

Community Comment 10/5/18

"Reticular Activating System"

Record on 10/3/18 - Darus Trutna - 567 words

Hi, My name is Darus Trutna and for this community comment we'll be chatting about how we can control the way we see the world around us. For example, have you seen any Tesla's driving around? As a Tesla fan myself, that believes in the potential of transitioning fully to renewable energy, I enjoy spotting Model S, Model X, and now Model 3s driving around town. Isn't it odd how that works that something that you are focused on or care about just starts showing up more often? We all experience this, but why does this happen and how might this be important for shaping how we each see and act in our community? Let's dig in.

So, our brains are incredibly complex. They can sift through billions of bits of data at any given time. And somehow it has to organize that information and present something useful to you so that you don't short circuit. Now what evolution came up with was to develop a part of our brain called the Reticular Activating System. The Reticular Activating System (RAS) is a bundle of nerves at your brainstem that filters out unnecessary information so the important stuff gets through (*or, more accurately, what it deems important gets through*). ~~The RAS is an impressive sounding name for a fairly small piece of the brain. Almost all of your senses are wired directly to this bundle of neurons that's about the size of your little finger.~~

★ This little bundle of neurons can be compared to a filter or a nightclub bouncer that works for your conscious awareness. ~~It tries to make sure that we don't have to deal with more information than we can handle.~~ It's why you can tune out a crowd full of talking people, yet immediately snap to attention when someone says your name or something that at least sounds like it.

Your RAS sifts through the data and presents only the pieces that are important to you. In the same way, the RAS seeks information that validates your beliefs. It filters the world through the parameters you give it, and your beliefs shape those parameters. If you think society is collapsing and people are terrible, your brain will be attuned to spotting that. If you believe we have the potential to do better and are on the right track as a society, you are more likely to spot evidence of this. The RAS helps you see what you want to see and in doing so, influences your actions.

If you ask the right questions, your RAS will highlight the people, information and opportunities that help you achieve your goals. We might ask, "What is going right in Humboldt County and how can I support that?" ~~Myself, I am a proponent Housing First and improving access to affordable housing.~~ I'm constantly seeing opportunities and people that I can follow up with to help support that direction. I see new developments, ~~cute houses, well-maintained yards,~~ new businesses opening, and positive progress throughout the community that reaffirms my belief in our potential.

★ My recommendation: Ask your brain some good questions. "Hey Brain, what is beautiful around me right now?" or "Hey you beautiful brain, what are some challenges I can take on to make things better?" When it does its job right and you begin to notice these things around you, you can say ~~"Thanks Reticular Activating System!"~~ Good Work Brain. Keep it up."