

Creating a Healthy Relationship with Self

By JP Sears, Holistic Health Coach

Out of all the people you will ever know, is there anyone who you'll spend more time with and live in closer proximity to than your self? What happens if we mindlessly ignore self? How would it feel to mindfully nurture self? For some of us, we tend to neglect the person who we are closest to – namely the person wearing our own skin. Like any relationship, whether with another person, a job, a business, or a hobby, the relationship with self is not likely to thrive without deliberate intent to create harmony and balance. It isn't until we've invested in the discovery process that we can transition into a deepening and enriching of our relationship with self. In this article I would like to offer some insights to serve as reflective points for discovery about the relationship you have with your own self.

Insight #1-Examine Old Beliefs

Our beliefs serve as a significant influence that alters the contour of the lens in which we see ourselves. It is said that most of our beliefs about our self are formed in early childhood. And because our beliefs become very familiar, though not necessarily comfortable, it can be too easy not to challenge whether or not we need to leave what was true and search for a new truth.

Is it okay for men to cry? Can women earn the majority of the money in a partnership? Is it okay for you to be soft and compassionate even though your parents were not? What do you believe about same sex partnerships? What are “good” jobs and “bad” jobs from your point of view? Can you be someone different than who your parents always wanted you to be? What does the concept of God mean to you?

There is a reason why a snake sheds its skin. The instinctual wisdom that causes the cellular turnover allows the old to fade away in order to give birth to what is to be. Without shedding old beliefs we pause the natural life cycle, which can cause us to begin to rot within our mental and emotional bodies. This above all else can give rise to a decaying intimacy with self. Though the decay doesn't show up in the literal sense, it can express itself through numbness, denial, apathy, and indifference toward self.

Perhaps the miracle of examining our old beliefs doesn't come by rigidly believing we need to change them. But rather it comes through consciously exploring and then *choosing* what is true for us in this given moment and accepting the

consequences of temporary discomfort if we choose to step forward into the realm of new unfamiliar beliefs.

Insight #2-Embrace the Full Spectrum of Emotions

Emotions range from shame, fear and anger to joy, enthusiasm, and happiness. If I can be so bold I would say that it is no accident that all of us have been created to experience the full spectrum of those emotions. With respect to philosophies that advocate denying the hurtful emotions, I will suggest that there is just as much purpose to the painful emotions as there are to the ones that feel pleasant. I will also suggest that a consequence of desensitizing ourselves to painful emotions is that we automatically become desensitized to all other emotions as well.

When we choose to suppress hurtful emotions that would otherwise arise, even though they are there whether we feel them or not, we deny the part of us that those emotions are coming from. Imagine a small child riddled with fear, coming to you crying for help. Denying the child by locking him outside and closing all the blinds so you don't have to see or hear the painful cry for help doesn't foster true healing. I would submit for your consideration that metaphorically speaking the same situation happens within when we choose to deny our own emotions – a part of us becomes abandoned and isolated.

On the other hand, when we somehow find the courage to say yes to painful emotions when they arise, as agonizing as it may be, we become a much more integrated and whole person because we are simultaneously saying yes to the part of us that owns the emotions. In other words, this translates to us stepping into a new dominion of self acceptance and self nurturing, rather than locking a hurt part of ourselves out in the cold and dark all alone.

Insight #3-Acknowledge the Intuitive Mind

Einstein suggests that the intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. He goes on to point out that most people honor the servant while having forgotten the gift. Does the notion that paying attention to our intuition is the road to realizing who we are beyond the illusions created by our own ego resonate true for you? If so, could Einstein be implying that without acknowledging our gift we are sentenced to living exclusively with our own illusory nature?

Intuition can be the key to quenching our thirst to live in harmony rather than in conflict with self. In fact, my experience has been we can do just that if we liberate

ourselves from a relationship with self garnished with dense falsehoods by letting even just a few rays of intuitive light shine through.

Though the topic of intuition is expansive, I would like to offer one method here of inviting your intuitive mind to be a part of you. When you get an idea, thought, or feeling that seemingly comes out of nowhere, one that your rational mind cannot explain or validate, simply observe that it is there without discounting it. If your mind operates with some of the same defense mechanisms that mine does, you'll notice right away the rational mind wants to disregard anything that it cannot explain. However, because our intuitive nature is far more expansive than our intellectual nature we realize this is the ego's defense strategy to block the realization of anything greater than what it thinks it is.

Given that this may be true for you too, a strategy to avoid discounting the intuitive gifts is actually to avoid discounting the intellect's skepticism. I have found that simply noticing when the mind has doubts, while simultaneously noticing the ideas, thoughts, or feelings that came out of nowhere to trigger those doubts is one way to smooth out friction.

Insight #4-Accept Impermanence

Everything you see when we look in the mirror will be lost at some point. Everything you see when you look around your house will be lost at some point. This much is true. One question I like to ask myself is, "How much do I value who I am based on how my body looks, the car I drive, the job I work in, the home I live in?" When I am fortunate enough to notice minimal amounts of attachment to things external of self, I am graced with an understanding that what can never be lost is found within.

At the risk of being judgmental I will say that from my vantage point the more a person sees their worth and who they are in their body, material possessions, or anything else that will pass in time, the more dysfunctional that person's relationship is with their self. The reason why this is true from my point of view is that they don't have a relationship with their self. They have a relationship with *any-thing* but self. Trying to attach to that which cannot truly be attached to is at best a struggle.

Buddhist philosophy speaks of impermanence and the importance of the realization that anything outside of the life force that is you will be lost in time. One of the paradoxical gifts that embracing the impermanence of external things gives us is that it directs to discover what we are left with – our inner being.

Wherever we are or whatever we are doing, what would happen if we walked hand in hand with the realization that “*this too shall pass?*”

Insight #5-Acknowledge Your Range of Different Perceptions

Can we experience the same situation from multiple points of view from within self? If that is possible, what happens when we disregard the perception that one part of us has while favoring the perception of another part? In contrast, what would happen if we learned to embrace all the parts of us and their perceptions?

It's more the rule than the exception that we'll have more than one angle of experiencing any situation or idea at a given time. When we learn how to acknowledge this we find we are in less conflict and more acceptance of our self and the ego parts it contains.

As an example, a person might say, “I'm looking forward to starting my new job.” This person may well be abandoning parts of himself simply by not acknowledging them. This abandonment can be remedied simply by reframing his statement. “A part of me is excited about my new job and another part of me has some anxiety about it.” The new statement integrates his multiple perspectives on the new job. This may sound like a new language for some of us because as we grew up we were always asked for our opinion about a given subject. We were never asked to offer our *range* of opinions about the subject.

How we experience self can take on a deeper, more colorful, and holistic experience when we have the presence to invite ourselves to notice two or more perceptions about anything.

Conclusion

As we journey toward synthesizing a healthy relationship with self, may you use, in any way that serves you, these five insights to self discover where discord with self lies and in turn to realize new ways of inviting integration with self.