

# **The Art of Consciousness**

## *Voice Dialogue, the Psychology of Selves, and the Aware Ego Process*

By J. Tamar Stone

Living within us are a myriad of Selves, each with their own interests, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and energies. These Selves, referred to as sub-personalities, voices, or aspects of our consciousness, greatly influence our lives and the choices we make day-to-day. Our Selves are born at various stages in our life, as early as infancy, to help us interpret and adjust to the demands and desires of our family environment, schools, churches, synagogues, and communities. These Selves have the ultimate goal of protecting us and helping us survive.

From the perspective of the Psychology of Selves, there is no such thing as a good or bad Self, or even a false Self; all Selves are created equal. Voice Dialogue, which is based on the Psychology of Selves and the Aware Ego Process, is a technique for giving voice to each of the Selves. When a Self becomes a dominant part of the overall personality, we refer to it as a Primary Self. Primary Selves are strengthened over time by the constant repression of their opposite Selves.

For every Primary Self, there is an equal and opposite Self that has become repressed or disowned. This Self is referred to as a Disowned Self. One of the goals of consciousness is to dis-identify or achieve balanced separation from a Primary Self, while at the same time reclaiming the opposite part that has become repressed or negated. This allows us to honor all aspects of our inner family, not just the ones that we have become most comfortable with.

When we are newborns growing into young children, our primary need is to be safe, loved, and accepted. We subconsciously learn to favor behaviors that get us what we need and reject those parts that do not. Primary Selves are born to help us handle, interpret, and adjust to the requirements of our environment. What is significant, as we grow into adulthood, is that many of these Selves continue to function in our lives as if we were still living as children in our family of origin. We have the opportunity to identify and honor these more dominant Selves for the role they have played in our lives and to recognize them as a bridge to those Selves that have been rejected.

According to the Psychology of Selves, the Selves function in a symmetrical way, organically dividing into pairs of opposites, much like the Taoist division of the world into yin and yang natures. For every yang Self, there is an equal and opposite yin Self; for every yin Self, there is an equal and opposite yang Self. The sub-personalities on the yang side of the spectrum tend to be more outward, active and analytical, while the sub-personalities on the yin side tend to be more inwardly creative and reflective.

A few examples of the yang Selves are The Thinker, who's famous for analyzing our daily experiences, often keeping us awake at night; The Perfectionist, for whom nothing is ever good enough; and The Pusher, who is famous for making things to-do lists. On the yin side are The Vulnerable Child, who carries our sensitivities and deepest emotions; The Being Self, who thrives on stillness and living in the moment; and The Creative Self, who craves artistic expression, often manifesting it's Self in how we decorate our homes, offices, and what we wear.

Powerful shifts of consciousness can occur when a Primary Self has been acknowledged. This allows us to reclaim our connection with its opposite. When we communicate with these Primary and Disowned Selves the essence of their concerns can be directly recognized and addressed and change can occur on many levels (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual).

An example of a potential pair of opposites would be The Pusher and The Being Self. The Pusher functions as the fuel that drives our projects, plans, and interests. It is the Self that helps us get the job done. As an opposite, The Being Self inherently knows the value of stopping to smell the roses, and how important recharging is.

What may at this point be sounding like schizophrenia is actually a very organized, safe, and systematic approach to consciousness. From the viewpoint of the Psychology of Selves, what has been historically referred to as the “ego,” is actually one or more of our Primary Selves running the show. The ultimate result of knowing and honoring our Selves is a powerful re-configuration of awareness. The ability to stand between opposites and carry the tension between two very different Selves is a profound and empowering experience. We refer to the capacity to consciously hold these opposite parts as the Aware Ego.

The Aware Ego allows us to have an objective overview of any situation, like a witness state, while at the same time connecting to the actual experience of any given Self. Every time a Self and its counterpart are brought to greater balance, the Aware Ego is strengthened and fortified in its evolutionary role. The Aware Ego has the ability to experience the many Selves without evaluating, judging, or identifying with them. It is neither rational nor, conversely, emotional, but is simply a point of reference that objectively witnesses and experiences *what is*.

The Art of Consciousness is in the strengthening of the Aware Ego, through the honoring of each Self for the unique value it brings. Without a Pusher, not much would get done in our lives. However, without a Being Self, we could too easily lose connection to the present. When we enter into the dance of the Selves with a more Aware Ego, an opportunity for real choice is created. This new awareness supports true harmony and balance in all aspects of our lives.

The true choice that comes from observing our Selves through the lens of the Aware Ego allows us to see how our disowned Selves hold the very qualities we need in our quest for wholeness. For every Self we disown, we end up attracting that very Self into our lives. It can show up in our significant other, our boss, our neighbor—even our neighbor's dog.

By embracing and integrating all of our Selves, we access an experience of Self that is no longer defined by our Primary Selves. Consequently, each Self can take its rightful place as a member of our extended inner family, free to offer its counsel to an Aware Ego now capable of making choices from a deeper sense of wholeness.

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