Psychology of the Selves

Intermediate Level - Basic Concepts of Voice Dialogue

What is a self?

* Each self is like a person who lives within our psyche.

* Selves can be named in many ways, e.g., pusher, judge, good or bad mother, loving or cold father, controlling parent, rebel son and dutiful daughter. Selves can also be identified on a first-name basis of that culture such as Tom, Jane, Frederick, Jasmine, Krishneel, Jorge, Marisella, Annika, etc.

* The selves have their own voices and unique way of expressing themselves. Voice Dialogue accesses the selves through dialoguing with the selves.

* Each self has its own perceptions, energy, beliefs, values, world-view, physical reactions, expressiveness, body postures, behaviours and voice, e.g., the perfectionist is precise and believes anything worth doing is worth doing perfectly, the pleaser wants other people’s needs satisfied to ensure there is harmony in our relationships and the controller likes to be in charge to ensure the person’s needs and wants are met.

* The selves are neither good nor bad; they have both strengths and limitations, e.g., when our rule maker is funneled through an Aware Ego Process, it can give us the rules/expectations that allow us to live more smoothly with others and also honour our needs.

* It is important not to judge, change or get rid of any self.
**What is the purpose of the selves?**

* The selves emerge to help us live our lives.

- The selves define how we relate to the world, to others and to our self, e.g., our pusher would have us doing something all the time: raising a family, working long hours, getting involved in organizations, playing sports and/or doing hobbies. The benefit of this pusher could be that we can have a very rich and fulfilling life. The limitation of this pusher could be that we often feel exhausted and therefore experience many of the activities we do as ‘just another thing to get done’.

* Our primary selves operate between our vulnerability and the world. They make it possible for us to function in our environment. Without them, we would become victims to others, e.g., our rule maker ensures we follow the rules so that others will accept us.

- Clusters of selves develop around our vulnerable child in order to protect it, e.g., the independent, self-reliant selves can keep us emotionally unavailable so that we are not hurt by others.

**How do personality and the selves develop?**

**The role of personality and the selves**

* As we grow, we need to develop a personality that enables us to manage our vulnerability while maintaining our essence.

* For the Stones, personality is the primary selves or sub-personalities that define who we are in the world. The Stones call this the operating ego; that is, it is the team of primary selves that emerges to help us live our lives, e.g., the pleaser, perfectionist, inner critic, judge, pusher and rational selves.
Development of Personality and the Selves

SELVES

VULNERABILITY

Essence/
Psychic
Fingerprint
The role of vulnerability in the development of personality and the selves

* The infant carries our essence, our psychic fingerprint, our uniqueness, that which makes us who we are.

* The infant is born vulnerable. This initial state endures as the vulnerable child.

* Vulnerability refers to the openness, sensitivity and sense of being undefended we all experience. It also refers to the pain, fear and grief we experience in life.

* Vulnerability without protection may lead us to becoming a victim, being weak, or being attacked.

* Being aware of our vulnerability versus being or becoming our vulnerability can throw us into our child self.

The role of vulnerability and power in the development of personality and the selves

- It is in our ability to embrace our vulnerability and power through an Aware Ego Process that allows the emergence of every feeling, thought and reaction and to cherish them as a valuable part of who we are.

What are the different types of selves that comprise our personality?

- Selves can be either primary or disowned.

- The primary self is the self that runs our life. It is 'Who we think we are'. People see us as that self and it becomes our identity, e.g., he or she is amiable, elegant, hard working, successful, relaxed, organized, fun-loving, responsible, discerning, or loving.

- The disowned self is a self that is opposite to the primary self and has been hidden, repressed, denied and/or buried in a person's life because it is seen as unacceptable to us or others, e.g., if the primary self is the independent self, the opposite might be the dependent self. We are not usually aware of our disowned self.

* It is important not to judge, change, or get rid of the primary or disowned selves.
Mapping of Primary & Disowned Selves

- Rational Mind
- Emotional Self
- Pusher
- Relaxer
- Perfectionist
- Imperfect Self
- Pleaser
- Rebel
- Inner Critic
- Inner Teacher