

How we can work together

Life can be challenging at times, we can feel polarised into a state of being as if someone else had pushed us there, or we may feel stressed and anxious unable to separate out the truth to our reality. It's made harder by our educational system seemingly incapable of teaching consciousness practices beyond a bit of mindfulness and non-thinking. Equally if you have a spiritual practice such as yoga you may feel it's a corrupted system as if you have to go via an Eastern mystic or guru and a particular religious dogma that comes with that in order to connect to your spiritual self. And often through that the 'spiritual self' tends to be a bolt-on that comes when we are on a yoga mat but otherwise parked up with our lycra.

Marion Woodman a Jungian psychotherapist once said:

'There is no sense talking about "being true to yourself" until you are sure what voice you are being true to. It takes work to differentiate the voices of the unconscious.'

Our minds and the psyches are the most elegant, complex, beautiful, responsive and high functioning systems on the planet yet we all make poor choices, polarise ourselves and others and create massive suffering in ourselves.

How can we do this better and in doing so trust ourselves more deeply too?

When we sit in my consultation room whether in real-time or on zoom something magical happens. We feel into not only our mental, physical and emotional happenings but also the energetic.

We are all obviously 'conscious' human beings however most of us have been taught psychological defence mechanisms, eg to hold our emotions in check, 'stiff upper lip', 'big boys don't cry', 'don't cry' so we learn from an early age to pack our emotional body away to protect ourselves. Equally as young children we may have seen or heard things from our caregivers that made us feel overwhelming pain, sadness, anger and confusion etc and again our elegant psyches will have packed our emotional body away to end our innocent suffering and that pattern without any consciousness work will continue to prevail into adult hood.

Part of my work with a client is learning to be and find value with our emotional body again, to learn a witnessing practice that allows for emotions to be observed like changing weather patterns without 'going anywhere' with those feelings. From this comes new insights and new experience that feed back new response patterns and new undemanding into the psyche leading eventually to a complete re-evaluation and renovation of the client's emotional patterning. The person is then capable of acting rather than reacting.

If we go even deeper into our human being-ness we find we are at a quantum physics level, only swirling, oscillating fields of energy and between these

observable energetic interactions there appears to be 'nothingness'. In modern physics one current theory holds that all matter and all energy is actually trapped light. The light appears to be intrinsic to an object rather than being reflected from the object, ie. the object itself emits the light. Many mystical and cosmic experiences report light of various colours. Light and sound are indeed accepted in conventional medicine as energy forces capable of healing. For example, blue light is used to treat jaundiced infants (the blue light breaks up the chemical bonding of the bilirubin molecule and converts it into a system less toxic to the nervous system. Equally ultra-violet light is used to treat skin disorders. And sound is used in ultrasonics in diagnostic equipment which bounces sound waves through the body to produce an 'echo rhythm' in effect. Our psychological just like our physical is being shown to be nothing more or less than a configuration of energies.

One of my favourite methods of working with clients is one based on the energetic model as explained above. 'Voice Dialogue and the Psychology of the Selves' is a system and model of consciousness developed by Drs Hal and Sidra Stone in Mendocino, California. I was lucky enough to meet them back in the 1980s and studied in Mendocino with them for over 15 yrs. it's a wonderful methodology that gives a clear roadmap as well as being experiential in process ie. it's not just your mind that understands it but your entire energy system is opened up and transformed.

It's the only process I know that is underpinned with the understanding of Eastern esoteric energy practices such as yoga, meditation, the chakras and pranayama with the energy patterns of our own personal psyche. Instead of seeing the psyche as a solid block we can sense, know, feel it as a set of disparate parts that need making whole holism'). As a psychotherapeutic model it's known as 'Transformational Psychology'.

In this method, I work as the facilitator helping the client to become more aware of and experience the many different selves (and their energetics) that may be unconscious but that have power to run our lives from the shadows. By becoming conscious of these selves we can learn to use them to make changes in our lives. It's a unique and elegant technique that teaches as well as positively transforming our lives.

In the Voice Dialogue model both the facilitator and the client engage energetically with the subject matter with a tuning in and resonating with the energy patterns in the room which co-creates a third layer of change - a literal raising of the vibrational field the client has currently been operating in. There is an expanded new space in their consciousness that can continue to expand well after the session has ended. It also works on an hypno-therapeutic level taking us out of beta (normal thinking brain waves/adrenal) into theta (healing brain waves/parasympathetic nervous system ie. relax response) and so don't be surprised if you feel tired after a session.

During a session, we invite these different parts/selves to come forward and speak about when they first came into our lives, what was important then. What we find is that these parts came in usually at an age in childhood when we most needed them and now we are older with our own agency they can begin to let go of their grip and newer parts/selves can step forward. There are certain key words that are useful to know about before coming for a session.

A. Our Primary Selves

In our growing up each of us develops characteristic ways of thinking, feeling and acting that became familiar to us. They can be our coping strategies, the parts of us that developed to allow us to fit in with our families. We call these our 'Primary Selves' and they would have developed in our psyche to protect us so that our deepest feelings, sensitivities, fears etc weren't exposed or damaged. For example, a person who's childhood was unstable and unsupported might have developed a very strong self that's all about power/control (it was the way as a child to make sense of all the instability), now that client is older they may still be running with that primary self in charge: wielding power at home, at work, etc and may be experienced by their family as someone who tries to control them, disempowers their children etc as they need to feel in charge.

Through Voice Dialogue and the Psychology of the Selves a client of mine discovered a vulnerable self who was scared of showing itself in case it was rejected again (as it was as a child), his controlling self was exhausted at having to hold the energetics of control and as he got older he realised he didn't need to have such a tight closed system, it was affecting his health (he had heart issues) and he couldn't admit to himself, or to anyone, that he was fallible just like every other human being is. At first he was embarrassed to show his vulnerable self to me, as if he might be judged (ironically in that moment the only judge in the room was his inner one). Through the sessions he began to relax and felt safe to explore further and week by week he started to see the value of his softer side. With his family he noticed a relaxed shift in them as he changed: they became more relaxed when he arrived home, his children more open to talk to him without feeling he was judging them if they didn't deliver with high grades. The entire family system began to expand and felt a safe ground to grow up in. His perfectionist energetic settled back into his psyche and everyone's stress levels reduced. His wife even mentioned that he now seemed to accept the love the family were sharing with him and breakfasts and dinners became fun and full of laughter again.

Our work together literally developed his awareness of his inner world: now he has choice - his Aware Ego State (see below for a description of what this term means) decides in any given moment to what is needed or can respond in relation to that.

B. Disowned Selves

For every self we are identified with (our Primary Selves) there are one or more selves that have been rejected, disowned and literally buried deep in our psyche. These are known as our 'disowned selves' and they carry what we are missing in

our lives or what we might blame others for having 'too much' of at a particular time.

An example of this is a married woman in my consultation room (let's call her Alex). We talk about her boredom in her marriage, the lack of adventure, the static energetic to it where she feels every day as the same. She has very young children and is very tied to being a good mother. In fact it's so strong in her that she's lost connection to her own free-spirit/adventurous self. Instead she sees her husband doing that: he's bought a boat, is doing lots of competitive racing, has skiing trips with his friends, goes to work (he really enjoys it). She feels resentful and tired.

She gave up her job to be the main care-giver and is struggling with that change in her identity. In our work together we connect to the good mother energetic in her that only has one focus and that is the children (it's not interested in her needs at all). By working with the good mother she gets to understand that her overwhelming emphasis comes at a huge cost to the actual woman who is literally dying under the weight and burden of parenting to such an extreme. A less polarised psyche would have more balance - time for the children, time for her. So instead of being conscious of that and then rebalancing she judges her husband for living out the side of her that is buried under motherhood.

We get her husband into the session, we devise a plan where she gets to speak her needs, he makes space and time for her so he takes up the slack of parenting (for him he was feeling left out, 'not needed in the family' which is why he filled his time with adventures). There's a dropping into their own vulnerabilities around this, the fear of missing out, not being in the heart of the family just seen as the breadwinner, the fear of the woman feeling she's lost in motherhood and has lost her sense of self/who she is when she's not being a mother). The outcome is good, consciously choosing new habits/patterns, speaking their needs, wishes, desires and meeting each other as a team. They go on trips together, make time for each other's free-spirited parts of themselves come out to play which can be as simple as just having an afternoon to do whatever you feel for yourself without a schedule of baby needs.

C. The Aware Ego

An aware ego is not ego in the 'self-centred' sense of the word. It's not a fixed state but a sense of centre between two polarities. Image the space on a line between yin (lunar/being/feeling) and yang (solar/doing/thinking). We want to feel we have access and choice to those two opposing energetics. When we are in an aware ego space we have that choice, when one of these two polarities 'have us' we aren't aware of a choice. For example, if we are making love from yang it will be goal orientated, maybe time orientated, we'll think our way there, we might hear internal criticism (you're ugly, you look bloated today) and making love will feel like a mentalized task. If we are making love from yin it will be timeless, sensuous, we'll be feeling our way (there'll be no judging/analytical criticism) it will be like swimming in a warm pool of energy where we feel energy

building, dissipating, building again...we're in the dance of sexual, sensual energy not trying to control it through your mind.

The Aware ego is a dynamic part of consciousness which witnesses our inner world and understands and holds the tensions and polarities (oppositions) between them. It's a part of consciousness that is separate from each self and values each polarity without judgement or preference. With practice that aware ego space builds and becomes stronger so that there is more internal clarity and space which helps us from feeling trapped under the influence of one particular self. We have space and time to choose when we are stronger in our aware ego process (this is similar to a yogic perspective of building an 'observer' part of ourselves that observes our breathing, thoughts, feelings without making anything of them).

D. Universal selves/disowned

In Jungian psychology certain energy patterns that are similar in all people (either owned or disowned) are called 'archetypes'. For example: father/mother, vulnerable child, inner critic, saboteur, perfectionist, victim, spiritual etc. examples below:

1. father/mother

the nurturing aspect of people. The negative expressions of these energetics show as the inner patriarch/inner matriarch which have a distant, controlling and dictatorial style of showing up in the world. Our partners or children will feel judged and controlled and will probably react defensively. Equally women sometimes have a strong inner patriarchal energy (we live in a patriarchal world ie. men have for a very long time ran the world) so we might find we are incredible judgmental of ourselves on showing emotion or 'being' weak I often find gets raised in a consultation as a massive negative.

2. vulnerable child/inner child

this is a primary part of ourselves that we are born with, innocent to the world, open, undefended, totally at the mercy of those caregivers around us. This self wants to relate to everyone around it with openness and love. If we have a challenging childhood where we aren't met with care, love and protection we learn it's not safe to be in the world so open and undefended. Our psyches literally pick up the pieces and develop defence strategies to protect our open, innocent selves such as a carer self, or withdrawn self. The carer is a protective mechanism that allows the child to be accepted by doing/caring for others and in turn the child's vulnerable self is hidden from the world so it can't be hurt.

Our child can also show up in our psyches as the rebellious child or the creative child/magical child which holds our creativity and when we are connected to this part of ourselves we can be extremely free in our creativity.

3. inner critic

this is a part of us (in many of us a primary self) that tells us what we have done wrong, where we aren't measuring up, and says things to us like 'you're not entitled', or 'you're not good enough'. It's a crippling voice that sits on our

shoulders and can literally stop us in our tracks - the artist's canvas stays unmarked, the writer's page stays unwritten. Often this can be an internalised voice of one or both of our parents. Because the inner critic is so normalised inside of us we habitually have it on our case nagging us to be/do better and we miss the beauty of our creativity, the individualises of our looks, the specialness and uniqueness of our way of being in the world. Another form of the inner critic is a judgemental self that puts others and ourselves down which is really trying to protect us from being hurt and criticised/judged in the outer world - almost if i criticise myself first to the point of annihilation i won't be surprised if i hear criticism in the outer world.

Through the work the inner critic becomes our friend, it becomes discerning and useful when used consciously.

4. saboteur

this energetic can literally stop our growth and success usually with subtle and unconscious manoeuvres. This part is built to protect us eg. let me screw up this relationship before it ends (it has learnt perhaps from its parents that all relationships end badly). When worked with this energetic becomes useful rather than unnecessarily disruptive as it often comes in when we have struggled to have healthy boundaries.

5. perfectionist self

This energetic seeks excellence and is never happy with the outcome and leads to hampering choice, movement and can become obsessive. When in balance the perfectionist becomes a useful tool that gets you to do your best but without the negative pushing energy - it becomes an ally not an enemy.

6. victim

the victim energetic feels that life has dealt them a raw deal and tends to blame others for their lot. It's an energetic that causes inertia, nothing is worth trying as things 'never work out'. To break this negative energetic loop it's important to debunk the victim's beliefs so that new space is created - what a negative mind thinks the proving part of the mind goes out to prove so if you think 'life is against me' you will literally have your proving mind go out to prove this and it will miss any times when actually life is good.

7. spiritual

this energetic is in contact with the sacred and universal transpersonal energies. I sometimes see this in the yoga room where folk have become too identified with the spiritual world at the cost of living in the 3D material world. Life is always about balance - having a connection to the spiritual world AND bringing it into the 3D material world not escaping into the ether or feeling that life is all about healing/fixing something. There is a lot of mumbo jumbo in the now overly-commercialised spiritual community and we all need discernment to navigate our way through. No one can connect you to spirit, you have that ability yourself, you don't need anyone as your go-between but it can help to have a mentor that has journeyed through that and can give pragmatic advice.

We can take that one step further and say the yang pole (solar/outward dynamic) would be in this instance 'Power' and hold those sub-personalities such as analytical mind, controller, perfectionist, critic, patriarch, parent etc and on the yin (lunar/more inward/passive) with sub-personalities such as the vulnerable inner child, embodied/feeling self. So if we are always identified with our power selves ie. analytical mind, controlling, judging etc then our shadow (what we will dislike 'owning'/admitting we have in ourselves or be less keen for others to see us as) will be hidden from us and when something happens that busts through our controlling selves and blows our world apart, like a death or a divorce, we will find ourselves adrift with little ability to find our centre ground (the aware ego state) - we become pushed or pulled into a polarised side of ourselves - at one moment we are in control, at another we are feeling lost to a sea of emotion.

The next pdf will show a process of understanding the dance of our outer world and what we call Bonding Patterns.