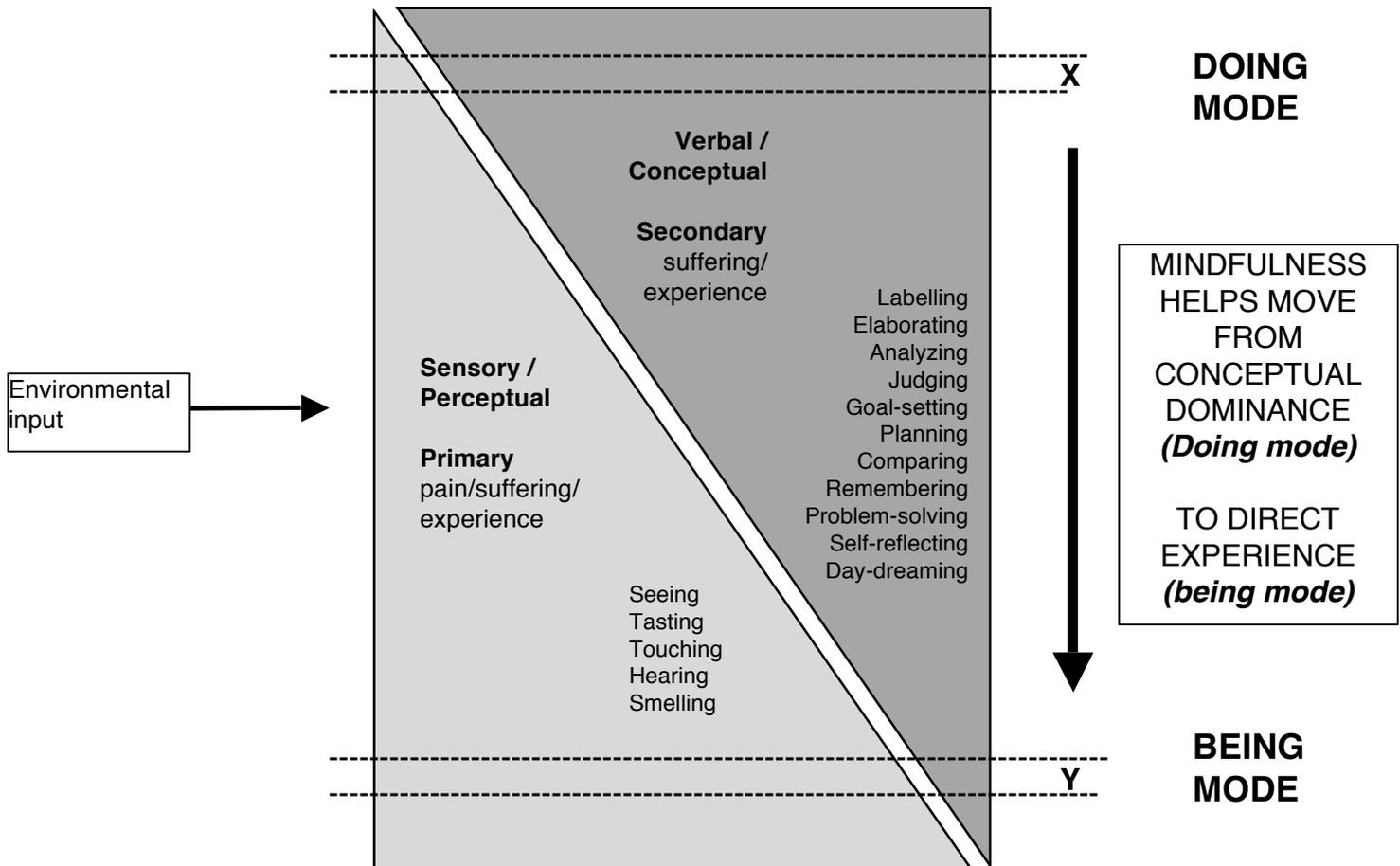


# Coming to Our Senses

## *From 'Doing Mode' to 'Being Mode'*



The diagram above shows two ways in which our minds tend to operate<sup>1</sup>:

- the **left hand triangle** represents our direct experience of the world - the world we see, taste, touch, hear and smell. We call this **Primary** experience/pain/suffering.
- the **right hand (upside down) triangle** represents our conceptualisation of that world - the way we label every experience, and then think about, analyse, compare, judge it etc. This is where our **Secondary** suffering lies.

When living with pain, illness or stress, we tend to operate at the higher end of the diagram - in the band marked X - worrying, analysing, trying to apply problem-solving techniques to our difficulty, with very little awareness of our actual sensations in the moment. The ability to think, analyse and reflect is of course a vital human skill, but we often overuse this part of our mind to try and 'think' our way out of our pain, and this mental activity tends to keep us

<sup>1</sup> This is slightly adapted from Professor Mark Williams in *Mindfulness and Psychological Process*.

trapped in secondary suffering. Living at the upper end of the diagram (X) also means we are trapped in 'doing mode'<sup>2</sup>

Mindfulness practice helps us to move towards the lower end of the diagram, with a more direct experience of the world, and less thinking. The band marked Y at the lower end of the diagram represents a high degree of sensory experience with very little thought. We don't have to make an effort to think less, rather our attention is so taken up with direct sensory experience that there's simply no room left in our mind for thinking about it. We call this dwelling in 'being mode' and it is a much more satisfying way to live.

With mindfulness we also discover that we can't be aware of our physical sensations and lost in anxious or disturbed thoughts at *exactly the same moment*. So, coming into Being Mode is a powerful way to undercut unhelpful mental habits. We may bounce back into disturbed thinking in the next moment, but by 'catching' this habit again and again - each time bringing awareness back to primary sensations in the body – we can gradually unwind our mental habits and find more peace and ease.

It's important to understand that we're not aiming to live all the time in band Y - sometimes it's appropriate to think - we're just trying to live from a more direct, immediate experience of the world and to restore more balance. It's very refreshing to spend a little time every day in band Y, and this experience lowers our stress and distress dramatically. This is why the Breathworks mindfulness programmes teach many ways to develop body awareness e.g. the body scan, breathing anchor, mindful movements etc.

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<sup>2</sup> For more on this see 'Mindfulness for Health' by Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman, pgs 77-85