



Spiritual Light Center

Newsletter—February 2015

EGO AND OUR TRUE SELF

When I was studying Psychology many years ago, I was taught that the Ego was the good guy who kept us safe and solved problems for us to keep us alive. The culprits to watch out for, who caused all the trouble, were the Id and the Super Ego. This is classical Freudian theory. He told us the Id is the part of our personality that drives us with basic urges like sex, hunger and survival. The Super Ego holds all the messages we got from our parents and teachers about what to do and not to do. It is the basic source of guilt and conscience.

The Ego, we were taught, holds the reins and steers us on our journey through life, while the Id and Super Ego act as “back-seat drivers.” The Ego, however, in this model is also not playing with a full deck. It has an exaggerated, distorted view of the world, relationships and self based on the strategies it adopted early in life to survive in a dysfunctional world.

It is interesting to note that the word “ego” in Latin, means “I am.” About ten years later, my spiritual education continued with an introduction to meditation, hatha yoga, past life regression, and *A Course In Miracles*. Freudian and neo-Freudian psychotherapies are a process of unpeeling the first layer of the onion, so to speak, removing the influence of Id and Super Ego so that the Ego can

learn to function in a healthy way. *ACIM* taught me that the Ego with which I had become so familiar as a psychotherapist also had to be stripped away (another layer of the onion). It also got demoted to having a lower-case “e,” becoming the “ego,” to make way for the true I Am Self, the Ego.

All efforts of spiritual practice now had as their goal to access and reveal this higher Ego, the “I within the I” of which Jeshua spoke. If Freudian ego function was like driving with two back-seat drivers, accessing the Ego was like taking your hands off the wheel and trusting that *someone* is driving.

Be your own Valentine and love your Self

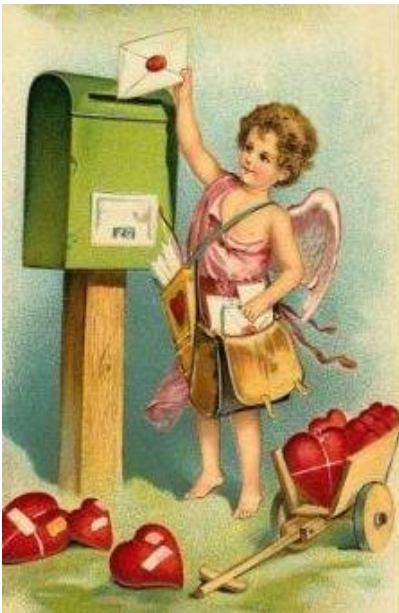
Arthur Cataldo, President

OUR VISION STATEMENT

The Spiritual Light Center is a peaceful and joyful fellowship of individuals, centered in love, dedicated to the God within, and honoring the many paths to truth.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We seek to develop our highest selves by continuous sharing of spiritual ideas, in an environment of unconditional love and respect for others.



ONGOING EVENTS AT SLC

Every Tuesday at 5:15 p.m. - Join our group in the Hall as we watch a selected film of a spiritual nature, followed by discussion to develop our evolution. Afterward we choose a res-

taurant and go out to eat!

Every other Wednesday, Feb 11 & 25 from 5:00 to 6:30p.m. – Come to **The Sacred Circle/TEA**, an open group dedicated to spiritual sharing and growth, facilitated by Tina Wardell. Contact is 828-276-6557.

Every other Thursday, Feb 5 & 19, at 5:15 p.m. - Please join us for our meditation group in the Chapel led by Dr. Richard Kimball. We have an informative discussion followed by walking and sitting meditation. Call Richard at 371-3425 for further details.

Every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. - Come join us for our **book study**. We've recently begun **A New Earth** by Eckhart Tolle. He is fascinating, as is this wonderful book.

OUR SLC METAPHYSICAL STORE WILL CLOSE UNTIL MARCH 1st

To give Sandy more time to get the online store going and to complete inventory we're closing the physical store until March 1st. For info please call Sandy at 828-200-2451.

Kay Smith is auctioning off this beautiful painting, all proceeds to go to help Sandy Frary get a much needed car! Bill Groves is joining in, auctioning off *your choice* of any of his original, hand framed photography hanging in the Hall. If you would like to participate, fill out one of the tickets provided in the Chapel and put it in the box. The highest bidder will be awarded on Sun. Feb. 15 before our celebration. You can help Sandy and get a nice gift for someone special!



UPCOMING SPEAKERS

February 1, 11 a.m.

Rev. Jamie Sanders is a New Thought minister visiting us from Florida. He's pastor of Pensacola Unity, a former television host, currently producer and host of *Spirituality Today*, and was featured in the new documentary *What is New Thought*. He will speak on "These Two Lips of Mine."

February 8, 11 a.m.

J. Robin Whitley is a poet, musician, and author of two books. Robin holds the M.Div. degree from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and she will share with us on "Sacred Life, Sacred Death."

February 15, 11 a.m.

Dr. Harvey Tritel, a retired cardiologist and former lay rabbi of the Mountain Synagogue, returns to speak on "Modeh Ani – Re-Creation Moment to Moment."

February 22, 11 a.m.

Carol Harrison, called Nature's Voice, animal communicator, shamanic practitioner, and Reiki Master, will speak on "Do You Know Who You Really Are?"

Friday, February 27, 6 p.m.

Millard Deutsch will speak in the Fellowship Hall on "Soul Travel: A Tour Guide."
Don't miss this out on this one!

SPIRITUAL LIGHT CENTER INFORMATION

80 Heritage Hollow Drive, Franklin, NC 28734
Right behind the Gazebo Restaurant in Heritage Hollow
828-369-3065
slcfranklin@frontier.com www.spirituallylightcenter.com

OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Valentine Letters to our True Self

 *From Ego to True Selves: The Journey Home* (edited) By Lynne Foote

A version of a story that is endearing to me is that one day two parents overhear their young daughter talking to her newborn brother in his crib, saying, "*Hurry, tell me about where you've just come from because I am already starting to forget.*" We come into this embodied world as a whole being but we are functioning without self-consciousness. We cannot remain in this undifferentiated state because it is our human destiny to develop an egoic personality. The fall from Grace, which in Enneagram terms is called the Primal Catastrophe, is the loss of contact with our True Self and the development of our Egoic self. What defines an Egoic self is the experience of a separate "I", the duality of a "me" and a "not-me". With this disconnection from the True Self, we experience a loss of Presence.

The problem is not that we have an Ego but that we begin to *identify* with this Ego. We begin to believe that *THIS* is who I am. At best, the Ego can only be an imitation of the True Self. The entrance into our egoic identity, and the formation of our personality, which happens in the first thirty-six months of life, is preverbal and unconscious. Our mind-body absorbs experiences from the sensory world based on needs that are being met, and those that are not. From this, we develop a core belief system, again outside our conscious awareness, deciding who we are and what kind of world we are living in.

It is important to emphasize that the ego is a necessary developmental stage on the way to becoming a Realized Being. Jung spoke about the work of the first half of life as grounding our lives in the experience of the Ego, developing a sense of self and cultivating the ability to love others, developing our home and families, while also finding our place in the world, our work. So we can see our Personality as a kind of arrested development, as a collection of internal defenses and reactions that are managing deeply ingrained beliefs about the self and world that come from our unconscious childhood experience. It's a form of mistaken identity.

Ultimately we live in the Trance of our Personality, under the spell of our Persona, estranged from our True Nature. Our personality becomes the source of our identity rather than direct contact with our Being. The more identified we are, the more our awareness becomes constricted and we lose touch with Reality. We are on automatic pilot, sleep-walking through life. The deeper we are in the Trance, the more charged the dynamics and defense strategies of the personality become and we are more reactive than responsive. This feels like home, like "me." When we change our center of gravity, there is a huge shift in our life.

JOURNEY TO SELF, THE WAY OUT The process of returning to Self is one of self-discovery, rather than self-improvement. We are correcting a case of mistaken identity, not trying to fix our false identity. And our Soul has its own wisdom in this process. As in any hero's journey, there is a preparatory phase. We have preliminary work to do that includes developing our awareness and stabilizing mindfulness by cultivating a "witnessing consciousness," an inner observer, through a meditation practice or other mindfulness training. We need to know the nature of the Trance that we are living in for us to wake up from that trance. And we need to strengthen our ability to stay with difficult experiences. We have had a lifetime of resisting contact with the early pain of our original self-abandonment and with our imperfect attachments. When we access this pain, which we must on this journey, we find ourselves in the *Dark Night of the Soul*, without our familiar sense of self to cling to. We need to feel the pain of our Holy Longing, because *that which we long for is also longing for us* and can guide us home.

The Journey heightens the moment we can "catch ourselves in the act" of our egoic behavior and choose to do something different than our automatic, conditioned response. It is revolutionary to see the rising of ego. This is the gift that we receive as we cultivate Presence. By staying with the Now, with what is arising in our present experience without resistance or judgment, we come into a felt sense experience of our unconscious belief system. By directly engaging with the unconscious motivators, we come in under the radar and access the storyteller rather than the story. We find the created self, the ego, but also the power that creates (the map and the map-maker). Here we are breaking through our conditioned patterns and responses. We do this by staying present to all that is arising. We find the defense mechanisms, the conditioned reactions that limit our experience and our expression. We uncover and move through layers of pain and trauma. We keep moving through the persona (the false self), the consequent defense strategies, until we come to the fundamental hurts and fears that are driving us. To be free you must be willing to go where you are most afraid to go.



THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS Our quest does not bring about perfection but brings about a maturity, an enhancement of our humanity, and a deeper wisdom. When we return our attention to the Here and Now, our awareness expands and the ego's grip loosens since awareness and ego cannot coexist. With Presence, we have a different place to stand. We experience a profound shift of identity from being the ever-changing contents of our minds to being the awareness in the background. Ken Wilber, during a Boulder talk, said, "Everything I know about myself as an object is exactly what I'm not." By staying present to an experience that is arising without identifying with it, eventually ego identification begins to dissolve and Presence becomes the ground of our Being.

The goal is to wear our personalities more lightly and to "expand our wardrobe." When we are no longer identified with the ego, we rediscover our connection to the Divine. From that same talk, Wilber claims that: "Waking up to the Pure Self is nothing less than God. God is the witness in me, the unbroken ray of consciousness."

When we explore our immediate experience without preconceived agendas and judgments, we are less caught up in what has magnetized our attention. Our defenses fall away. As we stay with what is arising moment to moment, we notice what calls us away from the moment. We cross a critical threshold to receiving inner wisdom. As we expand more fully into our Essential Nature, our senses are awakened and everything becomes more immediate, vivid, and alive. We are inside our experience. Eckhart Tolle claims, "Most people don't inhabit a living reality but a conceptualized one". Here we are interacting with life from an inner quiet and stillness. We are grounded in our body with an open heart and a quiet mind. Gratitude fills us and we have a sense of Wonder and Awe. The moment is just arising, organically, and we are abiding in our depth.



Living Sober/Awake: True Self vs. Ego

from aspiritualevolution.wordpress.com

We touch God with the inmost kernel of our being: spirit, soul, our true self. When I first got sober and tried to seek God, it seemed there was practically nothing there to reach for. "Flimsy reed" described it perfectly – as if I were trying to grasp something too insubstantial to even feel. What I understand today is that God wasn't the thing under-developed; it was my barely-there true self trying to connect with it! I had no familiarity with my own soul. I'd lived 99% of my life in the realm of ego, constructing myself around comparisons of what I thought you thought of me. Was there anything genuine in me, besides fear? I couldn't find it. But as it turns out, pursuing sobriety is about pursuing the truth of ourselves that is inextricably connected to God.

How do you recognize true self? Here are some handy hallmarks. Only the true self feels unmitigated compassion. It loves without neediness or score-keeping. My true self senses the sacred in every tree, bird, and human being it encounters, feeling connected to the goodness not only of living things but even in the inanimate world of matter. My ego's world, by contrast, runs a gamut of competitors, threats, means, and so *what?* It's a barren perspective of need.

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I had an experience of a quick turn-around with from ego to true self the other day. I was browsing on friggin' Facebook, feeling inferior, convinced everyone was having a more rollicking summer than I was – all of them constantly water skiing, laughing, and carpe-dieming away. In other words, I was caged in ego. I came across a friend's page and was busy envying his social life without even knowing it when I gathered from friends' posts that he was in prison. He'd relapsed. He'd been caught doing something bad and sentenced to four years.

Half of me died and another half came awake. If you say I had an emotion of feeling sorry for my friend, you'll be missing the entire point, which is that I remembered love –

an almost physical sensation pouring from my heart. My friend's voice came to me, his energy, and his sweet shyness at my "18 years sober/get to keep my boob" party soon after my cancer diagnosis, where he was wet-behind-the-ears sober again. He'd told me my example of constant kindness helped him, and he vied with others to drive me to my surgery. I knew his goodness, and no one who has not lived as a puppet of addiction, doing things against your higher self, can understand the compassion I felt learning of his screw up. The tears his past photos brought to my eyes weren't just for him – they were for *all* of us grappling with this disease. Suddenly, all the brag posts on Facebook transformed. Now they struck me as courageous: I understood we would all suffer, and that our show-offy flourishes on Facebook were no different from the exclamations of toddlers: "Look at *me!*" "I *did* it!" We're all just doing our best. We're all trying to shine, do well, and risk falling to grab the gold ring.

In that moment, my authentic self could see as God does – through the eyes of love.

What the Catholics refer to as "Holy Spirit" and Quakers as the "still small voice" does guide us more as we learn, over years of working our programs, to cut the crap and access our spiritual core. Some of my NDE friends have encountered this voice on the other side as their guardian angel, a loving spirit to whom ego makes us deaf. Or maybe it's the candle of God-energy in us. Whatever you want to call it, this is the power that nudges us toward goodness, and it seems to me it's what keeps us sober. Only something beyond our own brains can guard us from the "curious mental blind spot." To connect with our Divine, we have to let go of our thoughts, emotions, and posturing and become, to the extent we can, simply our own aliveness, the bit of God inside. More and more, I think living from that place is the sole path not only to sobriety, but to a meaningful life.

☪ *Ego vs. True Self*

from yoginisguidetolife.com

I have a huge ego. Seriously, I do. And it never ceases to amaze me. Sometimes it humors me; other times, it horrifies me. Once when my colleague challenged my decision-making for the umpteenth time, my ego erupted. "Let me tell you something," I yelled, "You don't stand in front of me. You don't even stand next to me. You stand *behind* me." As I stared him down, I couldn't help but notice the hurt in his eyes. Whoa, I thought, did I really just say that?!? I felt terrible. If someone ever said that to me, I would be devastated and probably quit on the spot. So why did I lash out at him like that? It's simple. My ego was threatened. And when that happens, not only do I hurt others, but also myself. Because I know that's not me, that's not my true Self.

I consider myself a spiritual person. I practice yoga and meditation every day. I try to be thoughtful and kind towards others. But still, I struggle with my ego, which loves to assert itself. In yoga, the ultimate goal is liberation. But how can we liberate ourselves when we continue to cling to our ego? When we allow our ego, or false identity to rule, we forget our true nature and suffer.



So is the point of yoga, or any spiritual practice, to lose our ego? I'm not sure that's possible. But as I have gone deeper in my own practice, I notice that I'm much more mindful of my ego and how it operates. And that mindfulness helps me remember my true nature. So what is the difference between the ego and our true Self? Well, try this little exercise...describe who you are. If you use words like mother, wife, vice-president, artist, writer, friend, that's your ego talking. But if you write down words like honest, kind, loving, thoughtful, patient, open and engaging, you're getting closer to understanding your real nature.

Our society places a lot of value on ego. We encourage competition, ambition and greed. Our titles, money, power and possessions all are defined by our ego. But the reality is, if you need something on the outside to make you happy and whole, you are bound to suffer. That's because those things don't last, and the ego will keep searching for something to satisfy it. Life becomes an endless loop of disappointment.

When I left my corporate job in television, my ego was lost. Who was I without a title, salary and staff to boss around? I remember how good it felt when I got a promotion. I was somebody important. Of course, I can laugh at myself now because I know that was all just an illusion. My ego doesn't define me. Everything the ego relies on to feel "important" will one day be gone. So ask yourself, if tomorrow, you lost everything you identify with, would you still know who you are?



I have struggled with this question for a long time. Who am I? This is the ultimate question we all try to answer. Through the practice of yoga and meditation, I realize that my true Self doesn't change. The circumstances of my life will, but my true nature remains the same. We say in yoga "I AM", which means we are eternal, everlasting peace. It's only when I allow my ego to take over do I suffer. When I feel threatened, insecure or inadequate I have no peace of mind. I shift into defensive mode --- fortress goes up, armor goes on, and I charge into battle. The ego loves a good conflict. That's how it survives, by separating itself from others.

That's exactly what I did that day with my colleague. When he threatened my ego, I responded by labeling him the "enemy" and bashing him over the head with my cruel remarks. But if I had acted from my true Self, I would have calmly sat down with him and listened. He just wanted to be heard. Don't we all? Even if I stuck to my decision in the end, I would have shown him kindness and respect... and kept my peace of mind.

So how can we connect more to our true Self, instead of our ego? Here are a few simple tips I have learned in my practice:

Have Good Intentions Are you acting out of self-interest or the interest of others? Ego is selfish; our true Self is selfless. Consider how your actions will impact others before acting on them. Will they benefit only you or will they benefit others, as well? When you act with good intentions, you stay true to your real nature and maintain your peace and happiness.

Take Five Breaths The next time you feel a confrontation coming on with another person, take five. Seriously, five breaths. I used to give myself time-outs by going to another room, shutting the door, and just breathing. Something this simple practice is very powerful. It helps calm you down and reconnect to your true Self.

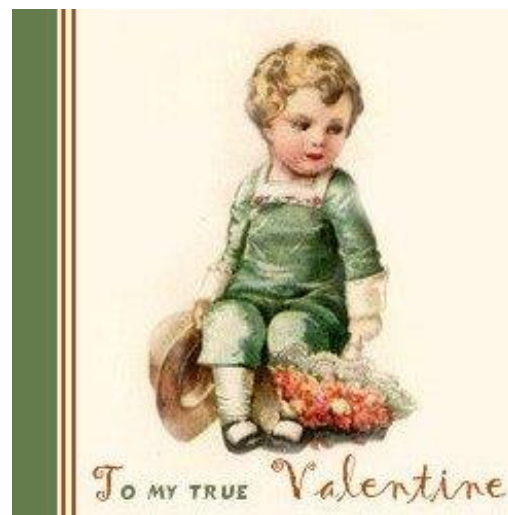
Observe the Mind Next time you meditate, or just walk down the street, observe your thoughts. Notice how all your thoughts are about yourself? I could develop an entire reality series with the drama that goes on in my head...Is she mad at me? He doesn't like me...I will never get another job...How will I survive? We are always thinking about ourselves, even when we think we're not. That's the ego. The more familiar you get with it, the less you will allow it to rule your life.

Tune in to Silence and Solitude The best way to tune-in to your true Self is to spend time in silence and solitude. Meditate, contemplate, stare out the window, or go for a walk in nature. Consider it a mini-escape. Let go of the need to think, plan or do anything. By cultivating an inner calm, you will be able to tune into your inner voice. And when you listen really closely, you will hear your Self, not your ego.

Have A Sense of Humor Your ego takes itself very seriously. Your True Self does not. So lighten up, make fun of yourself sometimes, and don't take all that drama in your head so seriously. When you realize your true Self, nothing can disturb your peace and equanimity because you understand what is real and what is not.

☪ How do you know whether a feeling you have is coming from your Ego, or from a deeper source?

Sometimes it's not so easy to tell. One criterion you can use is to know if there is any negativity involved, anger, resentment, irritation, and then Ego is present there. If there is no negativity but there is an underlying field of peace, then it arises from a deeper place that is not the Ego. For example, you may be in a situation, and you may feel that suddenly the right thing to do is to leave the situation – whether it's a relationship, or a place, or a job, whatever it is – you can direct attention to the feeling to see where it's coming from. Is there any reactivity, or anger in the essential part of that feeling? Or is there just a deep knowing that this is what you have to do, and you do it? There's a peace that comes with that. ~ Eckhart Tolle



~ February 2015 ~						
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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 11:00 Sunday Service Rev. Jamie Sanders	2	3 5:15 Movie Night	4	5 5:15 Meditation 6:30 Book Study	6	7
8 11:00 Sunday Service J. Robin Whitley	9	10 5:15 Movie Night	11 5pm TEA	12 6:30 Book Study	13	14
15 11:00 Sunday Service Dr. Harvey Tritel	16	17 5:15 Movie Night	18	19 5:15 Meditation 6:30 Book Study	20	21
22 11:00 Sunday Service Carol Harrison	23	24 5:15 Movie Night	25 5pm TEA	26 6:30 Book Study	27 6:30 Millard Deutsch On "Soul Travel: A Tour Guide"	28