States show us what exists, and structures (levels and lines of development), determine how we interpret what exists.

Ken Wilber
Introduction to States of Consciousness

The Lesson 3 Video from the Evolutionary Dynamics Primer illustrates two main axes of growth and development. The first axis are the levels and lines or structure of consciousness, whose stages we call structure stages and that we covered in Lessons 1 and 2. Development occurs through the levels or stages of growth and multiple lines of intelligence (growing up).

The second axis is states of consciousness, whose stages we call state stages (the process of waking up or coming into enlightened awareness). We’ll be taking a more in-depth look at these states in our next lesson, but offer a brief review of them below.

Waking up (realizing one’s ultimate identity) is typically revealed through a series of stages that are represented in surprisingly similar ways throughout the world of contemplative development.

States come in both small and large versions. Small states are the passing feelings of happiness, sadness, anxiety, joy, sorrow, elation, lust, and so on. These are simply the moment-to-moment experiential moods or tones or atmosphere-of-feeling we experience.

We will be working with the large states of consciousness.

Most of the perennial wisdom traditions describe four or five major, natural, large states of consciousness.

The Primary States of Consciousness are:

• The waking state is the sensory-motor, physical realm and its material objects.

• The dreaming state is the vast spectrum between the finite physical waking realm, and the dreamless, contentless causal realm.

• The deep-dreamless sleep state is the pure formless empty state or self without boundaries or qualities.

• The neutral witnessing state is the pure awareness or Self that perceives all the objects in the cosmos yet remains unidentified with any of them.

• The non-dual unity is the highest or ultimate state of consciousness.

When we’re born, we typically start out identifying solely with the waking state. Through meditation or contemplation we can expand our awareness to include all five of these states of consciousness.

States of consciousness exist and are experienced within our physical body, and each major state is supported by a specific aspect of our body.

In the complete Evolutionary Dynamics training, we’ll go through each of these fundamental, large states of consciousness in more detail, so you can easily recognize each one.
INTEGRATION QUESTIONS

1. Consider an area in your life where you had a positive impact or contributed to the forward momentum of a project or the resolution of a problem. (Such as parenting, extended family relationships, career, personal goals, volunteer opportunities, etc.) Can you see what level of development you were working from at the time? Looking forward, how can a deep and practiced understanding of the levels of development facilitate a greater impact?

2. Consider which line(s) are the most fully developed in you and where you can see the strong capacities you use for navigating your life. What do you think gave you this ability? How was it developed?

3. After reviewing the State of Consciousness section above, reflect on one transformative state experience that you have experienced in your life. Which state of consciousness was available to you at that time? How would you describe it?