

NEGOTIATING THE INNER PEACE TREATY™

Defining Your Personal Archetypes

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

We all contain many sub-personalities or “parts” – an “inner cast of characters.” Each carries a different dimension of “who we are.” Think about your own self-definition in each of the following domains and how you define yourself:

- Family Roles: what kind of Mother/ Father, Daughter/Son, Sister/Brother, Wife/Husband/Partner, Home Maker/Provider, etc.
- Work-life: Success/Failure – “I am my resume” or “I have no resume.”
- Personal history: The story you tell about yourself – pivotal experiences that have shaped you; your family and cultural history; wounds, struggles, successes, failures.
- Traits: personality, habits, patterns of behavior, reactivity, resilience, beliefs, values, any labels you have adopted, systems of categorization – Myers Briggs Typology, Enneagram, Astrology, etc.
- Group affiliations: cultural, religious, intellectual, recreational, community, creative, etc.
- Personal and Private Life: Lover, Friend, hopes, dreams, goals, sufferings, ambitions, secrets, fantasies, and longings.
- The Body/Instinctual Life: how your health defines you, body image, your sexual and gender identity.
- Spirituality/Soul Life: how do you define this domain and what words do you use for it
- Other (Anything else not listed here)

OUR INNER CAST OF CHARACTERS

If you look more closely at your “inner cast of characters,” you will find the following set of selves. These sub-personalities develop from the time we were very young and help us fulfill roles, get needs met, and respond to life circumstances.

- **Main Players**- These are the aspects we are most likely to think of as “me.” They occupy the stage of our lives most of the time, make decisions and take care of the main areas of our lives. We have **Main Players** in each domain of our life (family, work, soul life etc.). Note that these inner selves can differ from each other significantly and become sources of inner and outer conflict. Ex: your role as a Responsible Parent may crowd out time for your Playful Child and you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed, sad, and grouchy.
- We also have **Supporting Cast** and **Not So Supporting Cast**. These inner characters tend to operate behind the scenes. We are not as aware of them. They provide nurture, structure, protection, evaluation, problem solving. They remind us of our values and “rules to live by” to navigate family and communal life. The **Not So Supporting Cast** includes our Inner Critics, Judges, Abdicating Pleasers, Perfectionists, Sacrificial Givers, Addictive Self-Soothers and Compulsive Overachievers. These are the inner selves that diminish our life energy, creativity, and joy.

- ***Retired and Historical Selves*** - We all have identities from the past. These “past selves” can carry painful secrets that we hide from others. Sometimes they are nostalgic and recall “*the best days of my life.*” We can “retire” inner characters that cause us trouble.
- Locked away in trunks, closets, and the basement of the internal theatre, we house ***Shadow Selves.*** These dimensions of self can be dark (what we judge as negative or dangerous) or bright (gifts we have rejected or never developed). Being “shadow” means that these dimensions of self are mostly outside of our conscious awareness – disowned. Occasionally a shadow dimension of self will manifest as an “uncharacteristic” thought, feeling, or way of being (When you are “not yourself”). Shadow material appears regularly on the stage of our nighttime dreams in the characters bearing unfamiliar and sometimes disturbing energies. Shadow selves can also be figures that carry impressive, wondrous, beautiful, awe-inspiring qualities. This is “bright shadow,” aspects we have yet to integrate but that dwells in our deep potential. Shadow work is an important spiritual practice because the shadow hides some bit of “gold” that we greatly need to forward our journey into wholeness – who we were born to be.

THE 4-Step PROCESS OF NEGOTIATING THE INNER PEACE TREATY

- 1) NAMING (“who”)- Identifying what lives in you and viewing this as an inner character.
- 2) KNOWING- Getting to know these inner characters through dialogue work, dreamwork, and shadow work.
- 3) NEGOTIATING- Inner Round Table Work involves gathering a set of selves together and interviewing them about life questions and conflicts; It also involves “holding the tension of opposites” as transcendent options emerge.
- 4) INTEGRATING- The Self is always inviting us to grow. When we are on the journey of individuation, we use our life circumstances, synchronicities, dream work and shadow work to continue to become more conscious, evolve, integrate new dimensions from the psyche, and keep “recasting” who we think we are.

DIALOGUING WITH INNER CHARACTERS

You can get to know your inner cast through imaginary dialogues (journal work or with a facilitator). You can even create Inner Round Table meetings to dialogue with a group of selves and work through inner conflicts or make decisions about your life. You will notice that when you enter the mindset and energy of each inner character that you will feel differently, see from a different perspective, and experience the “felt sense” of the archetypal energy of this character in your body. It is important to note the “energy” of each of these characters and use this to begin to recognize when they are active in your life. Our inner characters carry our “complexes” and when we are in a complex it becomes a total reality. As you begin to recognize the inner characters that play on the stage of your life, you will develop an Observing Self and an Inner Director, who can step back, consider, and decide “who” should be running the show in different areas of your life. You will be also hijacked less by your complexes as you gain the capacity to step back and observe.

When you are identifying and getting to know your personal archetypal profile, there may be a long list of “selves.” Pick out a few and explore them. Here are some questions that you can ask these inner selves to learn more about them and gain awareness of how they operate. If you are working alone in a

journal, ask as if these were being addressed to someone outside of yourself. Imagine the stance of the inner character, and answer from that place as “I...”

You can dialogue with your dream characters in this same way. Try this along with any symbol association. This is how you can get into relationship with these energies and experience the “felt sense” of them in your body. In Jungian work, we call this Active Imagination. Interacting with the energies of dream characters will expand your experience of Self and help you to integrate these archetypal energies into your life for greater wholeness.

INTERVIEW PROMPTS/QUESTIONS- You don’t need to ask all of these questions –they are offered as possibilities. You can ask additional ones that you come up with.

- Tell me about yourself – this prompt will often yield so much information that you won’t need to ask some of the following questions.
- What is your history?
- What function do you serve in my life: examples are nurture, support, comfort, connection, feeling, structure, limits, control, excitement, stimulation, pleasure, fun, creativity, embodiment, grounding, rest, wisdom, balance, protection, focus, motivation, thinking, planning, analyzing, problem solving, _____?
- When and where do you show up in my life?
- What kind of feelings and body sensations do I have when you are present?
- What are the rules or guidelines you live by?
- Who were your mentors and teachers?
- If I had more of you in my life, how would my life be different?
- What are your thoughts about how I might solve ___ in my life? (questions & quandaries)
- Do you have any fears or concerns?
- Do you have any unmet needs?
- How do you feel about _____ (one of your other inner characters)?
- What would you like me to stop doing that I am currently doing?
- What would you like me to start doing that I am not currently doing?
- Do you have anything else you would like to say to me?

ADVANCED DREAM PRACTICE

In traditional *Active Imagination*, we talk TO a dream image. A very powerful way of experiencing, exploring and integrating some of the archetypal energies that are being presented in your dreams is to enter into a dream image and experience the “felt sense” of that image from the inside out. In this way, you can look out of the “eyes” of a particular character, symbol, or image. You can do this with any dream characters or even with an object, becoming a house, a purse, a guitar, etc. Nature symbols and animals can be particularly rich sources of energetic information. What do you see and feel when you become a river, an eagle, or look out of the eyes of a that old man or the little child in your dream? The

world will look very different when you are looking out from the inside of these images. You will feel different because you will be inhabiting a different archetypal energy than your ego identity is accustomed to - it will be “other.” It is interesting to look at yourself - the “main character” from this different stance and see what you see. I do not recommend that you move into nightmarish dream figures or evil energies. You can employ traditional active imagination with these figures or energies to find out why they have come and what they are trying to convey to you. These are shadow figures and some of these disowned energies can be quite overwhelming. After you enter into a dream figure, make sure to exit it, and “return” to your familiar sense of self in this exercise. For example: if you were exploring the inner world of that little child in the dream, you will be in a very vulnerable energy. You would also not want to drive your car in the dream image of a racehorse. Even when you move back into “yourself,” you will find an infusion of energy from that dream figure. This experience will shift the way you think, feel, and view your life. It can be profoundly healing and open up new vistas of possibility. Journal about your experience or share it with a soul friend.