was not just me; my patients, as well as nurses and other doctors, shared similar experiences with me.

In the late 1980s, experiments began to be published in medical journals assessing the impact of healing intentions and prayers on the clinical course of patients in distant hospitals and coronary care units. Similar experiments were done with non-humans and with organs and cells. These experiments strongly implied that our mind is not confined to our brain. Our intentions, thoughts, and wishes can reach out beyond the body and make a difference in “the world out there.”

Several evaluations of this field have been published, called systematic or meta-analyses. This is a way of combining the results of many studies in order to take an overall look at a particular field. Many of these analyses have been published in peer-reviewed journals. Most of them are positive, indicating that these effects are real. Still, they have not penetrated our awareness as they should.

It is vital to realize — and this is almost always ignored by skeptics — that scores of these experiments deal with effects not just in humans but in animals, plants, microbes, and even chemical reactions. Why important? Skeptics generally say that if a person responds to, say, the healing intentions of a distant individual, it is merely a placebo effect — the result of positive thinking, suggestion, or expectation. But if an animal, plant, microbes, or biochemical reactions are affected, the distant effect cannot be dismissed as a placebo even because, as far as we know, animals, plants, microbes, and chemicals do not think positively. They do not have placebo responses. So these non-human studies strongly suggest that the remote, distant, consciousness-mediated healing effects and similar nonlocal phenomena are real, and that we are not fooling ourselves.

These various experiments point toward the One Mind. They show that some aspect of our conscious-

ness operates outside the human brain and body, and cannot be confined or limited, but is nonlocal or limitless. If limitless, the mind has no boundaries and must come together with all other minds.

Other studies called “presentiment” experiments or experiments in “anticipatory awareness,” show that we can acquire information from the future, before an event even happens.

Putting this evidence together, a nonlocal picture of consciousness emerges, which means that our minds are not localized or confined to particular points in space or time. If our minds are unbounded, they must in some dimension come together to form a single mind, a single entity: the One Mind.

5. You begin your book with the story of Wesley Autrey, an African-American who saved the life of a young white man from certain death in the New York subway. What does that have to do with the One Mind?

Wesley Autrey, 50, a black construction worker and Navy veteran, saw a young man fall onto the subway tracks in Manhattan while having a seizure in January 2007. He instantly jumped onto the tracks and tried to lift him onto the platform, but could not do so in time. As the train approached, Autrey shoved him into the slight depression between the rails and covered him with his own body. The train could not stop in time and several cars passed over the two men before it could be brought to a halt. Autrey was nearly beheaded; he had grease stains from the train’s undercarriage on his cap.

The reasoning goes back to my experience as a battalion surgeon in the boonies in Vietnam in 1968-1969, where I was involved in an experience similar to Autrey’s, which I describe in the book. Briefly, I rescued a helicopter pilot from his crashed chopper, when everyone believed it would explode. Fortunately it did



not. I experienced other similar events in Vietnam. I was disturbed and confused by these happenings. I had sworn that I would never take unnecessary chances before going to Vietnam. I began to doubt my sanity.

Why would I, or anyone else, risk his or her life to save a perfect stranger? It goes against the premise of evolutionary biology, which maintains that our most basic drive is to preserve our genes or those of our close kin, not risk our life to save a total stranger.

6. You say that the One Mind is crucial in confronting the great challenges we humans face. What do you mean?

Our problems are enormous: global climate change, environmental degradation, pollution, overpopulation, water scarcity, hunger and food insecurity, endless wars, religious strife, degradation and acidification of our oceans, on and on. Nearly all these problems are caused by individuals who represent a particular culture, race, tribe, country, or religion,

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I eventually came across an explanation by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, described by mythologist Joseph Campbell. Schopenhauer believed that at the decisive moment the rescuer identifies so completely with the rescued person that their minds have literally fused; they have become a single mind. Their mental union is so complete that the rescuer is not rescuing someone else, he is essentially rescuing himself. I felt deeply that this explanation described my own experiences in Vietnam.

In researching my book, I accumulated a number of life-saving stories. They are not just human-to-human events, but they also involve humans rescuing animals, animals rescuing humans, and animals rescuing animals — every possible combination.

So what is going on? What's the pattern? I think Schopenhauer nailed it: there is a fusion of apparently separate, individual minds into a single, collective consciousness. In these instances something larger than individuality takes hold: the One Mind is bridging and uniting individual minds.

who are competing with other individuals of different views. Put another way: we are fragmented, and we are destroying our life-support systems. We cannot see beyond our individual self, our tribe, our religion, our culture.

It is going to be difficult or impossible to confront these problems intelligently without dealing with our fragmentation and sense of separateness. We need a profound shift in our sense of how we are related to one another. I believe this shift is possible by re-imagining how we connect with others through our consciousness. The “us-against-them” competitive model is not going to see us through. A shift to a One-Mind perspective may be our best alternative — a sense of unity that is experienced at our deepest emotional levels.

A dramatic example of this shift, which I write about is the “Overview Effect” experienced by astronauts and cosmonauts returning to Earth. They sense profoundly that our planet is an integral whole. The customary edges and borders are not fundamental.



Our disagreements and divisions are seen as petty, arbitrary, and utterly wrong. This shift in perception can be life-changing for the astronaut. An example is Edgar Mitchell, the lunar module pilot of Apollo 14.

If we genuinely believe we are “of One Mind” with all others, our existential premises shift. Our resentment and hatred of “the other” diminish. Not only is our attitude toward other humans transformed, but toward the earth and all its creatures as well.

7. OK, the One Mind is important. How do we access it?

Good news! It's easier than you think.

Our membership in the One Mind already exists. We are already a part of it. It is not something we have to engineer, acquire, generate, or manufacture — no assembly required. We just have to become aware of it. We have to get out of the way, so the realization comes through. That can happen in a great many ways. Some people are just born with this awareness — advanced souls who come into life knowing their larger connections.

Unexpected events can pave the way. We can experience an epiphany. This is a sudden, spontaneous knowing of how we fit in, usually accompanied by a sense of joy, meaning, and purpose in life. Millions of people have described this expanded awareness following a near-death experience. People may also experience a powerful telepathic, clairvoyant, or pre-cognitive event that demonstrates they are more than their brain, and that their consciousness can operate outside the here and now.

We can invite this awareness through meditation or some other type of spiritual work, in which we learn to set our ego and sense of self aside and permit a larger, more expansive awareness to bubble up from our unconscious mind — an awareness that has always been

there, but which we have not allowed to surface.

All these processes have this in common: the dominant sense of self, of ego, is transcended in favor of an expanded notion of who we are.

Every section in the book is an example of how we can become aware of our participation in the One Mind. For instance, the chapter “Dream Pathways” reveals how people often enter this awareness through detailed dreams of far-off or future events, which jolts them into realizing their consciousness is not stuck in their brain or the present moment. The chapter “Telesomatic Events,” in which people share similar physical symptoms and feelings with a distant person, is also a doorway to One-Mind awareness. Sections on children who remember previous lives is another; so too are the chapters on remote viewing, near-death experiences, communication with the deceased, presentiment effects, and so on throughout the entire book.

But when all is said and done, you do not have to do anything to experience the One Mind. Most people who come to this realization do not have any dazzling experience. They simply grow into the realization of connectedness. It simply appears as a natural process, an awareness that is part of our psychological and spiritual maturation. It becomes part of who we are.

For many, the old-fashioned way works best: turn off your smart phone, sit down, shut up, be quiet, and pay attention. To what? To whatever comes through. Call it meditation, contemplation, or something else. The point is to turn down the chatter, the stuff that crowds out everything else in our waking life. Let your inner wisdom surface. You may be surprised to discover what you already know.

The Law of Reversed Effort works here: the harder you try, the more it eludes you. So set an intention, open up, invite the wisdom to enter, and go with the flow.



8. Then why is it so difficult to be aware of the reality of the One Mind?

Bad learning. We are victims of a collective hypnosis, a cultural trance that has convinced us that the One Mind cannot possibly be true. Our culture emphasizes the importance and uniqueness of the individual — pulling our selves up by our own bootstraps. This has an isolating effect that blinds us to the ways in which we are connected with everyone and everything. Another reason is that we are wired biologically to focus on our separateness and individuality — the

sight, touch, hearing, etc. These senses lead to a world picture that psychologist Lawrence LeShan calls our “alpha world” — a world “out there” that is made of a huge variety of separate physical objects and things, including separate human beings. Our sensory perceptions are so immediate and vivid that we assume we are sensing an absolutely true picture of our world. Accepting this world picture as true is required if we are to survive as individuals and as a species. As LeShan says, “If you wish to continue bodily functioning, you had better act as if it [your individuality] pictures reality.” (Landscapes of the Mind, page 84).

There is a saying in the field of transpersonal psychology: “In order to transcend the ego, you must first have one. In order to go beyond the self, you must first be one.”

survival of our genes or those of our kin. This makes it more difficult to acknowledge our unity with one another — but not impossible.

The ways in which we encounter the One Mind are so numerous and varied that it is quite easy to be aware of our membership in it — but only if we can break the trance. So our goal is to break the hypnotic spell of the cult of the individual.

It is not that individuality is bad, but that it is limited. It can also be destructive if pushed too far, as our species is discovering. A coin has more than one side. Our task is to honor both sides of the coin — our individuality and our unity, as appropriate. Some people think it has to be one or the other side of the coin; both sides cannot be valid. But both sides are valid, and we must honor our bodily individuality, separateness, and uniqueness along with our oneness and unity of consciousness.

We are born with a sensory array — our ability for

So we are not trying to banish or de-throne our individuality but honor it, as our situation requires. Our individuality is not all we are, and we must keep our individuality in its place and prevent it from blinding us toward the unitary aspect of our individual minds, our One Mind.

I emphasize the need for a dual identity that honors both our individuality as well as our collective unity with one another in the One Mind. This is an example of what physicist Niels Bohr called complementarity — the coming together of apparent opposites to produce a more accurate picture of the whole.

There is a saying in the field of transpersonal psychology: “In order to transcend the ego, you must first have one. In order to go beyond the self, you must first be one.” It’s the same in developing an awareness of the One Mind. Our awareness that self, ego, and individuality are not all that we are empowers our awareness of the One Mind. It is a paradox, but it is valid.



The problem is that we have become practically hypnotized culturally to think that we are isolated individuals, connected with each other only through our see-touch-hear-feel senses. We are taught that our mind is locked into our brain; it does not go wandering through space and time to unite with other minds. Actually, that is the far-out view. It is far out because evidence shows it is not true. The ordinary situation is One Mind unity and connectedness. We have turned reality upside down.

Once we get comfortable with the basic idea of One Mind and open up to the ways in which our unity reveals itself, we will wonder how we could ever have swallowed the conventional view that we are individuals who are isolated in a sea of others.

9. You have written extensively in previous books about healing and spirituality. What is their connection with the One Mind?

The healing experiments I have written about extensively are entry points to the One Mind.

They reveal that our compassionate intentions can influence what happens “out there.” These studies reveal a nonlocal feature of our consciousness — that it can function outside the brain, at a distance, to change the state of the physical world, in this instance the clinical condition of someone in need. Healing experiments reveal an unbounded, unlimited side of the mind — and if unbounded, minds must come together in some dimension to unite as a single mind.

There is a major overlap of spirituality and the One Mind. Spirituality involves a sense of connectedness with something greater than the individual self or ego, whatever term we use — God, Goddess, the Divine, Allah, Universe, etc. That is why One Mind experiences are often experienced as epiphanies, awakening, or enlightenment — that sudden awareness that, as the Hindu aphorism says, “tat tvam asi,” or “thou art

that.” These experiences involve an awakening to our intrinsic divinity, “the god within,” our innate infinitude, our citizenship in the One Mind. In other words, “You are it!”

10. This sounds blasphemous: humans becoming God.

Not really. The evidence does show that we possess qualities via the One Mind that we have traditionally attributed to the Divine, such as infinitude in space and time. That is not the same as being God.

A metaphor that helps clarify this relationship is that of a drop of water within the larger ocean. The single drop of ocean water has the same composition as the ocean itself, but it is profoundly different in terms of power, quantity, and extent. It is the same, but different. Just so, the relationship of the human and the Absolute or Divine.

11. You mention creativity often in One Mind. What is the connection?

The connection is profound. The literature on creativity shows that creative breakthroughs often occur out of the blue, with little connection with logic or analysis. This happens in all areas — science, art, music, mathematics, etc. The creator, inventor, or artist often feels connected with something outside herself — a source of awareness that is far greater than one’s individual mind.

Thomas Edison, America’s great inventor, summed this up, saying, “People say I have created things. I have never created anything. I get impressions from the Universe at large and work them out, but I am only a plate on a record or a receiving apparatus — what you will. Thoughts are really impressions that we get from outside.” (source: Neil Baldwin, *Edison: Inventing the Century*. NY: Hyperion; 1995:376.)



The eminent German physicist and philosopher Baron Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker agreed: “[In any great discovery] we find the often disturbing and happy experience: ‘It is not I; I have not done this.’ Still, in a certain way it is I — yet not the ego ...but...a more comprehensive self.” (source: C. F. von Weizsäcker. Introduction. Gopi Krishna. *The Biological Basis of Religion and Genius*. New York, NY: Harper and Row; 1972: 35-36.) Edison’s “impressions from the Universe at large” and von Weizsäcker’s “more comprehensive self” point to the One Mind, an infinite source of wisdom and information.

12. What difference in your own life has awareness of the One Mind made?

Awareness of the One Mind has contributed enormously to my peace, tranquility, and joy. You see I am an introvert by nature, inclined toward aloneness. Awareness of my place in the One Mind has helped me overcome my innate tendency for isolation. I feel I have found a more authentic place in the Universe. It is rather like coming home and realizing that you never left. It is a sense of belonging, of finding your natural fit in the great scheme of things.

The great human dread of death goes out the window. As a physician, this is important to me, because I believe the fear of death and annihilation has caused more suffering throughout human history than all the physical diseases combined. The One Mind reduces that fear and the suffering that goes with it. Why? The One Mind mandates immortality by way of our infinitude in space and time.

One-Mind awareness has affected the way I relate to other people. I have become much less competitive, more giving, more supportive, more understand-

ing of other people’s difficulties and problems, and more interactive with others. (I still have a way to go!)

One-Mind awareness helps me see how I can make a difference. In today’s world, we can feel overwhelmed by the challenges we face. What difference can my efforts as a single individual possibly make? The One Mind increases our sense of adequacy and what is possible, because through it we have access to all wisdom and knowledge. We realize we do not need to know and do everything individually, because we are a part of the Great Connect. We are never alone. We are an infinite team, not a lone wolf. The pressure eases. A lightness of mind and spirit arises, and perhaps a sense of humor. Now that is different!

There is a sort of psycho-spiritual satisfaction that comes with One-Mind awareness — the joy, fulfillment, and empowerment that come from the discovery of one’s inner divinity and membership in the community of consciousness that is our birthright. 