

What is Enlightenment?

Beliefs are stored deep in the body

with Linda Clair



A Regular Q & A column exploring the mystery of enlightenment

Q: If enlightenment already exists, why do you say it takes time to become enlightened?

A: While we still believe that we exist as a separate self in the relative world, we also believe that time exists.

Q: So why do we need to act from that belief in time, and accept that enlightenment takes time?

A: We need to disprove our beliefs. At the root of them is the belief in 'I' and that encompasses the belief in time. As long as we believe 'I am the body' we believe in time. As long as I believe 'I exist, I believe in time.

Q: The so-called obstructions to enlightenment are only illusions, aren't they? If we say it takes time to get rid of them, aren't we giving them power by believing in them?

A: No, because we've taken years to build up these habits and illusions.

Q: And beliefs?

A: And beliefs. These habits go very, very deeply into us. They're not going to change overnight. And by believing in all those things, we also believe in time. So we have to prove to ourselves, through our own experience, that all this is an illusion. No matter how many times we hear someone who's enlightened saying, 'it's an illusion', we still don't believe them. It's only when belief turns into trust, that we stop believing anything, and we realize that it's an illusion.

Q: And that has to take time?

A: It has to take time. And all these illusions are stored in our bodies as beliefs, and our bodies are subject to relative time. We've built it up over the years and stored our emotions and beliefs in our bodies. And from my experience, the only way out of time is through the body. It's like you're going backwards in time through the body. It takes time to purify the body.

When you're enlightened, you don't believe in anything. There's nothing to believe in.

Q: I think awakening is often understood as a mental phenomenon – as seeing differently. It is a different way of seeing, isn't it?

A: Yes, but it's seeing through the body, seeing with the eyes, hearing with the ears... It's pure seeing, through the body, without the contamination of the mind.

Your body becomes pure. The whole internal structure of the body, particularly the brain, changes. My body movements are very different to how they used to be. I used to be very self-conscious about my body, and that would affect my movements. Our emotion affects the way we use our bodies, the way we move. When you are free from your mind, your body moves in a much more natural way. I used to be quite defensive with my body, but now I'm hardly aware of it.

Q: You're hardly aware of it?

A: The body becomes a secondary thing. It's handy to move around in, and I quite enjoy some aspects of the body, but I don't feel bound by it any more. There's no longer an inside or outside to the body, because really you know there's no body. I'm not continually seeking satisfaction through my senses. This is an enormous relief.

During the spiritual process you become more and more deeply aware of your body. This is an extremely important part of the process, but you eventually realise that it is the attachment to the body that is the source of all fear.