**Self Esteem, or Self-Importance?**

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Ego is an important aspect of a healthy consciousness. It helps us to know and honor our own personal truth in life. It helps us to move through life with a positive sense of ourselves and our place in the world that is grounded in the greater well-being of all.

If you have a healthy ego, you don’t take it personally when things go wrong in your world. Instead, you focus on fixing what is yours to fix, asking for help when you need it and giving help wherever you can, and you trust that there is a greater plan for all of us that is beyond the limits of your own vision. You are willing to be wrong, and you give other people the same right to be wrong as you. You are willing to weigh the thoughts and words of others when you disagree, and you certainly don’t need to be right all of the time in order to feel good about yourself.

Good self-esteem is probably a more positive way to express it in a world as ego-centric as ours, where the only thing that seems to matter sometimes is “what I want, regardless of the cost to others, so get out of *my* way.” Ours has increasingly become a world of hyper-inflated egos that all too often fail to make room for anything other than the big “I.” Still, good self-esteem and a healthy ego really are the same thing and they are an important part of a healthy you.

You know that your ego is not healthy when it is constantly telling you how fabulous you are in comparison to everybody else: “They’ve” got it all wrong. “They” don’t understand you or appreciate your true genius. “They’re” just too stupid.

You know that your ego is not healthy when you need others to agree with everything you say and do in order to feel good about yourself, and you especially know it is not healthy when you always need someone else to interpret your life for you, to tell you what to do and what to think and how to feel about what is going on.

You also know that your ego is not in very good shape when you’ve moved into self-importance, where you have an exaggerated sense of your worth to the world, an inflated feeling of superiority to everything and everyone else. You may have done something exceedingly well, you may have done a lot of things spectacularly well, but when you use your accomplishments to elevate your sense of entitlement beyond what is reasonable, you’ve actually moved away from a healthy ego and into a state of neediness. You need the world to acknowledge your greatness, even defer to you, or you feel angry and miserable. You are sitting on top of the world, yet you feel cheated.

What has happened is that you’ve moved from ego into the ego mind, and the ego mind is one of the biggest traps into which you can ever fall. It is the home of the shadow dwellers, those negative aspects of your being that feast on all of the negativity that you are willing feed them, feast on your negativity until there is nothing left of you.

There is a very fine line between ego and self-importance. The ego is a normal part of a healthy psyche that helps you to be the best person you can be in life, not the person others say you should be, especially when you know that what they are saying is not right for you. Self-importance is when you get so caught up in yourself that you begin to feel entitled to the adulation of others, entitled to win even though you might not have done your best that day and someone else really did better.

Self-importance does not come from the ego, which tells you to do the best you can in any given situation and let the rest go. Self-importance comes from the ego mind, which tells you that you are better than what you got, you are better than those around you, more entitled to succeed than others.

There is an attachment that happens when you move into self-importance, a certain kind of energy dynamic. Old sorcerers call it the “devils.” They say that when you are wrapped up in your own self-importance, you have devils sitting right on top of your head. These devils, however, are not evil spirits from some alien source. They are of your own making. They are shadow dwellers, creations of your own negativity that will devour you and destroy your life if you feed them often enough.

I have worked for many years with a *chamin curendera*of the YucatÃ¡n, a sacred healer named Zoila. Her husband is also a shaman healer, and they use that kind of conversation often. When something happens that moves one of them into feelings of self-importance, the other one will say, “Ah, you’ve got a devil sitting on you.” And they can literally see the negativity sitting on one another’s heads, waiting to devour them.

It is a very short hop from self-importance to self-pity, which is also a creation of the ego mind, also a shadow dweller with a huge appetite for your negativity. In fact, one sure way to know that you are in self-importance is when you find yourself in self-pity. Of all the shadow dwellers of negativity, self-pity it is the number one energy thief of your entire existence. When you are in self-pity, you lose your power and you lose your energy. When you sit in self-pity, you lose all enjoyment of life, and if you sit in it long enough, you may well lose your life. Such is the way of negative thinking that it has the power to create exactly what it is we are thinking.

There is an antidote to self-importance and self-pity, and that antidote is to look at all of life and everything that happens to you as an opportunity to learn and grow. Every experience you have in life offers you mirrors for your own enlightenment, opportunities to grow into the best person you can possibly be. You can choose to look into those mirrors, painful though some of them may be, to find the lessons that are hidden there. If you will look for those lessons and learn from them, you will find yourself moving up the pathway towards enlightenment and away from the bottomless pit of negativity.

When you move towards enlightenment, you move towards a higher awareness of life and a greater connection with the Great Spirit. Then there is no room in your life for indulging your ego mind. You are no longer food for the shadow dwellers. Without your negativity, there is nothing for them to eat, and they will wither away.

Winning, having the acknowledgement of those around us is a wonderful thing. It can add a terrific bonus to a day that is already fabulous simply because you are alive. When things happen that don’t turn out exactly as you expected or hoped or wanted them to be, that perhaps took something from you that you really thought should be yours, it means that life is holding up mirrors for you. Some of those mirrors will show you lessons you can learn that will move you forward in life. Some of them will offer to pamper you and indulge you in your hurt feelings, promise you comfort for the wrongs “they” have done to you. It is a false promise.

Into which mirrors will you choose to look? Self-importance and the ego mind, what’s a person to do?

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