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Phil Jaekl, with a PhD in neuroscience, is a writer about neuroscience topics. He had interviewed Russ for an essay in [Aeon](#) about inner speech. Like most people, Phil had assumed that mental life, including his own, was composed of a single stream of inner speech. Russ had claimed, on the basis of his descriptive experience sampling (DES) studies, that the constant-stream-of-inner-speech assumption was far from correct. Russ and Phil agreed that Phil should serve as a DES participant and find out for himself.

That led to the 10 DES interviews described here; Phil writes about his experience of this process in [Nautilus](#). Spoiler alert: Phil discovered (a) that inner speaking did occur for Phil, but less than half the time; (b) that he wasn't making a clear distinction between the phenomenon of *speaking* and the phenomenon of *hearing his own voice* (Russ says that for many if not most people, those phenomena are as different as speaking into a tape recorder and hearing your own voice played back. Even if we count inner hearing as inner speaking, the phenomenon still occurred less than half the time; (c) that he frequently engaged in what DES calls *sensory awareness*—the noticing of some sensory aspect of the inner or outer environment for its own sake (that is, not for any instrumental reason); and (d) that he frequently was innerly seeing (a.k.a. seeing an image).

**Russell T. Hurlburt, Ph.D.**

Professor of Psychology

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

4505 Maryland Parkway • Las Vegas, NV 89154-5030

EMAIL [russ@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:russ@unlv.nevada.edu) • PHONE (702) 895-0194 • WEB: [hurlburt.faculty.unlv.edu](http://hurlburt.faculty.unlv.edu)