

## Introduction

### Advanced Level - Basic Concepts of Voice Dialogue

#### What is Voice Dialogue?

- \* Voice Dialogue is a consciousness tool that can help us to become aware of our many different sub-personalities or 'selves' and how to consciously choose from the strengths and limitations of these selves. In particular, Voice Dialogue is a method for separating from our primary selves which leads to the development of the Aware Ego Process.
- \* In consciousness work, we have a sense that some part of us is incomplete and is seeking wholeness. Human beings are not seen as being broken or ill and in need of being fixed.



## What are the goals of Voice Dialogue?

- \* One major goal of Voice Dialogue is the development of the Aware Ego Process; that is the ability to separate from the primary selves, embrace the disowned selves and be able to exercise conscious choice using the benefits and acknowledging the limitations of the selves.
- Another major goal is the activation of the intelligence of the unconscious which stimulates the dream process. The Aware Ego Process stimulates the built-in, organizing ability of the unconscious which then results in dreams becoming more organized and focused. As people access their dreams, they are also accessing their unconscious and then their unconscious becomes the new inner teacher.
- \* In Voice Dialogue, there is no attempt to fix or change any of the selves. Instead, we are encouraged through an Aware Ego Process to learn about the gifts and limitations of each self and how to use, or not use them.
- \* The minimum hope in Voice Dialogue is to get a map of the selves, experience some of the primary and disowned selves and obtain some awareness of the Aware Ego Process.



## What is the theoretical foundation of Voice Dialogue?

- \* The theoretical foundation of Voice Dialogue is the Psychology of the Selves and the Psychology of the Aware Ego Process. This foundation developed from the many years of dialoguing and experiencing the reality of the selves and their interaction with each other. From the exploration of the energetics of relationship and how the selves manifest in the dream process, a new understanding of awareness and consciousness eventually led to the development of Voice Dialogue and the Aware Ego Process.
- \* The Stones are now combining the Psychology of the Selves and the Aware Ego Process under one title: “Voice Dialogue International, Teaching the Psychology of the Aware Ego and the Selves”.
- \* Voice Dialogue is taught throughout the world because people from many different cultures have found the concepts and practices of Voice Dialogue helpful in making significant changes in their lives.



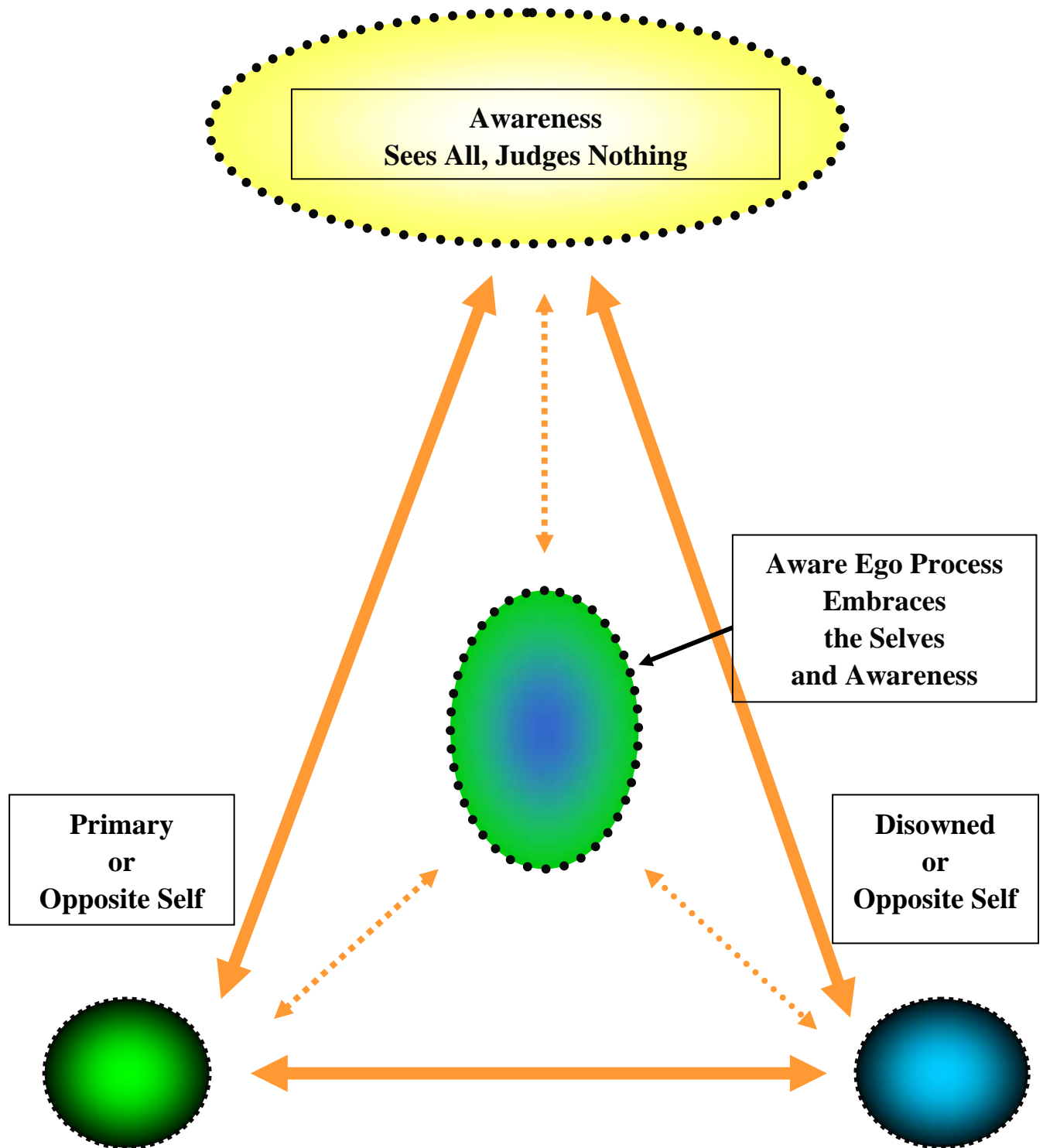
## What is Hal and Sidra Stones' model of consciousness?

- Consciousness is defined in the dictionary as "awareness, perception of one's existence; the totality of the thoughts and feelings of a person or group".
- In Voice Dialogue the question is: Who is this person or 'I' that is being conscious?
- We most commonly understand this 'I' to be Freud's concept of 'Ego'.
- \* Hal and Sidra Stone have re-defined this 'I' or consciousness as having three parts:
  - Awareness - This comes first in the process to let us know that we are different from how we usually see ourselves.
  - Experience of the Selves - In Freud's concept, the 'Ego' is thought to be in charge of our lives. Hal and Sidra Stone believe that the 'ego' is actually a group of selves (primary selves) that operate our lives (operating ego).
  - Aware Ego Process - The Stones believe that once we can separate from our primary selves (operating ego), the 'I' who is sitting separated from the primary selves is the beginning of the Aware Ego Process.

By separating from a primary self, we begin to discover its corresponding disowned self. Previously, this disowned self only came out occasionally and often unintentionally. In the moment of discovering this disowned self, we now have a more complete Aware Ego Process because we have separated from the primary self and embraced the corresponding disowned self. The Aware Ego Process allows us to choose how much of either the primary self or the disowned self we want to use in any given situation.

- The consciousness model evolved from the Stone's work with the selves and the Aware Ego Process.
- \* **In summary, consciousness is a process whereby we have awareness and experience of the selves and through an Aware Ego Process have greater choice in how we use the selves.**

# Consciousness Model of the Psychology of the Aware Ego Process and the Selves



## The Basic Voice Dialogue Session

The *basic* steps to a Voice Dialogue session are outlined below to provide a practical context in which to understand the theory presented in the Guides and PowerPoint Presentations.

Different facilitators may choose to do the steps in the facilitation process in a different order or choose not to do certain steps. It may take two or three hours to complete all the steps.

### Step One: Deciding which self to dialogue

- \* Identify the issue, distress, problem, or self the person wants to focus on.
- \* Facilitator and person's operating ego can co-decide which self to begin with.



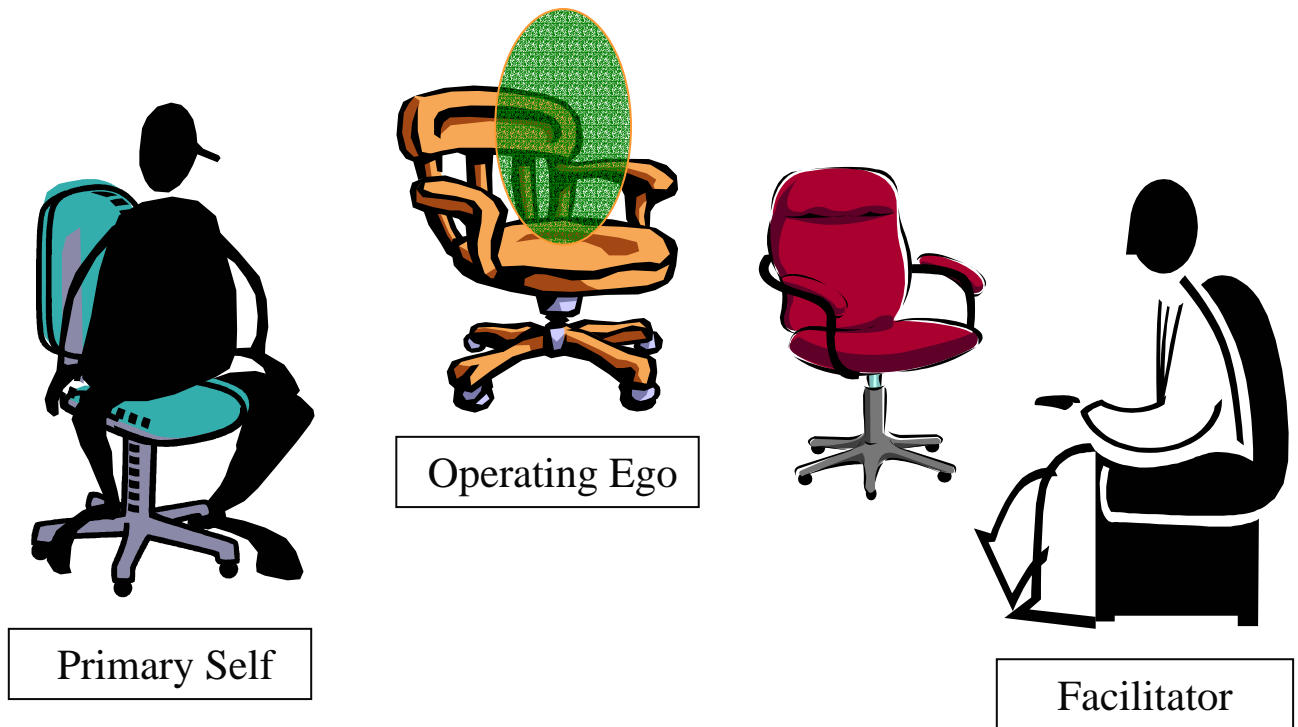
Person's Operating Ego



Facilitator

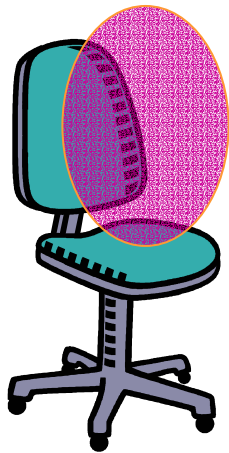
## Step Two: Dialoguing the primary self

- \* Have the person physically move over from the center (the operating ego chair) into the chair or space of the self to be dialogued (usually the primary self).
- \* Facilitator asks the primary self questions that bring forth who that self is and its purpose in the person's life.

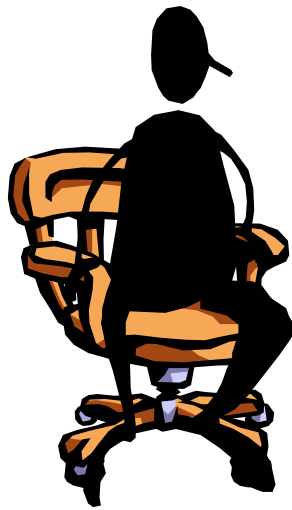


### **Step Three: Separate from primary self into the developing Aware Ego Process**

- \* When the dialoguing of the primary self is done, have the person move back into the center (the chair of the operating ego/developing Aware Ego Process).
- \* Facilitator takes the person through a separation process from the primary self just dialogued, making clear that this is the beginning of the Aware Ego Process relative to this self.



Primary Self



Center/  
Operating Ego/  
Developing Aware  
Ego Process

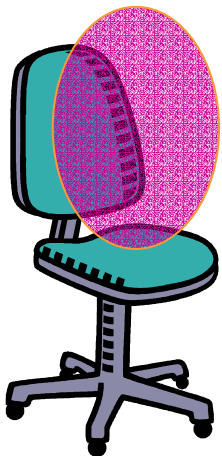


Facilitator

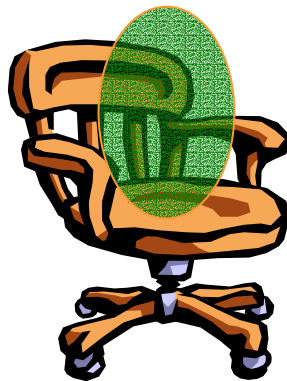
## Step Four: Dialogue the opposite or disowned self

*It is recommended that the facilitator dialogue the primary self for a number of sessions. (The assumption here is that the self/sub-personality plays a major role in that person's life). The work with the disowned self usually starts when the primary self gives permission to the facilitator to work with a disowned self. The safety of doing no harm to the participant comes from respecting the position the primary self holds in the person's life. With experience, the facilitator comes to know when to work with the disowned selves.*

- \* Now, the facilitator has the person move from the center chair to the opposite or disowned self.
- \* Ask the disowned self questions that bring forth who it is and its purpose in the person's life.



Primary Self



Center/  
Operating Ego  
& Developing  
Aware Ego  
Process



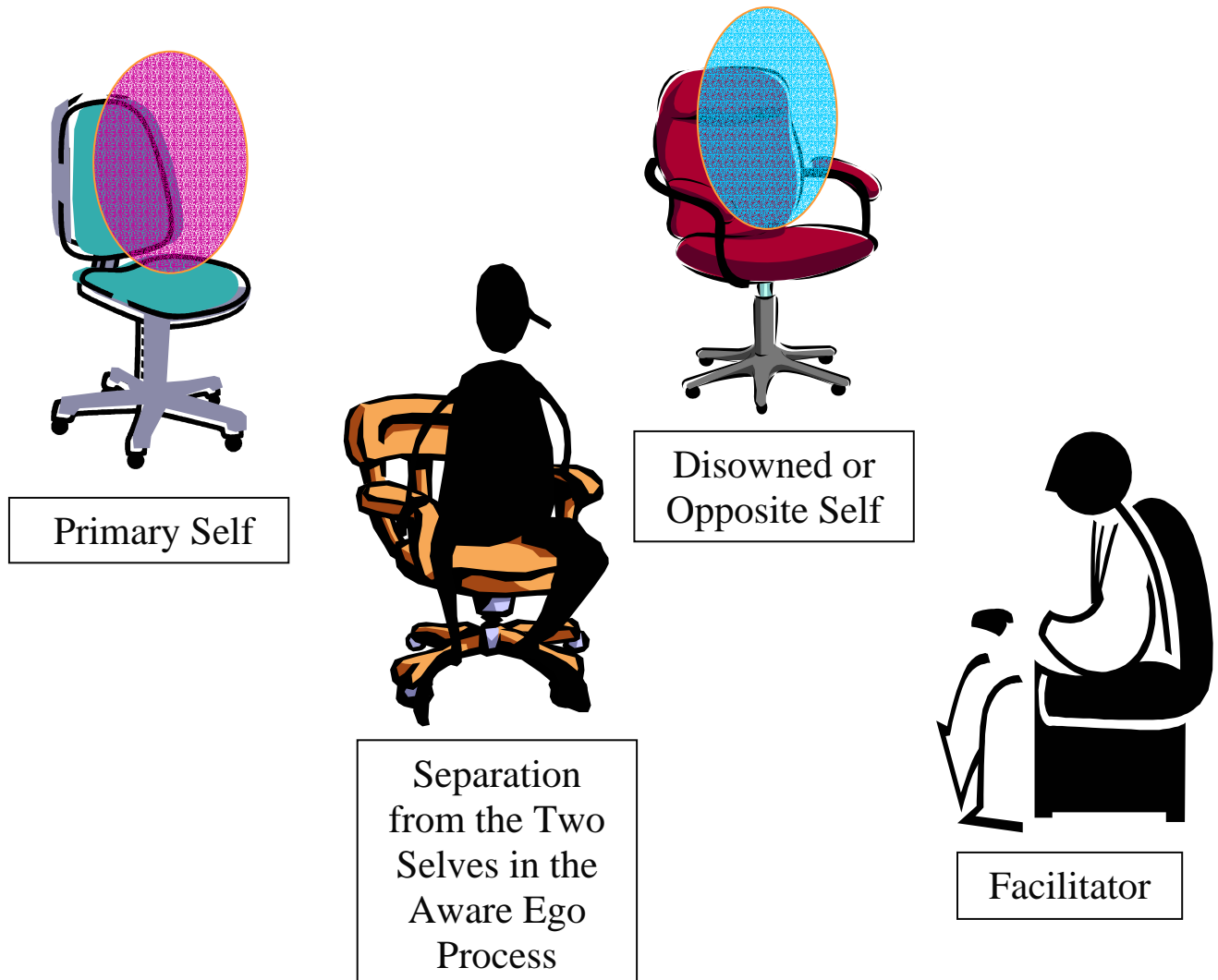
Disowned or  
Opposite Self



Facilitator

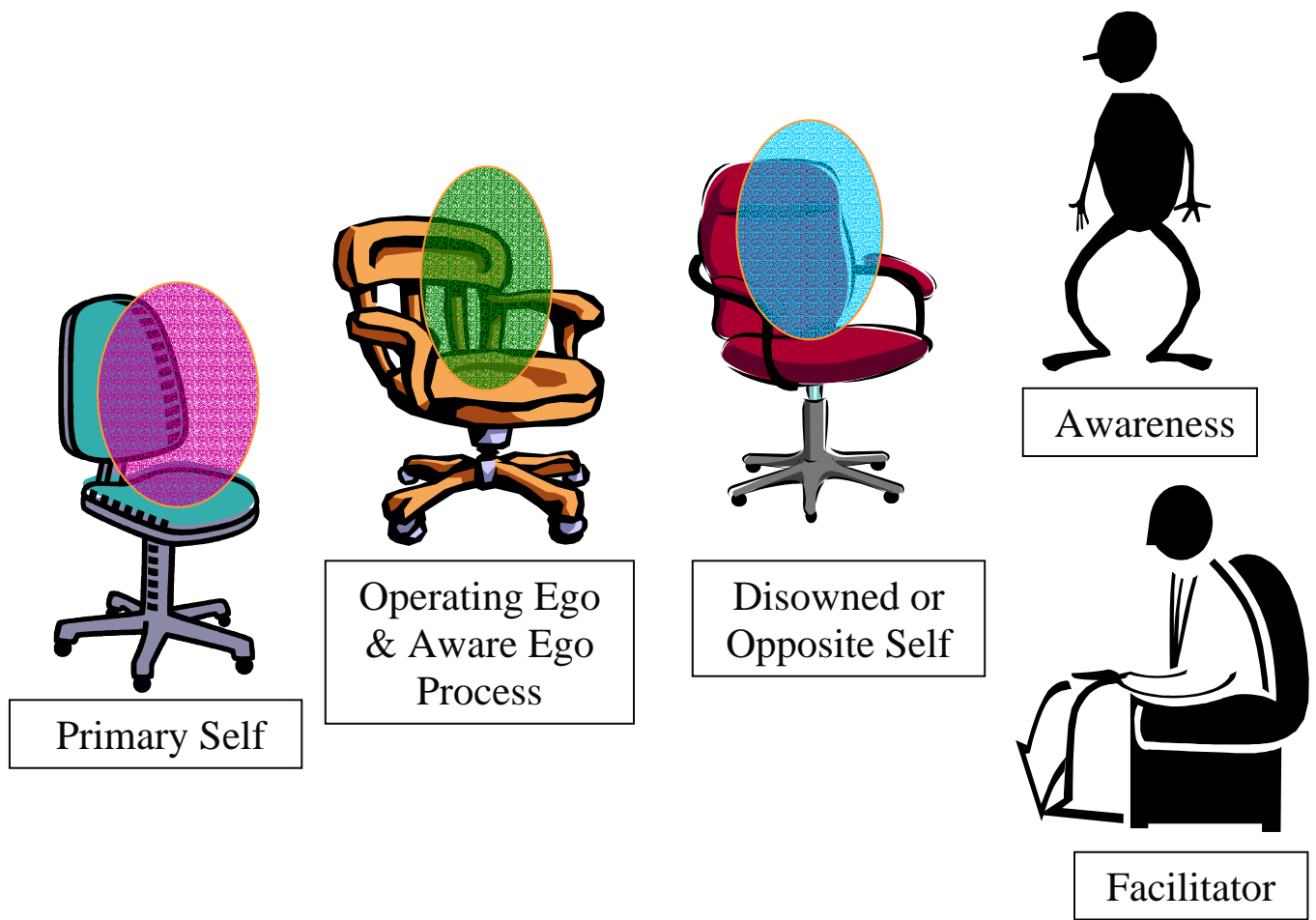
## Step Five: Separate & embrace the energy of the selves in the Aware Ego Process

- \* Have the person move back into the center chair.
- \* The facilitator then guides the energetic separation from the opposite or disowned self while holding the Aware Ego process for the person.
- \* The facilitator then assists the person in separating and embracing the energetic tension of the selves in the Aware Ego process. The facilitator may take the opportunity to use different methods to strengthen and enhance the Aware Ego Process.



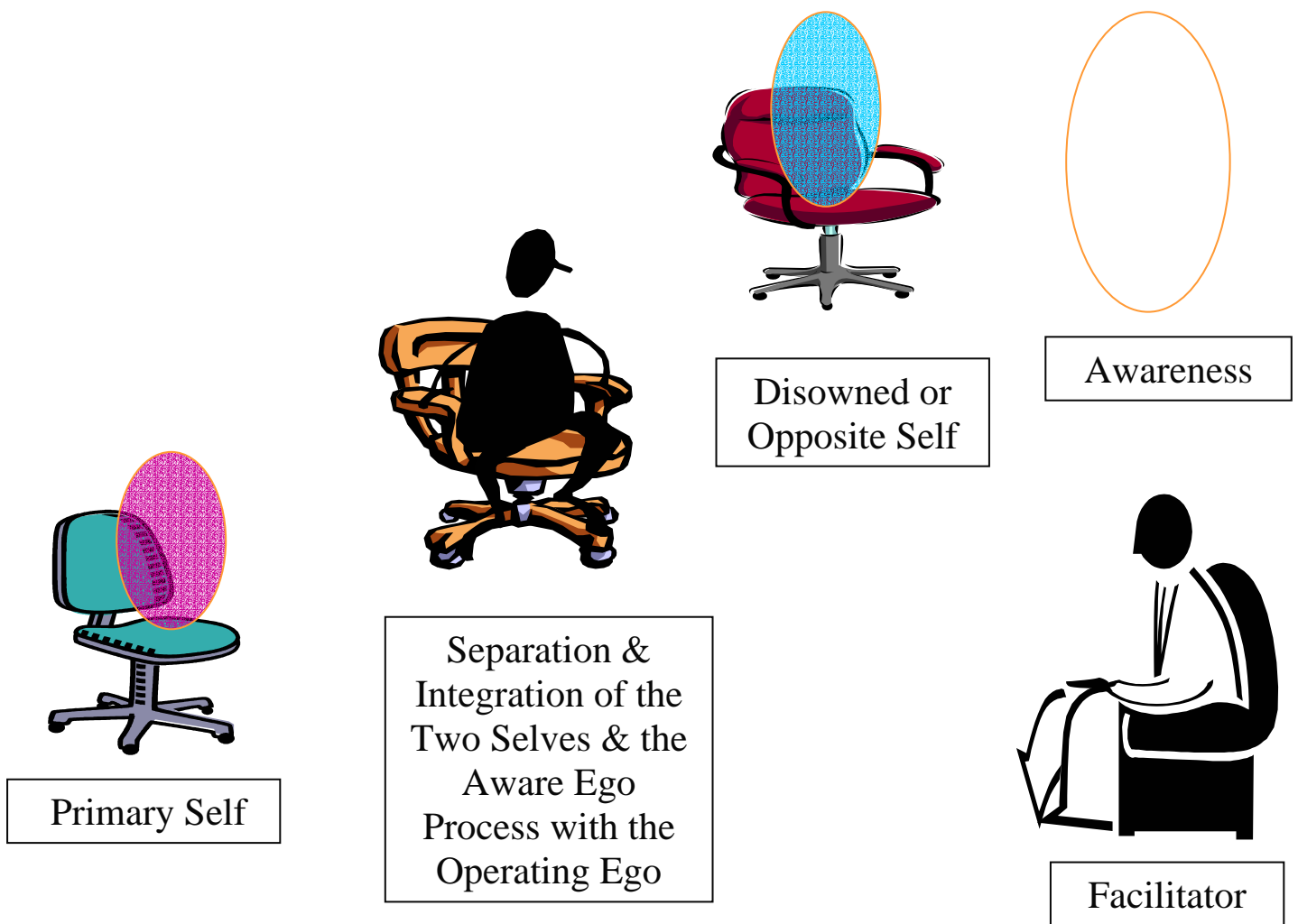
**Step Six: Experience the non-judgmental position of awareness**

- \* The facilitator may choose to do an awareness process in which the facilitator has the person stand far enough back so the person can observe the three places/chairs where the two selves were dialogued as well as the chair of the operating ego/developing Aware Ego Process. The facilitator then summarizes the Voice Dialogue session while the person witnesses and experiences the memory of the Voice Dialogue session from a non-judgmental position of awareness.



## Step Seven: Integration of the Voice Dialogue session

- \* As the final step in the Voice Dialogue session, the facilitator has the person move back to the operating ego/Aware Ego Process chair between the energy of the primary and disowned selves while our awareness retains the memory and learning of the experience and the facilitator debriefs the Voice Dialogue session.



# Psychology of the Selves

## Advanced Level - Basic Concepts of Voice Dialogue

### What is a self?

- \* Each self is like a person who lives within our psyche.
- The selves are the basic units of the personality and become the building blocks of the 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, Fredrick, 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, behaviors 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 and the controller likes to be in charge to ensure the person's needs and wants are met.
- Each self believes its views are the only correct ones, e.g., it is hard to convince the rational self, who does not comprehend the experience of emotion, that emotions are good.
- The selves can only give, get and see partial information concerning any issue, e.g., the rational self looks at the safety features in buying a new car while the emotional self wants us to feel good driving this car.
- Different selves will remember different things; sometimes the memories will overlap and sometimes they will not.
- The selves are neither good nor bad; it depends on who is using the self, e.g., a mother, in loving her daughter, has conditions around that love. This can feel 'bad' to the daughter. If the love is through the Aware Ego Process, the mother's love is not attached in the same way because the Aware Ego Process embraces both the awareness and the experience of the selves and therefore does not have the same attachment to it.
- \* **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.
- \* We develop clusters of selves that protect and collect around our vulnerable child, e.g., the independent, self-reliant selves can keep us emotionally unavailable so that we are not hurt by others.
- In the beginning years of Voice Dialogue, clusters of selves were treated as a single voice. Later on each self in the cluster was treated individually, e.g., typically, the free spirit self can cluster with a rebel self against parents. Historically, these two selves were worked with as one self but later on were dialogued separately.
- Selves may be clustered and categorized in many ways, including other theories or systems, such as Myers-Briggs or astrology. Examples of clusters of selves include:
  - Spiritual cluster of selves, e.g., religious, new age
  - Relation-oriented cluster of selves, e.g., pleaser, husband/wife
  - Anti-social cluster of selves, e.g., rebel, independent
  - Sensitive/emotional cluster of selves, e.g., vulnerable child, artist
  - Nurturing cluster of selves, e.g., good parent, sage
  - Power cluster of selves, e.g., warrior, pusher
- Although some of these clusters of selves may not seem protective, all of them do act in service to our vulnerability.

## 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/uniqueness. Our personality protects us, creates safety, helps us find love and lets us get along in the world.
- \* 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.



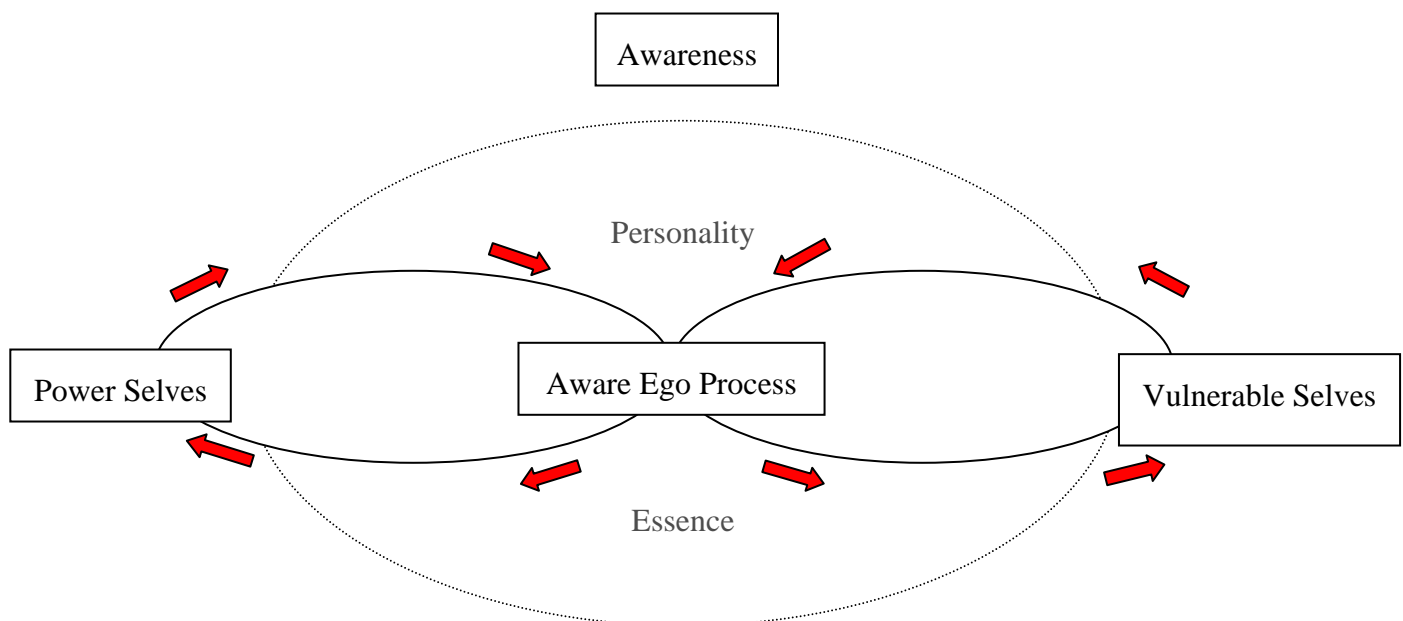
## **The role of vulnerability in the development of personality and the selves**

- \* The infant carries our essence, our psychic fingerprint, our uniqueness, that which makes us who we are at our core. Our essence began to emerge in our childhood and is manifested in our adult life through our operating ego.
- \* The infant is born vulnerable. This initial state endures as the vulnerable child.
  - Being vulnerable is a state all humans experience. Vulnerability is universal.
- \* 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.
  - Vulnerability, channeled through a strong primary self, protects the person from being victimized but in the process buries the vulnerability.
  - Vulnerability, channeled through an Aware Ego Process, frees the person from feeling weak, anxious or victimized all the time. The vulnerability does not have to be buried.
  - *Being aware* of our vulnerability is essential to consciousness work. *Being identified* with our vulnerability can throw us into our victim child self.
  - In Voice Dialogue, we are trying to learn how to be vulnerable in a safe way. If vulnerability is a primary self (that is, we are identified with our vulnerability), the power primary selves are not available to ground the person. This can make the person fearful about life and may prevent the person from establishing intimate, long-lasting relationships.
  - Ultimately, the Aware Ego Process is responsible for the vulnerable child's safety. When the Aware Ego Process is able to use our power selves, it can provide the protection and nurturance the vulnerable child needs. Our vulnerability can become an asset along with its limitations.



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

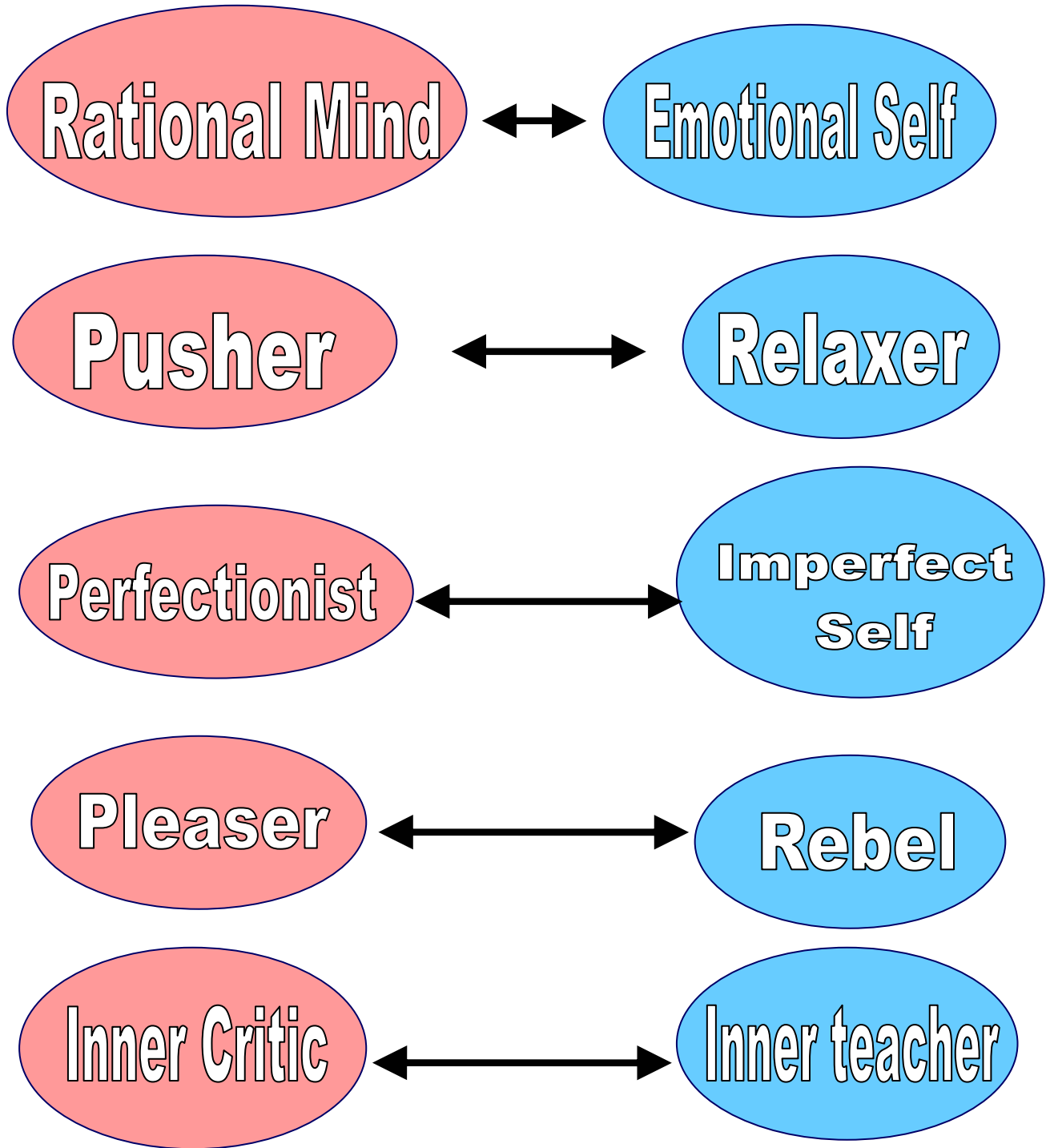
- \* It is in our ability to embrace our vulnerability and power through an Aware Ego Process that allows the emergence of every feeling, thought and reaction and to cherish them as part of who we are.
- As we include both our vulnerability and power through an Aware Ego Process, it strengthens our ability to be intimate, to fully experience others and to love.
- The interaction of power with vulnerability in the Aware Ego Process leads to empowerment.
- Generally, the belief has been that being powerful means using power and showing no signs of weakness or vulnerability. One of the goals of Voice Dialogue is to use power consciously in the world, with vulnerability present through the Aware Ego Process.
- In Voice Dialogue empowerment means embracing both sides, vulnerability and power. Now, vulnerability can be experienced as an asset.
- It is essential to remember that vulnerability, power and empowerment all have their time and place in a person's life.
- The infinity loop model below represents the dynamics of this interaction.



## 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.
- One self does not run our entire life. In reality, a group of primary selves called the primary self system/operating ego runs our life, e.g., pleaser-responsible-pusher-perfectionist self system.
- \* **The disowned self** is a self that is opposite to the primary self and has been, 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.
- **The hidden primary self** is one of the selves that run our life and is not readily seen by others. We try not to show the hidden self to the world because it is not acceptable to others or us but is still often seen or at least sensed by others. Sometimes, we are not aware of our hidden primary selves, e.g., the patriarch, dreamer, matriarch, sexual self, affectionate self, controller, leader, hero, manipulator, creative self and idealist.
- The primary self is aware of the disowned self and does not want the disowned self to be part of the person's life, sometimes even forcibly denying the disowned self, e.g., the pleaser adamantly stops the person's anger and appeases instead.
- Although both the hidden primary self and disowned self may not be visible to others, they are constantly active in our lives. The disowned self, which is often unconscious to the person, is occasionally seen when it pops up from time to time: the hidden self, which can be conscious or unconscious to the person, can often be sensed by others, but is rarely overtly seen by others.
- **An undeveloped self** is a self that has not become a part of the person's life because the person is not interested in, or in need of, or has not been exposed to that self. If an undeveloped self begins to emerge in a person's life, it can become either a primary or disowned self, e.g., a man has never been married or had a child and has lived a single life. He has not had the opportunity to develop a 'husband' or 'father' self. His 'married self' is not disowned or pushed down...it just never had the opportunity to emerge. If he falls in love and gets married and has children, the undeveloped selves of 'husband' and 'father' can become primary selves.
- An undeveloped self is not a disowned self, e.g., if a person is not mechanical, it may be because they have not been interested in developing that skill, not because it has been forcibly repressed by the primary self.
- \* **It is important not to judge, change, or get rid of the primary or disowned selves.**

# Mapping of Primary & Disowned Selves



## **What are the three levels of the selves?**

- There are three levels of selves: instinctual, personal and archetypal.
- At the instinctual level, Jung talked of a wisdom built into the genetics of our psyche that is linked to our survival/instinctual needs, e.g., aggression, protection, procreation/sexual, territory/boundaries and selfishness.
- At the personal level, the selves result from a combination of our genetics and conditioning by family and culture, e.g., pleaser, pusher, perfectionist and competitor.
- The archetypal level speaks to the universal characteristics we all share. Greek and Roman gods are examples of archetypal selves, e.g., Mars-warrior, Aphrodite-sensual/sexual, Zeus-father, Hercules-hero, Amazon-warrior woman, Athena-goddess of wisdom, Diana-goddess of Nature and Eros/Cupid-god of love.
- As individuals, we all have these archetypal energies within us. We often look outside of us for the answers to our life problems. However, all that we seek outside of us is already in us, i.e., we are all microcosms of the macrocosm.

## **How do we embrace the selves?**

- We honor the purposes and gifts that the selves bring to our lives. Embracing the selves does not mean becoming them.
- It is important not to reject or get rid of any self, no matter how we might try.
- Knowing that each self has positive and negative, useful and limiting qualities, we learn through the Aware Ego Process to discern how each self fits into our life.
- With disowned selves, it is helpful to embrace enough of the disowned self to allow us to relate with others who carry our disowned self, e.g., as a shy person, I am uncomfortable with assertive people. If I can embrace enough of my own assertiveness, then I will not be as uncomfortable or intimidated by assertive people because I have learned about the gifts that can come with assertiveness.

## **Stability versus instability of the selves**

- When our primary selves are running our lives, it is like hopping on one foot because we have not yet embraced the corresponding disowned selves.
- Even though we are on one foot, the irony is that we feel stable because our primary selves think they are right and everyone else is wrong.
- It is because the primary selves do not question their own truth that instability in our personalities is created.
- When we embrace our disowned selves, we are now hopping on the other foot. However, it is only when we can embrace any pair of primary and disowned selves simultaneously through the Aware Ego Process that we achieve stability and are now on both feet.
- Our primary selves create a paradox. On the one hand, our primary selves try to surround us with people who have the same primary selves as us so that all the operating egos can function smoothly together, e.g., a married couple who are both university trained or are both organized types.
- On the other hand, the primary selves attract those people who are opposite to our primary selves, i.e., who carry our disowned selves. Paradoxically, we can then either criticize others or be attracted to them, e.g., I can judge someone who is irresponsible or be attracted to the irresponsibility. Life usually gives us our opposites to help us learn balance, i.e., yin and yang of existence.
- Relationships are a common example of the paradox where each person is attracted to their primary and disowned selves.
- This paradox exists because we need to have enough in common with the person that we want to have a relationship and we also need to embrace our disowned selves in order to become more whole or complete, e.g., someone whose primary self is relationship-oriented can unconsciously be attracted to someone whose primary self is task-oriented. Extending this example, the relationship-oriented person, the wife, needs to learn to organize and prioritize, while the task-oriented person, the husband, needs to learn to make time for his children and/or wife.

## Primary Selves

### Advanced Level - Basic Concepts of Voice Dialogue

#### What are the primary selves?

- \* The primary selves are the selves that run our lives. They develop from our genetic predispositions as well as familial/societal rules and expectations.
- \* Primary selves emerge in our childhood to protect our vulnerability and by adulthood typically define who we are.
- \* The primary self believes that it is the complete identity of the person, i.e., it is 'who I am'. The primary self is strong and secure because it feels it knows all the answers for the person's own good.
  - Primary selves carry our power in the world because they have a set of rules about life which convinces us we are right while others are wrong.
- \* Potentially, we have scores of selves available to us, any one of which can become a primary self.
  - Any quality or characteristic of being human can become a primary self, e.g., travelling, being strong-willed, helping others, playing sports and homemaking.
- \* Primary selves are visible to others.
- \* We usually have five to ten primary selves that run our life.
- \* The most common primary selves in western culture are the:
  - pleaser
  - pusher
  - perfectionist
  - inner critic/judge
  - rational mind
  - emotional/feeling self
  - responsible self
  - controller
  - protector
  - rule maker
- \* Other cultures may have different common primary selves or a different order of dominance of those primary selves.



## **How do the primary selves develop?**

- \* There is a genetic predisposition to personality types, e.g., outgoing vs. shy, intellectual vs. mechanical, high sexual arousal vs. low sexual arousal.
- \* Societal and family rules affect which selves become primary. Some of these rules may be around:
  - Birth order - e.g., the first child is often responsible and serious.
  - Specific family rules - e.g., “if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all”, creates a pleaser.
  - Legacy of previous generations - e.g., in multi-generational alcoholism, one can become either an addict or a non-drinker.
  - Religion - e.g., being forced to go to church can create the non-church-goer.
  - Community - e.g., civic-minded parents can create the volunteer.
  - Country - e.g., a country that has lots of resources and affluence can create arrogant and self-serving citizens.
  - Historical times - e.g., during a war, the warrior or victim mentality can pervade the population.
  - Traumatic events - e.g., the shooting of a classmate could create an anti-violence crusader.
- We unconsciously adopt our family's rules and expectations at an early age. Typically in adolescence and going into young adulthood we may, temporarily or permanently, unconsciously or consciously, choose different rules and expectations for ourselves.
- \* We usually adopt the family rules in our childhood because following those rules will bring us love, acceptance, belonging, success, less emotional pain and allow us to feel safe and secure in our family and our environment.

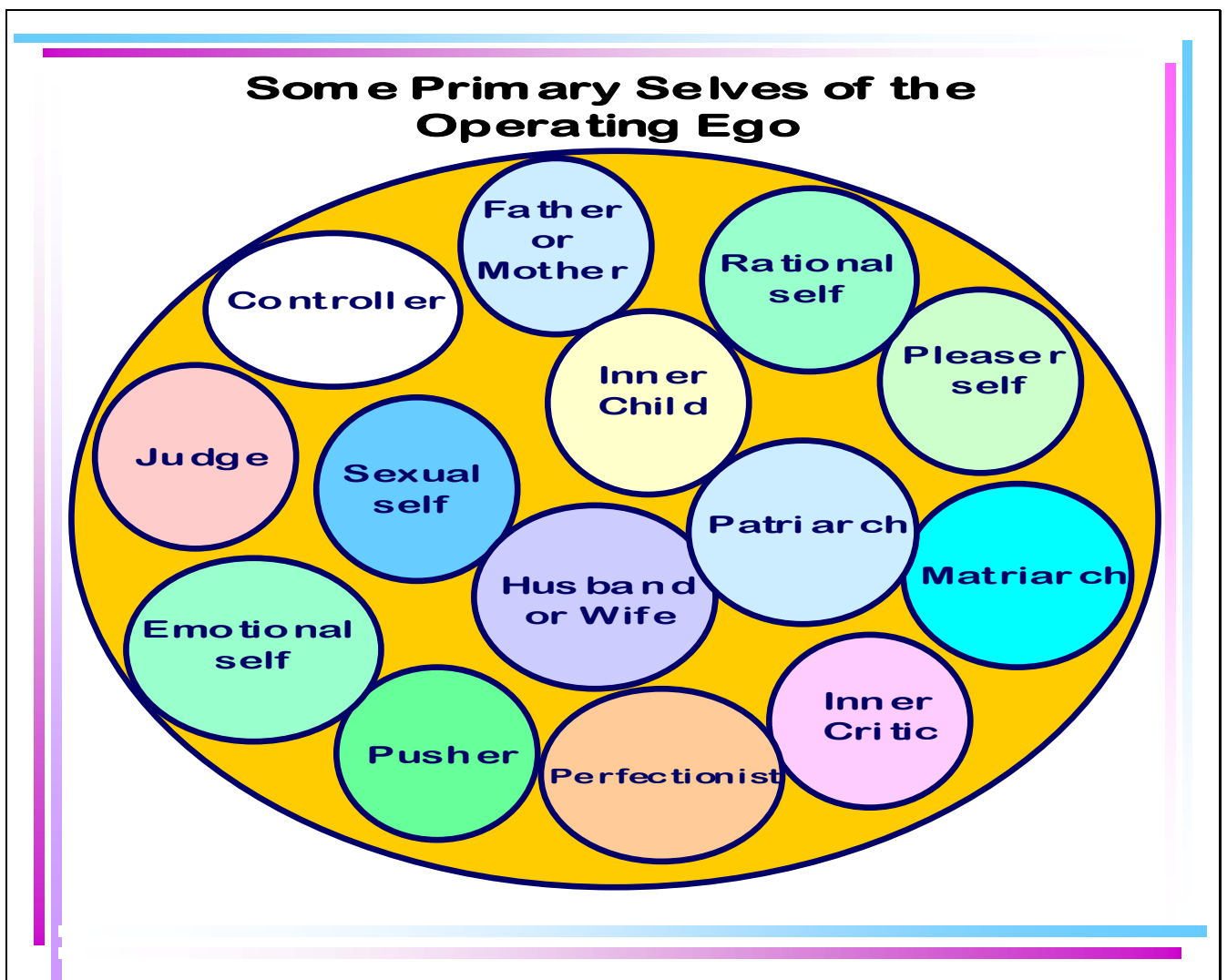
## **How do the primary selves work?**

- \* Hal and Sidra Stone theorize that Freud's concept of the 'Ego' is actually a team or cluster of primary selves that is running our life. The Stones call this the operating ego, e.g., the pusher/rational mind/inner critic/perfectionist could have us become 'workshop junkies'.
- \* The primary selves protect our vulnerability from pain, shame, confusion, ridicule, censure and feeling lost in the world. They are our power in the world. These selves carry the rules we live by, make sense of our surroundings, give us explanations about our life and make life predictable.
- \* We may stay locked in our primary self because the primary self believes it is 'right'. When we feel criticized, it is the primary self that does not accept the criticism; it believes it is the other person's fault or problem, e.g., if my pleaser is my primary self and I am being judged as being too nice, my pleaser would justify itself by saying that it is better to get along with people than to be fighting with them.
- Different primary selves co-exist in a person and emerge in different situations, e.g., being a tyrant at home but a submissive employee at work; being aggressive playing sports but passive otherwise; being talkative with friends but quiet with strangers.
- Primary selves cannot conceptualize working with their opposites. It is only the Aware Ego Process that can integrate the opposites.
- Primary selves are so strong that they can suck us back into their gravitational pull except when our Aware Ego Process is strong enough to resist this pull.
- Sometimes the primary self is created by 'pushing off from' (rejecting) family or societal rules, e.g., becoming an atheist in a Christian family, a draft-dodger. This is part of the rebel system.
- Hidden primary selves are seen by us but are not seen by others. We experience them internally, running our lives, e.g., competitor, star, adventurer and free-spirit.



## What is the operating ego?

- \* The operating ego is the primary self system; that is, it is the combination or team of primary selves who we think of as 'I' or 'me' as we live our life, e.g., one common team of selves is the pusher-perfectionist-pleaser-inner critic-responsible team.
- \* In our daily life, until we develop our Aware Ego Process, we are unconsciously and continuously identifying with one of our primary selves.
- \* At any moment, we are usually identified 100% with a self and are not aware of it. That self is operating our life 100% in that moment.
- The operating ego diminishes as the Aware Ego Process grows. Primary selves can change; disowned selves can become primary selves and vice versa but the operating ego will always be functional to some degree in a person's life.



## Does our identification with primary selves change?

- \* One primary self can be running a person's life one minute and then another primary self can take over the next minute. This can occur at any time, e.g., in a conversation with a partner, the pleaser self can be accommodating to the partner's wishes and in the next minute a rebel self could take over if the partner is being perceived as being selfish.
- \* Primary selves can change over time but keep their essence, e.g., the inner critic can become less critical and more supportive by seeing its own limitations and benefits.
- \* Different selves can be primary over different stages of our life, e.g., a good girl at home becomes the rebel at university and then becomes the good employee after she starts working.
  - There can be a permanent shift from the dominance of one primary self to another primary self, e.g., from being very easy-going to being on-edge after suffering from a heart attack.
  - A severe illness or major life disruption can cause a shift to a new primary self, e.g., having severe back problems can change a self-reliant person into depending on others; or losing your job can shift one from feeling secure to being highly anxious.
  - As our 'meaning in life' changes, our primary self can also change, e.g., the death of a friend could result in one becoming more religious/spiritual.

## How do we relate with the primary selves?

- \* We do not get rid of primary selves. We learn to separate from them.
  - The concept of separation is used because the energy of the primary self is sitting inside our body and we must separate from this energy system in order to develop an Aware Ego Process. To use other concepts such as differentiation and objectification instead of separation implies the selves are 'not us' and gives them a quality of not being real. It has been found through experience that using the concept of separation fosters the desired separation from the primary selves.
  - Never violate the primacy of the primary self when working with a disowned self; that is, always honour and respect the role of the primary self.
- \* **It is important not to judge or try to change any of the primary selves. We honour all aspects of each self.**

# When a Primary Self is Driving Our Psychological Car!

