As we go deeper into spiritual practice we experience more freedom and joy in our lives, but we also uncover the persistent patterns that we have been enmeshed in for a very long time. These include behaviors and thought-constructs that are an expression of our tensions, our limited perspective, and our self-rejection.

When these patterns are exposed, instead of reacting with horror at what we see, why not say, “How wonderful that this unconscious barrier to my own highest Self has been exposed to me!” Adopting this perspective of gratitude, we would suddenly have a completely different relationship to whatever is being exposed, and can deal with and process it from a very different perspective. We consciously choose to not engage the resonance in us that created that pattern in the first place.

Every level of density is really contracted energy that has been ground into us. We can soften, open, and transform that density into flow—but we can’t do that if our mind is on it or if we’re emotionally bound by it. Change only comes from having the objective awareness to see that although this is part of who we are, it does not have to bind our consciousness. The fact that these patterns might have bound us until this moment is not something to obsess about. We can either get wrapped up in the self-rejection of dwelling on past mistakes, or we can be grateful for having been given the opportunity to change.

From our higher consciousness we recognize these patterns as our own. Then, we surrender from that place of openness, not from within the pattern. Normally, we’re just jerks and don’t know it! We run through life swinging our sledgehammer, beating the hell out of everything and everyone, and we’re unaware that we’re doing this. When we get still and quiet enough, we see these patterns start to emerge and recognize “Yes, this is me, but this is not all of me.”

Our patterns are covering the light. They are covering our consciousness—and what good does it do us if we’re unaware of the covering? It’s still there, seething and fermenting, and in many people it just explodes. In reality, all the patterns, all the labels of self-rejection, and all the drama surrounding our patterns are simply camouflaging the underlying pattern of our belief that we are separate from God. Holding on to separation is the highest form of self-rejection. When we understand this, we can truly change.

The highest practice is surrender and the conscious discipline is to not reengage either the pattern or the place in us that feels all this self-rejection and self-hatred for having the pattern in the first place! All that does is sink us farther into the quicksand. The only thing that will free us from self-rejection is the conscious and disciplined process of opening our heart and taking responsibility for not rejecting ourselves.
A pattern is a huge block of density, and to absorb its energy you may have to chew on it for a while. It may submerge itself again, you may act out on it a bit. That’s fine, because the next time the pattern shows up it will have been partially digested and you will have a better chance to deal with it. But if you’re inside the pattern and fighting it, you have no capacity to do anything else.

We must have the objective, discriminating awareness to see that two things are happening: a), we’re a jerk with all our patterns and self-rejection, and b), God is showing us that we’re a jerk who’s living in that condition. Having this self-reflective awareness is what enables us to choose whether to be conscious or unconscious about what we do. The amazing thing is that we’re brought to a place where we do have a choice. Otherwise, we would continue to run around, bouncing off the walls, not realizing that we have any other option.

We are so busy feeling the things we’re bound by that we forget to feel the things that we’re freed by. All pattern, all self-rejection, is one thing: contracted energy—and the only way you will free yourself of it is to internalize that energy and put it into the flow within your psychic system. As soon as we start to experience freedom in ourselves, then the very things that bind us are recognized as “lunch,” as something that can nourish and open our psychic mechanism. The conscious discipline is to absorb and integrate the density of the pattern into ourself, in the moment it arises, instead of projecting and re-engaging the pattern. There’s no need to label it or feel it. We recognize that our pattern is what’s restricting our freedom from expanding. Now we have a whole different relationship to it and a whole different relationship to ourselves.

Being conscious is never automatic. No matter how big our awareness is, we still must consciously sustain it and choose to function from that level. Instead of continuing to live in some limited consciousness, we create the vasana, the impression of a more open place in ourselves, and then that’s what grows and grows. This is how we expand into higher consciousness and “permanentize” it.

From that expanded state, when patterns pop up, we simply see that it’s our ego, our self-rejection, or our thoughts going off, and this no longer has a grip on us. We can deal with whatever arises, because if some unconsciousness is exposed, we see it clearly—because we’re above it, rather than inside or underneath it. The higher you go, the better the view, the more luxurious the living. In the penthouse suite, there’s only freedom and joy. The only rent is the unconditional surrender of that which limits us. Who wouldn’t want to live up there?

—Swami Khecaranatha