

Anima and Animus Our Inner Female and Male Persona

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We live in a world of relationships. Each day we deal with family members, friends, lovers, acquaintances, and strangers. The most obvious mode of communicating is with words, either spoken or written. Beyond words, however, there are many levels of interaction. There is non-verbal communication in the form of body language and what is left unsaid. This can be called “reading between the lines” of verbal communication. And every connection you have with another human being, whether it is your parent, partner, friend or child, contains energy information that affects the health of your system. Your most important relationship is your relationship with yourself. Because we live in a society that places such emphasis on external relationships, it may sound strange and selfish to consider focusing on your inner relationship. In addition, many of you are probably natural “healers,” sensitive to the desires of others and in the habit of attempting to provide them with what they want. Shifting your focus from others onto yourself can seem like a betrayal. But you will come to see that turning your healing attention onto yourself will not only help you, but the others as well.

The first step in healing external relationships is healing the relationship between your inner male and female. Within each of us, whether in a female or a male body, are the energy currents of both sexes. We are an expression of the inherent duality of the Universe. When you listen to your inner male-female persona this will help you sense that duality within yourself and give you the opportunity to feel how that inner relationship can dramatically affect your outer relationships.

How do you begin in this introspective process? Take some time to complete the following exercises.

- On one page of a journal write down all the characteristics you associate with the feminine. These can be emotions, colors, needs, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, natural elements or phenomena, anything that you consider female. Here are a few to get you started: Soft, nurturing, flowers, moon. Now see how many others you come up with.
- Now, on the opposite page, write as many characteristics of the masculine that you can think of. Here are just a few: Strong, provider, Ferrari, protector.
- Now look at your two lists. Did you write any of the characteristics on both? Look again to see if any on the feminine side could be applied to masculine. Place a symbol for masculine next to those items. Do the same with the masculine list.
- Think about where your ideas came from. What influences have shaped your impressions of what is feminine and masculine? How much of your understanding of masculine and feminine has been created by your culture and your family? How much is based on a universal or archetypal definition of feminine and masculine?
- Look once more at your lists. Make a special mark next to the characteristics of feminine and masculine that seem to be universal or archetypal. These definitions appear across a broad variety of societies and have appeared consistently throughout human existence. For instance, in many cultures, the masculine is considered the protector/warrior element while the feminine is considered the nurturing/peacemaker.
- Now scan your lists and be aware of any emotional charge that you sense around specific items. If you have “cold” in your masculine list, notice how that makes you feel. Or if there is “homemaker” in your feminine list, be aware of any charge you might have around it. Pay particular attention to the items you marked as universal. Do you have strong emotional reactions to any of those?

There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. The purpose is to get you to begin thinking about your “own” perception of masculine and feminine. These questions and your lists should help you to begin dismantling the external ideas of male and female that you have accepted. As you begin this process, you will find yourself opening up to your inner

knowing of what is feminine and what is masculine. And you will be able to sense and honor your unique combination of these characteristics.

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