

Me, My Selves and I



# ME, MY SELVES AND I

Discovering other sides of yourself  
with Voice Dialogue

Karin Brugman  
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Berry Collewijn

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## THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.

They may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice.  
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes.  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

*Maulana Jelaluddin Rumi, Persian poet, 1207-1273*

*For Lex Mulder  
our lighthearted inspiration*

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## FOREWORD BY HAL AND SIDRA STONE

*On the journey of self-discovery, let's stop looking for what is wrong with us. Let us discover, instead, who we are and how we work! Let us separate from our judgments as we explore the amazing system of selves within us, and learn to live our lives with ever-increasing honesty, choice, and freedom.*

Hal and Sidra Stone

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Karin Brugman, Judith Budde, and Berry Collewijn are a great team! They have written a practical, delightfully easy to understand, and very valuable book on self-development that opens up a new world to explore and a new way to deal with the challenges present every day in life and at work.

As Brugman, Budde, and Collewijn show us so clearly, wherever we go and whatever we do in our lives, we take our selves with us! Whether we are alone or with others, these selves will determine what we think and how we act. The more we know about these selves, the more real choice we can have in the way we live our lives and the more effective we can be.

In their work, much like ours, they do not look for what is wrong and needs correction, but for what is and for what other possibilities exist. Voice Dialogue (our method for working with these individual selves) plays a major part in their work with clients, but Collewijn, Brugman, and Budde have added to it substantially. They creatively combine Voice Dia-

logue with Voicedrama, a technique especially developed when working with the psychology of selves in larger groups.

This book will widen your horizons and introduce new possibilities into your life. Enjoy!

Hal & Sidra Stone  
Albion, California

## INTRODUCTION

*But I'm here in my mould. I am here in my mould.  
But I'm a million different people from one day to the next ...*  
Bittersweet Symphony

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In this book, we will allow the various selves residing within you to speak. We will invite you to look at yourself in a different light, to consider yourself as a person composed of not one, but of a collection of selves. 'Do I actually have more than one self?' you might be wondering. Indeed you do, and not just you: every human being is made up of a collection of selves. They reveal themselves in our daily language, in expressions such as: 'I really wasn't myself last night' or 'Something in me says this isn't going to work'. Take a look at pop songs, for instance, like the song 'Bitch' from Meredith Brooks: *I'm a bitch, I'm a lover, I'm a child, I'm a mother, I'm a sinner, I'm a saint.*

You too have different sides, parts or subpersonalities which see the world through different sets of eyes. They each have their own habits, thoughts and feelings.

The main question then becomes who to listen to amidst this cacophony of voices. This is a fun way of looking at yourself and it offers a number of advantages. For one thing, this approach will help shed some light on why some people immediately attract you and others do not. It will also

help you to understand why you sometimes do things even when you do not want to.

The notion that you consist of a number of subpersonalities is not new. Many contemporary psychological models draw on the concept of subpersonalities or selves. This book is based on the ideas of the American psychologists Hal and Sidra Stone and their Voice Dialogue method. What appeals to us the most in their approach is the non-judgmental way of looking at yourself. They are not focused on establishing a diagnosis or examining what is wrong with you. Voice Dialogue is aimed at discovering who you are in all your diversity. You come to discover who within you is in charge, and why. You learn to tap into underutilized talents and free yourself from worn-out habits and counterproductive behaviour. Voice Dialogue can also prove to be very useful in your relationships. It can help you gain insight into repetitive patterns and show you how to break out of them.

Since its development in 1972, Voice Dialogue has proven to be an extremely effective method. Today it is used in many countries throughout the world. Through this book, we wish to share our enthusiasm for this lighthearted, adventurous yet profound method of working. This book was written for anyone who wants to get to know themselves better and for anyone who wants to become acquainted with Voice Dialogue.

## Overview

In *chapter 1*, we invite you to take a look at yourself and others from the perspective of subpersonalities.

You will become acquainted with the Psychology of Selves. We provide answers to questions such as: Where do your different selves come from? Which selves do you have? How can you discover your different selves? You will learn that some selves strongly affect your life while others have less of an impact.

Why is it that, despite your best efforts to change, you always seem to end up empty-handed? Who within you is sabotaging your desire to get more exercise, to quit smoking or to stand up for yourself more often? And why is that?

Finally, you will learn how you can manage your different selves so that you are in charge of your life, not them.

In *chapter 2*, we will introduce you to some of the most common subpersonalities. You will learn why they are there and what talents they possess. You will get to know the Pleaser, who caters to everyone's wishes. You will meet the Pusher, who chases you around all day to squeeze in that extra bit of work. You will become acquainted with the Rational Mind, the Inner Child, and a number of other selves. We will also discuss some archetypical subpersonalities. You will recognize the influence of these selves in everyday life – if not in yourself, then definitely in others.

*Chapter 3* describes how subpersonalities influence our relationships. Why is it that some people drive you up the wall while others lift your spirits? Patterns emerge in every relationship – in Voice Dialogue, we call these bonding patterns.

In this chapter, we explain how you get into these patterns and how you can break out of them.

By recognizing which selves are at work within yourself and others, your understanding of relationship and conflict will grow.

*Chapter 4* concentrates on the Voice Dialogue method. You will read how a Voice Dialogue facilitator literally engages in a conversation with their client's various selves. You will get an overall idea of how a session works; how it progresses; the position the facilitator assumes; and the types of situation to which the method lends itself?

Naturally, a lot more can be said about the methodology of Voice Dialogue. However, this book was not intended to serve as a manual for Voice Dialogue facilitators. If you are interested in having a session, or if you are

interested in becoming a Voice Dialogue facilitator, you can find a list of addresses at the back of this book.

## In closing

We wanted to write an easily accessible and readable book on Voice Dialogue and the Psychology of Selves. To this end, we used a lot of examples of daily routines from both work and private life that everyone can recognize. Some examples were borrowed from the many people that we have met in our training groups and in our coaching practice. To protect their privacy, we have changed their names and details.

Further on in the book, we describe some of the more common subpersonalities such as the Pleaser, the Pusher and the Critic. However, ultimately, the names you give to your subpersonalities depends entirely on what suits you best. Although subpersonalities can be both male and female, for purposes of easy readability, we have described described all of them as masculine but you can think of them as being feminine if you prefer.

Needless to say, we had to set limits while writing this book. A lot more can be said about the energetic aspects of the subpersonalities, about archetypes, dreams and bonding patterns. However, because we wanted to introduce the idea of subpersonalities to a broader audience, ease of reading took precedence over comprehensiveness. If you want to read more, you can find some suggestions in our reading list.

We hope that you – and your selves – enjoy this book!

Karin Brugman

Judith Budde

Berry Collewijn



# 1 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELVES

*The voyage of discovery is not in seeking  
new landscapes but in having new eyes.*

Marcel Proust

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## 1.1 Every person is made up of many selves

Imagine you walk into a bookshop and head straight for the psychology and non-fiction section. You grab *Me, My Selves and I* from the shelf and start leafing through the pages. 'Nice book. Seems interesting. I'm going to buy it,' you think. But, just as you are heading for the cash register, a different thought pops up saying 'Great! Not another one of those self-help books. You have mountains of these lying around at home and you haven't even opened them. Why don't you head home first and read one before you even consider buying another? And anyway, do you really think these books actually help?'

Every day, every one of us has quite a number of these inner dialogues. Sometimes we literally end up thinking 'On the one hand, I really want this, but on the other hand, I really want that'. We want two things at the same time, things that are in direct conflict with one another. Everybody runs into this now and again – it is completely normal. But how do you finally make up your mind?

Something tells us that the chances of you doing the following are pretty slim: you find a chair in the store and have a seat. You take a moment to listen to what both sides have to say. First, you ask one side, 'Why do you want that book so much?' After hearing what that side's motives are, you turn to the other side, eager to find out what its objections are towards buying this book. You acknowledge both of their concerns, you show that you understand their feelings, and then you make a decision – much like a mother or father who listens to the various needs of two children and then makes a decision.

But usually you do not make decisions in such a conscious way. Most of the time the decision-making process happens unconsciously and at lightning speed. It is not you that has the final say, but a part of you that automatically makes the choice. Before you know it, you are standing in line at the cash register, ready to buy the book. Or, alternatively, the book has already been returned to the shelf as you have decided not to go through with buying it. And all of this happens without the involvement of any conscious thought processes.

When it comes to buying a book, this is not such a big deal. But what about decisions that have a bigger impact on your life?

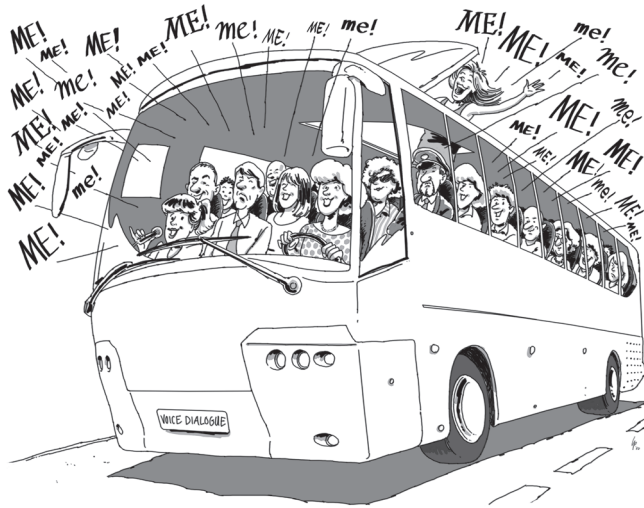
### **WHAT ARE SUBPERSONALITIES?**

You probably think it is you who is leading your life and that you have freedom of choice. However, in reality, your life is being run by those selves inside you who have the most say. We refer to these selves as your *subpersonalities*. They determine, for a large part, your behaviour and how other people see you. What you know as your character or your personality is, in fact, a collection of subpersonalities.

Suppose we compared your personality to a bus packed with selves<sup>1</sup>. Your various selves are the passengers and you are the driver, nicely seated behind the wheel. The thing is, your selves do not all want to go in the same

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1. The 'bus packed with selves' metaphor was borrowed from the work of the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli.



direction, and they each have their own ideas about how the bus should be driven. For instance, your Perfectionist wants you to drive excellently, your Pleaser wants everyone to be comfortable, and your Pusher wants you to reach your destination as soon as possible. If, every now and again, each of these passengers were to express their wishes to you, the driver, the situation would still be manageable. The problem is that they regularly push you aside and grab the wheel themselves. As a result, your freedom of choice is lost. For example, all of a sudden your Pusher is sitting in your driver's seat. All he knows is how to put his foot on the accelerator and rev things up. This is his purpose in your life.

**ALL THESE VOICES IN MY HEAD – AM I CRAZY OR WHAT?**

Sometimes, the idea of subpersonalities can evoke associations with certain mental disorders. However, this is not what we wish to convey here. The fact that we each have multiple selves within us is a perfectly normal and healthy phenomenon.

### INFLUENTIAL AND LESS INFLUENTIAL SUBPERSONALITIES

Not all of your subpersonalities are equally influential when it comes to your daily activities. Some selves are seated more towards the front of your bus and are more prominent. We call these your *primary selves* or *primary subpersonalities*. They are the first selves to take over the wheel. They do it so often that you do not even notice any more. You have come to believe that they are the driver.

*Li's parents used to have a Chinese restaurant. She has been used to helping out ever since she was a girl. It never once crossed her mind to sit around after school and watch TV, or to go outside and play with her friends while her parents and brother were all busy working in the restaurant. Now that she is an adult, she is as hard working as ever. In Li's eyes, that is perfectly normal. What's more, because of this, she is now one of the key members of the hospital's executive staff. People take her seriously and she is highly respected.*

Li has a Pusher and he plays quite an important role in her life. He is a primary subpersonality. Whether Li is at the office or organizing a party, she is devoted to everything she does and always gives 110 per cent. She just doesn't feel comfortable lazing about. 'That's just the way I am,' Li thinks. Her other subpersonalities are less noticeable. They can be found in the last few rows of Li's bus, and sometimes even in the boot. They are there all right, but she hardly ever sees or hears them. And, as soon as they start to speak up, they are immediately silenced. We call these her disowned subpersonalities.

*Li has a really good friend who works part-time and has a lot of free time. Every once in a while, Li wonders what it would be like to trade places with her, if only for a day. But, no sooner does this thought cross her mind than it is quickly toned down. Li needs to make every second of her day count!*

Li can no longer hear the other passengers on her bus, like the Dreamer and the Pleasure Seeker. Over time, they have become less and less notice-

able. Li is hardly aware that she even has these other sides. They barely have any effect on the way she drives, even though they could provide just as meaningful a contribution to the journey as any of the other selves. ‘Then why don’t they?’ you might be wondering.

### **WHERE DO SUBPERSONALITIES COME FROM?**

Where did all Li’s passengers come from? How and when did they get on the bus? Everyone develops subpersonalities in order to survive, and this process starts early on in life.

When parents first gaze at their newborn child, they often double-check to see if ‘everything is there’. And although the baby is still very small, it arrived with everything intact – with tiny fingers, ears and feet. It has everything it needs to grow into an adult human being. You came into the world in exactly the same way: as a little child, fragile, open and dependent on others. We call this original child within your *Inner Child*. As a baby, this is who you are. Later on in life, when you have matured into an adult, you still carry this Inner Child within you. This is the reason why, even when you are grown up, you can suddenly start to feel very small, e.g. during a presentation, right before a job interview, during that first date or when catastrophe strikes. As a baby, you carried everything you needed for you to grow into the person you have become: both physically as well as in terms of your personality. The Inner Child possesses your ‘psychological fingerprint’. Just like a normal fingerprint, it is similar to that of other people and yet it is unique to you. As a baby, you possessed all the things that made you unmistakably you. This is who you truly are – your essence. When Miles Davis played the trumpet, you could tell just by the first few notes that he was playing in the same way you can tell the difference between a Van Gogh and the work of another painter.

Early on, you carry all possibilities within you. Whether or not your potential is fulfilled depends on your development. Some aspects of yourself are appreciated and stimulated by your surroundings. Other sides meet with disapproval or are simply not noticed. As a baby and as a child, you are ex-

tremely sensitive to reactions from your environment. You are dependent. You are in need of something that will enable you to hold your own and keep you from constantly getting hurt.

You will not get far with just your Inner Child. You cannot go through life being dependent. It would not be a good idea to give a presentation or to go to a job interview as an Inner Child. People tend to think more positively of you when you exude strength. Imagine that, during your high school years, you only had your Inner Child at your disposal. That would have made for quite an unpleasant time. This is why you are generally better off when your Inner Child remains hidden and out of sight. At a very young age you begin to discover how to influence your surroundings. Even as a baby you notice which behaviours bring positive results, e.g. when someone smiles at you or gives you food, care and attention. In this way you avoid pain.

How does this process unfold? As a baby, even though you are not yet fully aware, you do have an abundance of experiences. Babies are very well attuned to their environment. For example a baby may notice that his mother becomes anxious and restless whenever he starts to cry. The mother does not know how to respond and the baby does not like this. On the other hand, when the baby starts to make noises and smiles, he notices that his mother becomes excited and starts to relax. She starts to play with him. In turn, the baby feels safe and comfortable. As a result, he learns that smiling helps to make his mother happy and that crying leads to less pleasant reactions. This interaction can lead to the development of a Pleaser. This is a subpersonality that perfectly senses what other people like. The Pleaser notices that when he does what other people like, when he *pleases*, other people become happy. The Pleaser can then become the automatic response for dealing with other people.

### **SOME SELVES BECOME PRIMARY**

And so you enter into the world using those sides of you which have proven most effective in getting you what you need. These are your *primary selves*. Along the way, you develop quite an elaborate collection.

They become your personal bodyguards. They stand like a fortified wall between your Inner Child and the outside world. Your primary selves are of the utmost importance to your survival. All of them have been put in place to prevent you from being harmed, and they will remain there to protect you until long after your transition from childhood to adulthood. They consider it their responsibility to keep a constant eye on anything that might endanger your Inner Child. As soon as they spot something that could threaten what they feel is important for your safety, they interfere: they fear that you will not get the job done in time, or that the group atmosphere is becoming less friendly, or that mistakes are being made. In their eyes, any of these situations could put your Inner Child in harm's way.

*Every time Li has a chance to catch her breath, her Pusher grabs the wheel. If she were to allow herself more than ten minutes for a coffee break and a chat with a colleague, she would end up feeling guilty. She has yet to finish what she set out to do that day, and besides, she was just gaining so much momentum. Later on in the day, the Pusher sees to it that she continues to mull over everything on her to-do list on her way home. And after all that, there is so much to be done at home: clothes to iron, dinner to cook, people to call, newspapers to read, finances to manage, and so on. The Pusher makes sure that Li never sits still, because Li learnt early on in life that idling is not appreciated. The minute Li completes a task, her Pusher has already added a few more things to her to-do list.*

Which subpersonalities become primary is different for each person. In Li's case, she has developed a Pusher and an Ambitious Self. Someone else might develop a Dreamer or a Pleasure Seeker as their lead character. Your primary subpersonalities are shaped by the norms and values of your family system, the place where you live, your religion, your culture and by your various life experiences. Anything that is essentially human can become primary, even selves like the Rebel, the Victim, the Average Joe, the Trickster, the Killer and the Liar.

Each subpersonality has its own idea of what might be dangerous. The Pleaser, for example, is convinced that the Inner Child is threatened when he does not cater to everyone's needs. Other people might not find the Child likeable. This is why the Pleaser keeps close tabs on everyone else's needs. The Perfectionist wants to shield the Child from all criticism and sees inadequacies as probable risks. For the Pusher, the danger lies in doing nothing. Relaxing is a dangerous thing to do, as you will most likely end up being a loser. And so it is that every bodyguard ends up protecting something different. They prefer to get the job done before the unsuspecting Inner Child has even had a chance to detect any possible danger.

#### EXERCISE 1 WHO ARE YOUR PRIMARY SELVES?

Perhaps you already know which of your selves are prominent in your life. If not, then the following questions might help you get an idea.

- What are your "fully automated" behaviours, things you do without thinking, things you look back on and say, 'Before I knew it ... (I had straightened everything out, I had already said yes etc...)'.
- How do you generally respond to stress?
- How do the people who know you describe you ('You're a real...')?

What do your primary selves take care of?

Take a minute to look at one or two selves that often show up in your life.

- When did they start to take part in your life?
- Did they enter your life at a specific moment in time? Why did they show up?
- How do you benefit from them being there?
- What do they generally try to protect you from?



### SOME SELVES BECOME DISOWNED

If you were to walk around as your Inner Child during your entire stay here on planet Earth, there is a strong possibility that you would end up becoming a constant victim. People would use and abuse you, and most events would leave you shattered. So, essentially, it is a good thing that you developed your primary selves. As your bodyguards, they are constantly at your side, helping you to navigate the difficulties of everyday life. And, more often than not, it appears to you that you *are* them.

However, there is a flip side to this whole scenario: you have become partially separated from your original psychological fingerprint. After all, what happened to the other selves? Why is it that some parts of you end up at the back of the bus or even banished to the boot?

As we mentioned earlier, you learn at an early stage in life which behaviours lead to unpleasant, painful emotions. Perhaps you have been acting up and your mother comes down on you pretty hard. Since you are very dependent on her, it is very upsetting when your mother rejects you. So, you quickly learn that you had better mind your manners. This is not a very conscious process because, as a child, not much thought goes into it. But even so, you feel the rejection quite distinctly, and so you suppress those sides which cause you to feel the pain and sorrow. These selves become repressed or *disowned*. It is as if they are no longer a part of your personality. This is a necessary, unconscious and natural process that we all go through.

*At an earlier stage, Li also had a Pleasure Seeker inside her. This subpersonality wanted to play with the other children and had no interest whatsoever in working after school. However, if Li had listened to him, it would have felt to her as if she was abandoning her entire family. She had once seen how her brother got punished when he lost track of time; he had gone to play basketball with a friend while he was needed in the kitchen. If her Pleasure Seeker had been left without any restrictions, this would have inevitably led to criticism, great conflict and would have caused her parents much sorrow. She would have ended up feeling horrible. Another thing was that she and*

*her brother always got a big hug at the end of the day when they had done a good job helping out. She also knew that her parents had come to Europe in order to give their children a better start in life than they themselves had experienced. Thank god her Pusher showed up. He loved nothing more than to roll up his sleeves and get to work, always aware of what was next on the list of things to do. He felt no need whatsoever to stop and catch his breath. As long as he was behind the wheel, Li felt no need to relax and no sense of loss or pain for not having done so. In addition, she grew more and more annoyed with people who cut corners to get things done.*

Did Li's Pleasure Seeker disappear? Was he thrown off her bus? No, he was not.

The fact that some passengers hardly ever take a seat behind the wheel does not mean that they are no longer on the bus. You are simply no longer aware that they exist. The passengers on the bus do not like the fact that the driver acts as if they do not exist and only drives according to some passengers' wishes. What would *you* do if you were constantly being ignored? It is easy to imagine that the Pleasure Seeker would try to find one or more ways to draw some attention to himself – say, when the driver is not looking. What if it was the Pleasure Seeker who had Li daydreaming about winning a huge amount of cash and doing whatever she wanted? Could the fact that Li has migraine headaches every weekend be related to the fact that her Pleasure Seeker is not getting enough quality time?

For every primary self that gets behind the wheel of our bus, an opposite self must be banished to the boot. Someone who has a primary Ambitious Self will push aside the part of them that wants to laze about. But this does not mean that that part is gone. On the contrary, your disowned selves follow you everywhere, like your shadow. A self usually ends up in the boot because you were punished and hurt when he surfaced at some time in the past. This punishment could have involved actual physical or verbal abuse, but it could just as well have been a casual remark, a disappointed glance or a raised eyebrow from someone in your surroundings.

*When the leadership training session started off with a goofy name game, Marcel completely shut down. This is exactly what happens to him at work too. People see him as a serious, reliable and stable person. Occasionally, though, Marcel would just like to let loose. He thinks that if he were a more easy-going manager, he would probably get more out of the people working for him, and that it would be easier for him to stop by someone's desk for the occasional chat. Marcel's parents were serious and pious people who did a lot for their church. Being good to your fellow man and taking responsibility were high on their list of values. Whenever his brother barged into the house, or when he imitated a wacky voice from someone on TV, his father always demanded that he 'behave in a civilized manner'. 'Life is not all fun and games,' his mother would add with a stern look on her face. No wonder Marcel disowned his Easy-Going Self. This is how he shielded himself from his parents' disapproval. This is also why he freezes every time a situation calls for a more loose approach.*

You do not only disown the sides that you condemn – like aggression, egotism or arrogance. Sometimes, the qualities you wish you possessed are also banished – like creativity, the ability to improvise or the ability to stand up and take decisive action. In Marcel's case, he wishes he could loosen up and be a bit more cheerful now and then. His Easy-Going Side does show up on occasion. Sometimes, when he has had a few beers, he has been known to be spontaneous and make a few jokes. Marcel is not the only one who uses alcohol as a way to let down his guard. When most people are under the influence of alcohol, their bodyguards become less vigilant. This creates room for the disowned selves to move about. For some people, alcohol is the only way to come into contact with these sides.

Not being in touch with your disowned sides is like hopping through life on one leg when you actually have two at your disposal. You will probably get by. After all, you are used to it. Still, the fact remains that you make do with less than is actually available to you. However practical it might have been at one time to disown certain sides, it can and usually does come

back to weigh you down. What would it be like if you could learn how to use that other leg? Or, in other words, what would it be like if you could learn how to utilize the qualities of the disowned selves?

#### EXERCISE 2 WHO ARE YOUR DISOWNED SELVES?

The following questions can help you find out who your disowned selves are.

- What annoys you in other people? What do you despise or condemn? What qualities are you glad that you do not have? These are all sides of yourself that you have disowned.
- What qualities do you wish you had? These qualities can also be ones that you have disowned.
- What kind of people do you easily end up in conflict with?
- What do you sometimes daydream about, and which selves play a role in these dreams? Daydreams and fantasies tend to create room for the selves that spend most of their time behind the scenes.
- Psychosomatic complaints can sometimes be an indication of a disowned self: hyperventilation, headaches, stomach ulcers and so on.

What would it be like if you could summon some of the talents of your disowned subpersonalities in certain situations? When would that come in handy?

#### **SOME SELVES ARE UNDEVELOPED**

There are also passengers on the bus that have not been disowned, but that are still not used that often.

These are your *undeveloped selves*. These are sides of you which you are unaware that you even have for the simple reason that they have never been called upon.

*When Tom turned 65, he decided to sign up for a painting class. A few months later, painting had become his number one hobby and he was making the most beautiful works of art. He never knew he had it in him – simply because he had never tried.*

The difference between these and your disowned selves is that your bodyguards do not see your undeveloped sides as a threat. When you start to make use of these sides, it does not necessarily coincide with feelings of fear or disapproval.

### **COUNTLESS SELVES**

There are an infinite number of subpersonalities and each holds a potential that is ready to be awakened within you. Which subpersonalities are given a more leading role and which ones are kept behind the scenes differs from person to person. This all depends on the culture you grew up in, the norms and values within your family and also on the nature of each individual – on his or her psychological fingerprint. Take a look at brothers and sisters who grow up together with an authoritarian father. One child develops a Pleaser to deal with the father's dominance while the other brings a Rebel to the dinner table. Both the Pleaser and the Rebel come into existence in order to protect the child, but they each do it in an entirely different way.

### **ALL SUBPERSONALITIES HAVE THEIR OWN ENERGY**

Each subpersonality has his own effect on your mood. You can feel bright and cheerful, or you can feel a lump in your throat. This all depends on who inside you is calling the shots. The effect each subpersonality has on you can also be seen on the outside. When your Responsible Self is in charge, you tend to look more serious and your voice goes down a bit. The world becomes a sombre and serious place. When you are in a playful mood, your face brightens up and all of a sudden you can seem years younger.

Imagine subpersonalities being real flesh and blood people who you could run into any time at work or when you go to the supermarket. A Pusher would look a lot different from, say, a Pleaser or a Rational Mind. If you were to actually meet any of these subpersonalities, they would each provoke a different reaction from you. The Pusher is always in high gear, so if you want to have a talk with him, you had better be quick about it. The Pleaser would smile and put you at ease while the Rational Mind would leave you with a more distant impression.

Subpersonalities, sides, selves, parts, voices – in this book, these are all names we use for the different aspects of your personality. We also call them energies. When we refer to them in this way, it becomes more apparent that they each express their own energy and that we can describe one self as being more warm and open and another as being more cool or withdrawn. You can tell all these things from a subpersonality's posture, movement and facial expression as well as by the tone of his voice. We can observe all these elements in our daily use of language – in expressions such as 'If looks could kill', 'He's very withdrawn' and 'What an intriguing personality'. It is precisely these aspects that influence our communication without our even noticing it. Essentially, a lot of our communication is 'energetic'. By that we mean that you react more strongly to *who* in the other person is saying something than to *what* is being said.

*Kathy is attending a workshop in Personal Effectiveness. At work, it was pointed out to her that she sometimes scared people off, albeit unconsciously. People rarely come and sit with her during their lunchbreak. She clearly sends out the message that she prefers to be alone and that she does not appreciate it when her colleagues seek out her company. This could spell trouble for Kathy, because more human contact is precisely what she needs. Apparently she's doing something that drives people away, even though she has no idea what that might be.*

There is a bodyguard within Kathy who sees to it that people stay at a distance. Before Kathy even notices it, he avoids any possible danger by pre-

venting her from coming into contact with other people. That way, they cannot end up rejecting her.

*Kathy never really was a girl's girl. She never liked girly clothes or talking about girly things. People thought she was a little bit odd. She had always felt different from other people and she thought this was the reason she was laughed at. Constantly feeling that you are not welcome would be unbearable for anyone, and this is why a primary self showed up and told her: 'We don't need those other people. Look how they sit around, giggling about meaningless things. Do you really want to belong there? They're so stupid!' And so she developed a Self-Sufficient Side which helped her to deal with things on her own. This side does not need anybody, he does not care about what other people think of her and he avoids contact with others. Problem solved! Now that Kathy is an adult, her Self-Sufficient Self sees to it that Kathy brings along a book and her iPod when she goes to get the children from school. That way, she does not have to chat with the other mothers in the playground. She can just be herself.*

Kathy's Self-Sufficient Self has developed quite an effective solution so Kathy does not have to deal with rejection: he sees to it that people stay away from her. And he has become exceedingly good at this.

This is a pretty useful talent to have up your sleeve when, say, you are walking down a dark alley or you do not want to be asked to help out with something. But when this subpersonality is constantly in charge, you end up being excluded from any and all contact with other people. Kathy doesn't have to say much because the energy of her Self-Sufficient Side is enough to keep others at a distance. Sadly, though, she has no other behavioural alternatives at her disposal.

Every time Kathy goes to places where there are other people, this subpersonality is 'triggered': meetings, receptions, the playground, and so on. Whenever a primary self takes over, you can no longer make conscious choices. When you are on autopilot, you react to 'triggers' from your environment. Just as the dogs in Pavlov's experiment began to drool at the

sound of a bell even though there was no food on the way, in the same way Kathy's Self-Sufficient Self takes over when other people show up. This happens automatically without her having thought about it at all.

#### SUMMARY

- *The Psychology of Selves theory is based upon the idea that your personality is a collection of different parts. Other names for these parts are subpersonalities, sides, voices, selves or energies.*
- *The primary selves are the sides with which you first meet the world. They are who you think you are, your identity. They came to help you survive the context in which you grew up. Their main goal is to protect you from harm. You can consider them as your personal bodyguards.*
- *Repressed or disowned selves are the subpersonalities which have been banished to your subconscious: the boot of your bus. This occurred because they were punished when they originally surfaced, or at least that is how they experienced it. These selves are still there but you are no longer aware of their presence.*
- *Undeveloped selves are sides of yourself that you are unaware of, simply because they have never been used.*
- *We see subpersonalities as being similar to flesh and blood people. They each have their own thoughts, wishes, feelings and memories. They each have their own energy.*
- *Who within you is speaking is more important than what you are actually saying!*

### 1.2 The limitations of your primary and disowned selves

What would you do if you ended up on a moving bus and the driver was incapable of operating the vehicle? You would probably do the same as the primary selves: grab the wheel yourself! So long as the driver is incapable of controlling the vehicle, the primary selves will take over. You might think it is you who shapes your life, but in fact it is your primary selves who are responsible for your accomplishments in areas such as



your career, your relationships and your overall sense of well-being. Is this such a bad thing? After all, your bus is still moving and you might actually like where it has brought you so far. However, whether or not you are pleased with the results, you must face one fact: your primary and disowned selves have a number of limitations.

### **PRIMARY SELVES LIMIT YOUR FREEDOM OF CHOICE**

*Max is a real Pleasure Seeker. He often goes sailing with his friends, and he recently enrolled in a wine-tasting class. His job involves a lot of travelling and he often stays in exclusive hotels where he has elaborate lunches and lavish dinners. When he goes in for a routine check-up, the doctor tells him his blood pressure is too high. He needs to watch his diet more closely, get more exercise and lose some weight. Max is quick to fall in line and starts working out at the gym, showing a lot of commitment.*

*Every time he goes to the gym, he has to force himself to go. But every time he comes home from the gym, he feels exhilarated. What an amazing and powerful feeling. He has not felt this good in years and is really pleased with the progress he is making.*

*Two weeks later at a party, Max goes overboard on the wine and tapas. 'Ah, we all die eventually,' his Pleasure Seeker tells him. 'Besides, a while ago, one of your younger colleagues passed away and he had been leading a really healthy life.' The Pleasure Seeker grabs another portion of patatas bravas and thinks, 'You'd better enjoy it while it lasts.' A week goes by and Max has not been to the gym. Pretty soon, things are not going well at all. Deep down, Max feels disappointed and gloomy. He had been feeling so much better physically and then he went and let himself go again! Max tries his best to change, but it would seem that he is no match for his Pleasure Seeker.*

Although you have countless ways of dealing with a situation, you usually respond with the same set of standard reactions – even when the outcome is negative. Other options do not occur to you or are simply too hard to execute. Your bodyguards are standing between you and your freedom of choice.

If your Modest Self has the upper hand in your life, there is a good chance your superiors might ask you to make more of an effort to stand out. However, your Modest Self will not approve of this idea. He came into your life to shield you from too much visibility. No matter what they might ask of you at work, he prefers to stay behind the wheel to ensure your safety, even with all the negative effects on your normal functioning that can result. This is how those primary selves – which at one point served you quite well – can end up jeopardizing your efforts when you are an adult.

### **REPRESSING DISOWNED SIDES IS ENERGY CONSUMING**

You might not always notice it, but it takes quite a lot of energy to keep your disowned sides at bay. For instance, the Modest Self must constantly see to it that the Attention Seeker stays in the boot.

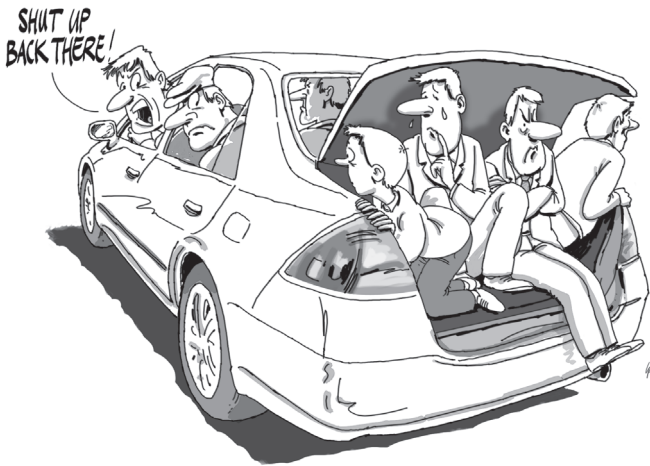
The more strongly you identify with a particular bodyguard, the deeper his counterpart has been tucked away in your subconscious. You banish your disowned selves with the same amount of force you use to empower your primary selves. The more strongly the Modest Self is present in your life, the more power you will need to subdue the Attention Seeker.

### **DISOWNED SELVES WREAK HAVOC**

Try as they might, your bodyguards are not always successful in containing their counterparts. The repressed selves can not be held back forever. They eventually manage to draw attention to themselves, and they do this in their own particular way. When they feel that they can't breathe, they start shouting that they want out or they start banging on the boot. They demand to be recognized, and often do this in ways that can have quite a disruptive influence on your 'normal' life.

Take a look at Lester Burnham in the film 'American Beauty' and how he undergoes a complete personality transformation during his midlife crisis. He breaks loose from his suburban life, quits his long-term job at a magazine, and does something that every one of us has probably dreamt of doing on more than one occasion: he stops caring about all the preconceived notions about how he is supposed to behave and only does what he feels like doing. All the selves that were locked in his boot for so many years break free – and those who saw the film will know at what cost.

Repressing subpersonalities is a lot like holding a ball under water: it takes a great deal of effort. Ease off the pressure and the ball can force its way right back up. The intensity with which this happens all depends on how deeply the subpersonality was being held down to begin with. Your Pusher might get paralyzed by a burn-out, meaning you will have to start listening to the side that wants to sit on the couch or lie in bed. Or your Reasonable Self could suddenly become blinded by an enormous fit of rage from your Emotional Side. After the storm subsides, your Reasonable Self will reassert himself, tormented by feelings of shame. "You cannot show your feelings like that. It's just not done!" he might say.



### **YOU CANNOT DEAL WITH CONFLICTING EMOTIONS**

As humans, we often end up in situations which produce a conflict of emotions. Or, said another way, there are different subpersonalities speaking simultaneously and they each want to react differently to the same situation. Typically, we tend to ignore the subpersonalities who are shouting their opinions from the depths of the boot. It is not just intense events like the loss of someone dear to you, quitting your job or becoming very ill that can shake you up. Small everyday matters can throw you off

balance and evoke strong emotions, even for the shortest length of time. For example, a customer reacts angrily towards you, an acquaintance forgets to invite you to a party, your partner shows no interest in your story, a telemarketer comes on too strong, a car in the other lane cuts you off.

*While he's passing her desk, Laura's boss drops off another pile of paperwork, instructing her that the documents have to be sent out to clients before noon tomorrow. The first thing that comes to Laura's mind is 'jerk'. If her boss had been a friend, she would have told him what she really thought, but this is her boss. She feels helpless and wants to start crying, but then again, that would not be very professional of her. Extremely annoyed, she types on, wondering why she did not express her feelings straight away.*

*One of Robert's best friends was just promoted. Robert is happy for him: his friend worked really hard to get there. Robert, on the other hand, is stuck in a rut. He has been working in the same department for fifteen years. On top of that, his company is planning to reorganize some of its activities, and there is a good chance that his position might become obsolete. Deep down, Robert is really jealous of his friend, but he is ashamed to admit it. True friends celebrate each other's successes, right?*

All these reactions take place in the blink of an eye. You might disapprove of some of the reactions of these subpersonalities: Robert's Jealous Side, for example, or the self in Laura that would love nothing more than to let her boss have it.

Laura quickly pushes that subpersonality aside, so quickly that she does not even notice it. However, when she comes home later on, she is extremely irritated to find her partner napping on the couch. She explodes at him. He could have started dinner or at least done something to clean the place up! The angry side, the side that had to contain itself at work, can finally express itself. Laura's partner has no idea why she is suddenly so angry with him.

What about Robert? Without noticing it, Robert sees to it that his Jealous Side is silenced – he thinks jealousy is pitiful. He enthusiastically tells his

friend how happy he is for him, and how much he thinks his friend really deserves the promotion. As a result, his friend starts to think that Robert is exaggerating a bit and that, for some inexplicable reason, he is being somewhat insincere.

### SO WHAT?

‘Gosh’, a client sighs to her coach, ‘If I had to stop and think during every moment of every day how much I may have felt hurt, my life would become unbearable, wouldn’t it?’ She is right. If you took a moment to recollect, you would probably end up with quite a list of how many such moments pass by every day. If you then had to stop and pay attention to each and every one of those moments, your life would become unbearable. The sides of us which are rational and sober by nature consider these types of experiences to be quite trivial and they usually just shrug their shoulders at them. Naturally, you can leave those moments for what they are: just another moment. But you can also use them to gain insight into yourself and your sensitivities, and to learn who the selves are that you have banned from your life. This way, you can learn to drive your bus yourself, using the talents of all your selves.

*When Robert learns to not only listen to the voice of his Loyal Self – who thinks that you should always celebrate your friends’ successes – he will be able to feel his jealousy at his friend’s promotion. He will learn that his Jealous Self is envious because he thinks that Robert also deserves a promotion – maybe even more than his friend does. After so many years of being loyal to the company, his Jealous Side thinks it is extremely unfair that there is now a chance that Robert might lose his job. This self feels underappreciated and sad, and that Robert has somehow failed.*

If Robert were to allow more room for this side, not only would he be able to experience the joy he feels for his friend, but he would also be able to experience the pain he feels at his own situation. This way, he would not have to over-emphasize his happiness. He might even find it in himself to tell his friend that he feels a bit jealous. Then his friend would see both his

sincere joy as well as his disappointment. In the next few paragraphs, we are going to tell you how you can separate from your bodyguards and the consequences this can have. Your bodyguards will resist at first because they do not believe that you know how to deal with unpleasant emotions.

#### SUMMARY

- *When a subpersonality takes over, your freedom of choice and your behavioural options are limited. A Pleaser only knows how to please, a Pusher only knows how to push, and so on.*
- *Disowning selves is like holding a ball under water: it uses up a lot of energy.*
- *Sometimes, a disowned self can just take over. It is as if your record flips over and starts playing on the other side.*
- *The subpersonalities that helped you survive your childhood can severely hold you back in your adult life.*
- *You become ineffective when all of your different subpersonalities start talking at the same time in reaction to something that just happened. Some subpersonalities you ignore. Others you simply cannot hear.*

### 1.3 How do your selves react when you try to change?

How are the primary selves going to react when you decide to make some changes? After all, they are the ones who have enabled you to achieve everything that you have. In their own way, they have protected you from pain for a long time, and the least you could do is show some gratitude for all their hard work. They are not that intent on relinquishing their control, even if their way of doing things is no longer needed. This will make it difficult to introduce changes, no matter how convinced you are that you could use a change in your career, your relationship or your physical health. This is not because you do not want to change, but because your primary selves will start to feel apprehensive. They have been at your side your entire life. How do you think they will react when you tell them you will not be needing them as much, that you would like to do things dif-

ferently and that they are becoming something of a nuisance? There are a few possibilities:

1. the primary selves rebel
2. the disowned selves take control
3. the primary selves show their tenacity!
4. the primary selves begin to see that change is necessary

### **1. THE PRIMARY SELVES REBEL**

Your primary selves will not give up their position without a fight. They will do everything within their power to sabotage any changes and to prove that you cannot function without them! Why argue with them? If you had been taking care of someone else's well-being throughout your entire existence, you would not want to be laid off either. It would be a completely natural reaction to fight this to the bitter end. Aside from that, your primary selves are also concerned about what will happen the minute you stop listening to them. They are frightened of the consequences that change could bring. After all, they have been protecting you for a reason! When your primary selves feel they are not being given due credit for their efforts, there is a risk that they will stay behind the wheel anyway, regardless of your perception that they are no longer there.

*With his bald head and massive build, Jack is a pretty imposing man. He is taking part in a personal growth training course that will last a few days. He wants to learn how to show his sensitive side more often. He thinks this could really help him in his relationship with his wife. His coursemates compliment him when he risks showing his emotions.*

But what does his Tough Self think about all of this? He is pretty upset. He is not into the idea of Jack taking part in all this nonsense. It is thanks to him that Jack was able to build a lucrative construction company – and you can bet this had nothing to do with him being able to show his sensitive side. On top of that, Jack has three older brothers who love to joke around. It is because of his Tough Self that they take him seriously, and he would never hear the end of it if they found out what he was up to.

*Throughout the entire course the Tough Self of Jack just cannot shake off the feeling of being really uncomfortable. He keeps asking himself what he is doing here. This place is for softies! On the last day Jack doesn't show up. He sends the trainer an e-mail saying he was too busy and that he had to attend to some business.*

## **2. THE DISOWNED SELVES TAKE CONTROL**

Even if you are successful in pushing a primary self into the boot, it might just turn out that you have been wasting your time. The primary self will become disowned, and the disowned self will become primary! You still have no freedom of choice.

*Margaret's boss sends her to see a coach so she can learn how to communicate in a more sensitive manner. He thinks that she is often too blunt in dealing with others. Naturally, she thinks this is nonsense; she just tells it like it is. Thanks to her frankness, at least people know what they are dealing with. Whenever her colleagues come by at the end of the day to present her with some more last-minute work, she simply points out to them that she is going home on time. After spending some time with the coach, they discover that Margaret used to be too nice and that people would take advantage of her. This led to her having a breakdown at work and she had needed to take time off. It was at that moment that she made up her mind that this would never happen to her again.*

After she had become so distraught, Margaret handed all power over to her Independent Self. He broke out of her boot in a fit of rage. His fury had been piling up for years because Margaret had constantly been ignoring him. Ever since that episode, the roles between him and her Pleaser had reversed. The Pleaser was thoroughly removed from the front seat and banished to the boot. Margaret never wanted to feel that bad ever again. The Independent Self blamed it all on the Pleaser. With a different, more assertive self behind the wheel her chances of having another burn-out may have diminished, but Margaret is faced with a new kind of problem. Other people have now come to see her as inflexible and inattentive.



What's more, scared of ever being pushed around again, she has suppressed part of her personality. She is incapable of coming up with another way of dealing with this. Without question, Margaret has gone through some significant changes. Nevertheless, the fact remains that she still has no freedom of choice. Where she used to spontaneously respond with her 'Sure, I'll take care of that', she now responds with a resolute 'No!'.

Change does not succeed when you simply replace one behaviour with its opposite. The solution is not that you *become* your disowned selves, but that you learn to listen to both sides. They each have something to offer you.

### 3. THE PRIMARY SELVES SHOW THEIR TENACITY!

*Mary works extremely hard in her career as a manager and has a busy social life. She is married with two children and is the main breadwinner of the family. To compensate for all the stress in her life, six months ago she began meditating. Since then, she has started to feel calmer and more like herself. If it were up to her, she would dedicate the rest of her life to meditation.*

Mary's wish to only spend time on her meditation practice stems from the fact that someone always needs her to do something. She never has time for herself and feels like she is constantly besieged from all sides. The only time she can relax is during her meditation. In these moments, she finds room for the needs of the 'self-that-does-not-want' – the Relaxed Self.

*Last summer, Mary went to France by herself, to meditate in silence in a monastery for a whole week. Ever since then she has been getting up at half past five in the morning to meditate for an hour. This has already led to some arguments with the rest of her family.*

Although it seems that more room has been created for her Relaxed Self, somehow her Pusher has managed to creep back in and grab the wheel. The only difference is that he has begun to push in a different area. The same energy that he used in order to prod Margaret in her work and social

life, is now being channelled into her meditation practice. The Pusher is still driving her as he always has; the only difference is that he is applying his energy to her spiritual life. If Margaret were to decide to devote herself to meditation, she would probably be getting up early every morning, attending group sessions two nights a week, tracking all the latest developments and reading every book on meditation that she could get her hands on! Perhaps her Pusher would stimulate her to start her own meditation centre or to begin teaching her own classes. Her Pusher has remained her primary self. He just loves using his talent for going the extra mile and getting a lot done; it does not matter to the Pusher in what area he does this. Sometimes it might *seem* to you that you have turned over a new leaf when, in fact, it is the very same subpersonality who is calling the shots.

#### 4. THE PRIMARY SELVES BEGIN TO SEE THAT CHANGE IS NECESSARY

Sometimes it can happen that a primary self is actually quite happy with the idea of change. Although he is still protecting you, he is able to appreciate the fact that in order for you to be more fulfilled, your other subpersonalities will need more space.

Some primary selves work so hard for you that they can become exhausted. They still push on, despite some reluctance, because they think this is what you need. Very occasionally, they might allow you to do things a different way because they feel the need to slow down a bit and could use some assistance.

*Beth's mother used to check every evening whether or not Beth had tidied up her toys and neatly folded her clothes. If she left just one little thing lying about, Beth immediately had to clean it up. 'Get a move on!' her mother would command. In reaction to this Beth began to rebel. Her Rebel began to make even more of a mess on purpose. Beth grew up to become a freelance journalist and has an office that is always a picture of chaos. Some time ago she lost all the notes she had made during a really important interview. As a consequence, her client dismissed her. Beth's resistance to keeping things organized is increasingly hampering her work life. Even her*

*Rebel was shocked to see her lose one of her clients. That had never been his intention! He thinks it would be a good thing if Beth had more discipline. The problem is that he has no idea where to begin. He only knows how to respond by staging a rebellion.*

Beth clearly has a lack of structure in her life. Her Rebel cannot help her and is actually getting in her way. What could she do to add some more structure to her way of working?

How can you effectively deal with your selves and prevent yourself from constantly being run by the same ones? What would it take for you to be able to control them? We will discuss this in the following section.

#### SUMMARY

- *Your bodyguards rebel when you change. They are scared of the consequences.*
- *Change does not imply a simple change in roles between the primary and disowned selves.*
- *Your primary selves do not give up easily. What appears to be change is often only pseudo-change. You think you have changed directions but the same primary selves are still calling the shots.*

## 1.4 The manager of the selves: the Aware Ego

Personal growth is an ongoing process in which you learn, slowly but surely, to handle all your different selves and their particular needs more effectively. To do this, you will need someone within you who can take charge of your selves and consciously drive your personality bus by acting as a ‘manager of the selves’. Another name for this inner manager is the Aware Ego.

All your subpersonalities are co-workers, as it were, of this manager of the selves. He listens both to the prominent subpersonalities and also to those that are barely noticeable. He knows how to deal with the tensions

resulting from the conflicting interests of the various selves. For instance, the Pusher and the Pleasure Seeker frequently differ in opinion, much like the Hermit and the Adventurer. The more the manager of the selves grows in his leadership role, the better you become at running your life. It is therefore necessary for the manager of the selves to continue to develop his managerial qualities.

*Luke has a Clown which regularly takes over the wheel. At dinner parties with his colleagues, his Clown helps to liven things up. If someone is going through tough times, or the company is struggling to get by, Luke's Clown has a talent for pointing out the funny side of things. He brings a lot of laughter to the table. The other day, though, one of his colleagues lashed out at him. During a meeting he had made a funny remark while she was talking about her ambitions within the company. Luke could not understand why she reacted so badly. She usually appreciated his wit. She knows it was just a bit of harmless fun, doesn't she?*

The problem is not that Luke has a Clown. The problem is that Luke does not know that he has a Clown. As a result, Luke has no control over his Clown and usually responds by telling jokes at every possible turn. The Clown is driving Luke's bus.

In just the same way as the computer program Word was designed to create text documents, so the Clown is there to make facetious remarks. This is his primary function. This is how he has been programmed. In the same way a computer contains more than one program, Luke's personality contains more than one self. If no one is present to manage these different selves, they will take control themselves.

*Luckily, Luke has already learned that he has a Clown. Many people have pointed this out to him on more than one occasion. Recently, he has been able to notice when he has made another witty remark. Luke has figured out that his Clown becomes most active when things get too serious or too quiet. The Clown has a hard time dealing with this. He does not like it*

*when the atmosphere becomes tense or uneasy, so he intervenes to lighten things up.*

When the Clown is not allowed to jump in and do this, Luke grows more and more uncomfortable. His Clown simply cannot cope with negative atmospheres and deadly silences. He knows perfectly well how to free Luke from these unpleasant situations: by injecting a bit of comic relief!

The manager of the selves – the Aware Ego – comes into being when Luke separates, or *disidentifies*, himself from his Clown. This means that Luke becomes aware of his Clown. The Aware Ego notices when Luke's Clown wants to storm the stage. It takes control of the Clown instead of letting the Clown take control of the situation. The Aware Ego notices that the Clown becomes uncomfortable when a meeting is a bit grim. However, like a true leader, he does not yield to the Clown's every whim. He also listens to the needs of Luke's other selves – like the Serious Self. With the aid of the Aware Ego, Luke can still choose to make a joke, but he can also choose not to. The Aware Ego has the freedom of choice. In this way, Luke is capable of running his own life, as opposed to having a group of selves run it for him.

This may sound easy to do, but it is not. Separating from your primary selves is a process that takes time and intention. At first, when Luke starts to listen less to his Clown and more to his other selves, he will not feel all that secure. It takes some effort to develop an Aware Ego because the primary selves do not step aside that easily. They will only do this when they are sure that this will not have any negative consequences for you and that you will not start to feel miserable as a result. Remember, they are convinced that you cannot cope without them. Like overconcerned parents, they will keep taking over the wheel. The development of an Aware Ego requires that you learn how to separate from your primary selves and disidentify with them.

*There was an interview in a European newspaper with a number of politicians who were put under the protection of bodyguards after receiving threats to their personal safety. When it was decided that the immediate danger had passed and security was no longer needed, it took them quite some time to get used to the change. They were all tremendously concerned about going back to a life without protection.*

This is a lot like what happens when you separate from your personal bodyguards – your primary selves. You start to feel more vulnerable. Developing an Aware Ego gives you more clarity but it does not necessarily make your life easier. The Aware Ego does not free you from feelings you would rather not have, such as insecurity, fear or guilt. On the contrary, it experiences both the fear the Clown has of seriousness as well as for example, the guilt of the Pleaser, it can endure the insecurity you feel towards a presentation, it can allow someone else to be hurt by something you said. The Aware Ego has a relationship with your softer, more sensitive selves as well as with your more powerful and stronger subpersonalities. On the one hand, you are touched by other people's actions and what goes on around you. On the other hand, you are filled with strength and your ability to exercise influence on those around you. The manager of the selves has one arm wrapped around your vulnerable subpersonalities and the other wrapped around your stronger, more powerful subpersonalities. He experiences the differences and the tensions between both these sides without either one taking precedence over the other. There is a good reason why Hal and Sidra Stone's first book is called *Embracing Our Selves*.

### **HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP AN AWARE EGO?**

You cannot expect the Pleaser to behave assertively. Neither can you demand the Analytical Self to become impulsive, or the Pleasure Seeker to become disciplined. They are simply not capable of behaving in any other way, and that was never their job to begin with. Our subpersonalities remain who they are, with the qualities and unique aspects they each hold. As we mentioned earlier, personal development does not mean changing or getting rid of any subpersonalities, but rather developing an Aware Ego

that is capable of managing the various subpersonalities. Because there are so many subpersonalities, there will always be those whose existence you are unaware of. For this reason, the development of an Aware Ego is a lifelong process. Within this process, we distinguish three steps:

**STEP 1     REALIZE THAT YOU CONSIST OF MULTIPLE SELVES**

As we wrote earlier, the problem is not that you have subpersonalities. The problem is that you don't know it. You are probably under the impression that you are a singular "I" and are unaware that these different selves exist within you. The development of an Aware Ego must begin with the realization that there is an entire collection of selves residing within you. This will make it easier to understand what exactly it is that motivates you to behave in a certain way and have greater control over your actions and reactions.

*As long as he can remember, Luke has been aware of the fact that when he is in the presence of other people, he is the one that sets the tone. It was always obvious why the boys from his class invited him to their parties. With Luke around, you were guaranteed to have a good time.*

*The first time Luke heard that his colleagues were bothered by his behaviour, he did not take it seriously. 'They're just a bunch of cynics looking for something else to whine about,' he thought. But then something happened that opened his eyes. Someone told him that his drinking companion was sitting at home, feeling a bit down on his luck. This came as a surprise to Luke. He knew that things weren't going so well for his friend at work, but he had no idea things were that bad. When Luke called him to ask why he hadn't talked to him about it, his friend said 'I don't really like telling you about that stuff. I'm always scared you'll just start making wisecracks.'*

This came as a shock to Luke. Were his colleagues right when they said that he only knew how to deal with serious matters by making jokes? It is not easy dealing with this type of feedback. You might start to think that you are a completely irritating person or that you do everything wrong. It becomes a lot easier to deal with when you are able to understand that

it is just one part of you that sometimes behaves in a clumsy way. Since then Luke has come to realize that it is his Clown who sometimes makes inappropriate jokes. Luke has made a conscious decision to pay more attention to this subpersonality within him. This has helped him a lot in dealing with the feedback.

**STEP 2     DISTINGUISH YOUR SELVES: IDENTIFY**

Knowing you have a subpersonality is a good start but this is not enough to help you separate yourself from that side. Your bodyguards will not step aside that easily. Luke must get to know his Clown and discover why and when the Clown takes over. What is he protecting Luke from? What does he care about?

*Luke remembers that the last time they met him for a drink, his friend had looked very gloomy when he spoke about the problems he'd been having with his manager. Luke responded by reciting every manager joke he could think of and was able to cheer his friend up and get him to laugh a bit.*

It was hard for Luke to see his friend so downhearted. He did not know how to deal with it appropriately. But the Clown knew. 'Tell a few jokes,' he urged. That is his way of caring – by cheering the other person up. Now that Luke understands what his Clown is trying to achieve, he can see the good intentions of this subpersonality.

The minute you discover a specific self within, you are no longer completely identified with it and your Aware Ego can begin to build a relationship with that subpersonality. The Aware Ego also knows that disowned parts have a lot to offer and he can allow them to tell their story as well. Again, this is not about becoming your disowned selves but about gaining access to their qualities.

*Luke had never developed his Serious Self. However, it could really serve him well sometimes by helping him take things more seriously. If he were to allow this part to express itself when appropriate, other people would be more inclined to discuss sensitive matters with him. Up to now, this part*



*had been denied its voice because Luke was afraid that things would get too gloomy – a feeling he does like very much. Now that the Clown no longer jumps in automatically, the Serious Side can have more say.*

### **STEP 3      SEPARATE FROM YOUR SELVES: DISIDENTIFY**

Once you have got to know a self it becomes easier for you to distinguish yourself from him. Your body sends signals when a subpersonality takes over the wheel. For example, when your heart starts beating faster, when you feel an adrenaline rush or when you feel primed for action, it means that your Pusher is in charge. When you are deep in thought with a frown on your forehead, it means your Analytical Self is pulling the strings. With an Aware Ego, you begin to notice these changes more quickly. You also become faster at taking the wheel back from whoever just grabbed it. Once you have separated yourself from your Pusher, you can then make the decision about whether or not it would be a good idea to take action. Perhaps a more appropriate response would be to do nothing. Separating from your primary selves involves a lot of effort. Your bodyguards are still there, yet they are slightly more distant than before. They do not intervene as much. This takes some getting used to – both for you and for them. Your primary subpersonalities will continue to influence you, but now you can determine to what extent.

*At a team-building exercise, a colleague explains how she learned some breathing exercises during a course in presentation skills and that they help her to relax when she is attending large conventions. Luke resists the urge to make a witty remark. He notices how his colleague is able to tell her story in a relaxed manner. He must admit to himself that sometimes he too can feel quite intimidated when he has to give a speech in front of a large audience. Luke has been listening more attentively when other people talk. He is starting to feel more at ease with this and is beginning to discover that some situations and subjects are sensitive for him as well. He used to ignore this side of himself. When the right moment presents itself, however, he is still able to make a joke.*

The development of an Aware Ego will not happen overnight. It is an active process that continues throughout your life. Like anything else, it requires maintenance. Because you have so many subpersonalities, there will always be selves of which you are unaware. In order for you to manage all your subpersonalities it is necessary for your Aware Ego to constantly develop his managerial abilities so that he can become ever more capable of handling the tensions and differences in opinion between all your subpersonalities.

Using the Voice Dialogue method, you learn how to get to know your different selves and how to distinguish yourself from them. Your subpersonalities are openly invited to reveal themselves and to share their stories. In everyday life, subpersonalities talk over each other and it is difficult to make sense of the cacophony. By listening to each of them individually, you are able to gather lots of information that would otherwise be unintelligible. Quite often, this proves to be a profound experience. In chapter 4 we will describe precisely how this method works and what a session with one of your selves is like. Here is a short exercise on how to separate from one of your primary selves.

**EXERCISE 3     A THANK YOU LETTER TO YOUR PRIMARY SELF**

Try to write a short speech or thank you letter to one of your primary selves, a self who has had a long record of service but who might have to take a step back in the near future.

In this letter, write the following:

- What is this self concerned with?
- What has this self done for you in your life?
- What are you happy about that you would otherwise not be if it were not for this self?
- What are you grateful that this self has done for you?

→

Perhaps you could let this self know how you will be needing his talents in the future, and in which situations you will not be needing him as much.

If you like, you can put an empty chair in front of you, imagine that this self is sitting there and read the letter to him.

### **ALWAYS IN YOUR AWARE EGO?**

How can I make sure that the manager of my selves takes the decisions from now on – or at least for most of the time? Our answer to that question is simple: it is impossible, and even undesirable. If you feel this need growing within you, it is safe to assume that it is actually one of your subpersonalities who is considering this. Perhaps it is your Perfectionist telling you ‘It’s clear: an Aware Ego knows how to deal with all the selves. Now, all we have to do is get you into an Aware Ego and make sure you stay there.’ Or perhaps your Ambitious Self has sparked an interest: ‘If you manage to stay in your Aware Ego from now on you’ll always be balanced and you’ll definitely be on your way to success!’ Naturally, your Critic is waiting patiently to put you down when this does not work: ‘Now that was just stupid of you! Again, you failed to act from your Aware Ego!’ You might want it, but it is simply not how we are built as human beings. It is just not possible to always be aware of all your selves.

We see the Aware Ego as an ever-evolving process. The manager of your selves develops, grows within his role and constantly learns how to deal with your conflicting selves.

At the same time, your primary selves will continue to run your everyday life. After all, for the most part they remain who you are. As we said earlier, it is not about you having to become something different than you are. The purpose of Voice Dialogue is the development and reinforcement of the Aware Ego. You could think of your primary selves like magnets. It takes effort to pull yourself away from them and you will always naturally gravitate towards them. For that matter, you will never be entirely

sure if you are in an Aware Ego. It is through the interaction with your environment that you learn whether or not you have been leaning too far towards your primary selves. Anything that puts you off balance, even for a split second, is a sign that you might be operating while too identified with your primary selves. This is easier to control when you are sensitive to the little things as well as to the big things and also when you are able to experience your strength. This is the process of the Aware Ego. There are moments when you are aware and moments when you are not. Above all, remember to be easy on yourself when you realize yet again that a primary self has taken you over. Paradoxically, constantly trying to be in an Aware Ego will lead you in the opposite direction!

#### SUMMARY

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- *Change involves the development of an Aware Ego – a manager of all the selves.*
- *When changes occur, focus less on what you are doing and more on which part of you is doing it.*
- *You cannot always be in your Aware Ego. The Aware Ego is a process.*

## **2 SUBPERSONALITIES TAKE THE STAGE**

*The way we think about the evolution of personality is that the first thing we have to discover is that these selves exist inside of us. They're very real, they're very autonomous.*  
*Hal and Sidra Stone*

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### **2.1 Discover your own subpersonalities**

You have already been introduced to the phenomena of subpersonalities, primary and disowned selves and to the manager of your selves: your Aware Ego. In this chapter, you are going to actually meet a number of subpersonalities. Some we will discuss at length: the Pleaser, the Pusher, the Rational Mind and the Inner Critic. These are selves that we frequently encounter in our daily practice as coaches. Each one of them can be experienced as both a burden and a blessing. The Inner Child will also be explored in depth: this is a part that many people have lost touch with.

Later on, we will give a brief description of a number of selves in order to give you a better idea of the abundance of possibilities. You will see that each subpersonality is a real flesh and blood person with his own history, his own character and his own way of doing things. The opposites will also get their chance to speak. When you read through the examples, you will recognize many of them. The last section deals with archetypal subpersonalities and the Inner Patriarch.

Keep in mind that the descriptions we provide are just sketches. It is definitely not our intention to categorize people into different types. After all, at any given time there are hundreds of selves at work in every human being.

In order to do justice to each subpersonality, we have described how they would look if you were to identify with them one hundred per cent. As a result, the descriptions do appear to be something of a caricature. In reality, there are always many subpersonalities at work simultaneously and rarely is one manifest to the total exclusion of all others. Some subpersonalities work very well together and reinforce each other. Others have conflicting wishes and this can lead to tension. As is often the case with people in real life, there are selves that cannot stand each other or even bear to see each other. Subpersonalities can be masculine, feminine or neuter. As we said earlier, we are using the masculine pronoun here for ease; feel free to think of them as you wish.

#### **SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER**

In your everyday life you usually do not listen very consciously to what your primary selves have to tell you, and certainly not to your Inner Child or your disowned selves. They just talk or act and, before you know it, your primary selves have taken over. Voice Dialogue – literally the dialogue with your inner voices – enables you to consciously listen to each voice. You meet your subpersonalities and get to know them. By reading this chapter you will gain more insight into the selves that are at work within you.

When reading the description of each subpersonality, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I recognize this part of myself and, if so, in what way?
- To what extent do I tend to listen to this subpersonality?

The subpersonalities that you strongly recognize are probably primary within you. When a particular description makes you shudder, then the chances are that you have probably disowned that part.

At the end of the description of each subpersonality there are short exercises for you to try on your own.

## 2.2 The Pleaser

*I enjoy myself when everyone else is enjoying themselves.*

### **PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE: THE PLEASER**

In chapter 1 you met the Pleaser – the one who loves to cater to everyone’s needs. Like a jug of wine that never runs out, he pours you an everlasting stream of warm-heartedness. Nothing is too much to ask, just as long as others are happy.

### **THE ORIGIN OF THE PLEASER**

Pleasers come into being early in your childhood. Your first smile is welcomed with great enthusiasm. It pays to smile and be sweet. It provides you with attention and security. Although you are still too small to understand it intellectually, you feel quite distinctly how pleasant this can be. This is how you learn at a young age to anticipate the needs of your environment. If your environment demands that you be accommodating, kind and easy-going, you can rest assured that a Pleaser will be born inside you. As long as you fulfill the wishes of those around you, people will be kind to you in return. Or if you have been dealt a lousy hand in life, the Pleaser can at least help prevent people from giving you angry looks, a beating or some other kind of punishment. Your Pleaser sees it as his personal responsibility to ensure that you are loved and that you are not abandoned.

Pleasers are appreciated to a greater or lesser extent depending on the country you grow up in. In many cultures it is quite normal, or even the social rule, that you think first of others, and only then of yourself. Traditionally, women have been especially encouraged to be caring and self-effacing.

If not, they are often seen as being something of a bitch. At the same time, especially in western countries, women are also increasingly expected to be assertive and independent. This can be confusing for your Pleaser: ‘Am I welcome or not?’



### THE PLEASER PUT INTO PRACTICE

George, a systems analyst, has an influential Pleaser. Whenever his Pleaser is calling the shots, George's day at work looks something like this.

*Arriving at the office, George waves to the receptionist as he passes and asks 'Busy day today?' Further down the corridor he helps his pregnant colleague Barbra: 'Hey there, why don't you let me carry those heavy binders? Where are you heading?' The second he reaches his workplace the telephone rings. His colleague Peter's computer has frozen. George rushes over to Peter's office immediately. After all, Peter is working on an important report. Problems like this have to be tackled straight away! Passing the coffee machine he grabs a cup for Peter and one for himself. He knows very well that Peter*



takes his coffee black. After finishing that task, George quickly heads over to solve some other technical problems that were left over from the day before. However, while on his way he is asked yet again to fix another technical hiccup and quickly rushes over to deal with it. Sometimes this results in complaints from the people who have been waiting for him, and this type of reaction can really get to George. He does not want to disappoint anybody. At the end of the day he is exhausted but he pays little attention to this. Finally, when his girlfriend asks him what he wants to do during the weekend, he says: 'No idea, what do you want to do?'

Everybody loves George. His boss does too, but he also thinks that George spends too much time dealing with incidental issues for which he does not get paid. George needs to learn to prioritize. However, as long as his Pleaser is calling the shots, George simply can't say no.

Suppose we had an interview with George's Pleaser. Let's pretend the Pleaser is a flesh and blood person who is able to speak independently.

George's Pleaser (smiling, in a friendly way):

*I sincerely enjoy making people feel at ease. I even liked doing this when George was very small. I would help his mother; she was incredibly busy with her five children. She just loved this and she would say things like 'Aren't you the sweet one!' I'm with George almost all the time. He takes me to work with him as well. I like helping Barbra and I really get a rush when I can solve Peter's problems instantaneously. This makes me feel both useful and needed. During team meetings I pay attention to everyone's posture. When someone is quiet or doesn't understand something I'm able to notice it straight away. Then I have George give them an inviting nod. I'm alert to even the tiniest of signals. Sometimes George wants to say no to something – like last weekend when some friends wanted to come over. George didn't feel like it at all but I quickly saw to it that he said yes anyway. He should be careful not to become too selfish. I told him: 'Don't be so difficult. You haven't seen them in months. Pretty soon they'll start feeling that you don't think they're important.' Luckily George listens to me almost all the*

*time. When people become snappy or businesslike I don't know what to do with myself. I don't know how to respond to that. I only want to be nice. That's all I know how to do.*

It is true that the Pleaser has no defence against these types of people. This is not his job, to begin with. The Pleaser is expected to be attentive and submissive.

### **ENJOY YOUR PLEASER**

Do you have a Pleaser? Then use him wisely, because a good Pleaser is worth his own weight in gold. He is like a lubricant for your social contacts and he helps to create a harmonious atmosphere. He gives other people a warm and welcome feeling. Most people love it when you are nice to them.

Your Pleaser can also be an important source of income. Without Pleasers, there would be no money to be made in the hospitality industry. A restaurant where the waiters are moody will not keep its doors open for long. We could go on for quite some time summing up the benefits. Basically, there is nothing wrong with your Pleaser – unless you are pleasing because you do not have anything else in your repertoire. In that case, you are just asking for trouble.

### **WHAT DOES YOUR PLEASER PROTECT YOU FROM?**

Why does the Pleaser try so hard? He wants to prevent you from hurting others and, more importantly, to prevent you from being hurt. He does everything within his power to prevent others from rejecting you or being angry with you. He is absolutely terrified at the thought of you ending up alone as a result. He is convinced you will not be able to handle this.

George's Pleaser:

*Whenever George receives a comment that he is taking too long to solve a problem, I quickly come up with something to reassure his complaining colleague; otherwise he might become angry with George. I can't stand that.*

Naturally, the Pleaser can only see the dangers that could happen if he does not do his job of maintaining harmony properly. He cannot see the potential risks involved in having you behave this way all the time – risks such as the negative consequences of constantly ignoring your own needs.

### **THE DRAWBACKS OF THE PLEASER**

It is obvious that having a strong Pleaser can have its drawbacks. If George only listens to his Pleaser, sooner or later he will end up in trouble. He will not be able to set boundaries. He will not be able to say no or stand up for himself. This could make it hard for him to get ahead in his job. He also runs the risk that others – unconsciously and unwittingly – will abuse his warm-heartedness: ‘He’s the one that offered to fix my computer straight away, right?’ Other people will inevitably step over his boundaries because he simply fails to point them out. As hard as his Pleaser might try, he will not be able to prevent George from running into people who treat him unkindly. With only his Pleaser available to him, George will not be able to stand up to them. He will have no other response to this type of situation.

### **OPPOSITE: THE AUTONOMOUS SIDE**

A number of subpersonalities can serve as opposites to the Pleaser, such as the Autonomous Self, the Egotist, the Distant Self or the Business Self. Let us take a look at what the Autonomous Self has to offer George.

The Autonomous Self dares to do what the Pleaser would never dream of doing: to say no without feeling guilty, to set boundaries, to know what you want and do what you feel like doing, to not care about other people’s opinions, to tell someone what bothers you and ask for what you need.

*Antoinette has her Autonomous Self readily available. She is a journalist and an editor on a magazine. She loves her job but she also wants to have time left over to do other things. This is why she works three and a half days a week of which she spends half a day at home. This was clearly negotiated prior to her appointment to this position – it was that or nothing! Her colleagues regularly moan about the fact that she is out so often. Antoi-*

*nette doesn't pay any attention to this. Her mother always told her 'Child, if everyone takes care of themselves, then everyone will be taken care of.' When the situation calls for it, Antoinette can hand out strong criticism. She doesn't lose any sleep over this. When a friend calls her to ask if she wants to go to the cinema, she says yes when she feels like it and no when she doesn't. This doesn't bother her in the least.*

### **THERE IS ANOTHER WAY ... USE YOUR AWARE EGO**

George could really use some autonomy. His boss thinks so too and sends George on an assertiveness training course. When he returns to work, George is determined to pay more attention to his own needs. What does his day look like when he not only listens to his Pleaser but also leaves some room for his Autonomous Self?

*George's Pleaser wants to help Barbra with the binders. However, after wising up during his course, George is able to contain himself and consults with his Autonomous Self first. He says to himself 'There are enough colleagues who could lend her a hand.' The second the Autonomous Self voices his opinion, the Pleaser gets nervous and tells George 'You can't just leave a pregnant woman to carry that load on her own?' George starts to feel a bit guilty. But the Autonomous Self speaks up again. 'How heavy are those binders anyway?' The internal dialogue between the Pleaser and the Autonomous Self causes quite a bit of tension. It's now up to George to deal with this tension from his Aware Ego. He listens to both voices and decides to first ask Barbra if she needs any help. Barbra says 'Not really, I'll be fine.' 'You see,' the Autonomous Self says, 'you're not needed!' The Pleaser is a bit disappointed that he cannot be of any service, but he also feels reassured. George moves on. He didn't ignore his Pleaser and he also took the advice of his Autonomous Self to heart.*

But what if George's environment starts to put pressure on him? Take Peter, for instance. 'George, can you come over for a minute? My computer just jammed up on me.' George's Pleaser is ready to go – this is precisely where he can be of use! Again, though, George listens to both sides.

*The Autonomous Self: 'Ask him first how urgent this is.' Peter says 'It's really urgent. I'm working on an emergency here.' George's Pleaser starts to lose it and says to him 'A while back you left Peter waiting too. If you don't head over there now, Peter is definitely going to get angry.' The Pleaser is clearly getting nervous. George's stomach starts to churn and he breaks out in a sweat. However, the Autonomous Self has not given up yet. 'George, there are problems from yesterday that you still have to solve. Deal with them first. Don't let yourself be pressured like that.'*

George now has a choice: he can still do what his Pleaser wants and go to help out Peter. If he does so, he will not be doing it on autopilot like he used to. He makes a choice – from his Aware Ego – and gives priority to Peter's question. He does not let his Pleaser decide, but he makes the decision for himself.

George can also decide to let Peter wait. Not yet accustomed to standing up for himself, George will initially feel guilty about this. His Pleaser is not yet comfortable with this new policy. The Aware Ego can feel the Pleaser's tension and guilt. But, unlike the Pleaser, the Aware Ego is able to deal with these emotions. It might not be pleasant, but it is not a disaster either, even if Peter does get irritated.

*George takes a deep breath and decides to let Peter wait. 'I can't make it to you until after lunch.' Peter notices there is no point in insisting. 'OK, then I'll go and work on a different computer.' George is surprised. Apparently it wasn't that urgent at all! Peter didn't even get angry. What was all the fuss about?*

It will take time and attention on George's part to learn how to give his Autonomous Self some more space. The benefits will be worth it: George learns that he can be both kind and attentive if he really wants to, but that he can also act on his own wishes.

### Questions

- When was the last time you did something for someone else when you did not feel like it? How did that feel?
- What did your parents teach you about being nice?
- What would it be like if, from now on, you said 'no' to things you do not want to do?
- What would it be like if, from now on, you spent more time doing what you want to do?

### Tips

- The next time someone asks you to do something, instead of immediately saying 'yes', take some time to think about it.
- Practice saying 'no'. Do it until you start enjoying it.
- For one day, put your Pleaser in the service of yourself: what might you think of doing for yourself?

### **IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A PLEASER...**

Not everyone has a Pleaser as a bodyguard. It could be that you are more detached and that you have no problem expressing your opinion. There could be many reasons for this. Perhaps you were encouraged as a child to stand up for yourself. Maybe it was vital for you to stand your ground and too risky for you to be nice. Do people sometimes tell you that you are too blunt or too businesslike? Then it might be a good thing for you to develop your Pleaser.

## THE PLEASER IN A NUTSHELL

### *How can you recognize a Pleaser?*

A Pleaser is focused on other people's wishes. He is kind and accommodating. He gives warmth, love and attention to others and creates harmony. A Pleaser has an open and personal energy and smiles a lot. It is your Pleaser who says 'yes' when you would rather say 'no'.

### *What does your Pleaser protect you from?*

He does not like conflict or when things are chaotic. He will do anything to maintain a good atmosphere.

He tries to prevent you from being rejected and ending up alone.

### *Benefits*

Fun to work with; people like you; you get things done.

### *Risks and drawbacks*

The effect it has on you: dependence, being easily influenced by the opinions and judgments of others.

The effect it has on others: other people step over your boundaries, they do not know for sure if your 'yes' actually means yes.

### *How does the Pleaser try to convince you to listen to him primarily?*

He does this by trying to make you feel guilty by saying the following: 'After all, how hard could it be?', 'Don't be such a pain', and 'Better to get it done rather than end up in an argument'.

### *Opposites of the Pleaser:*

Independence, being geared towards yourself, autonomy, assertiveness, arguing, keeping it strictly business, egotism, stubbornness, standing up for yourself, 'Like it or not, here I am!'

## 2.3 The Pusher

*So many things I wanted to do  
So many things, but such little time  
I've got fifty things to do  
But I'll get back to you  
Dead Milkman*

### **JUST DO IT: MEET THE PUSHER**

'How's it going?' 'Pretty busy!' Do you recognize this greeting? Being busy is fashionable these days. Having a busy schedule is proof that you are successful. And who would not want that? TV shows and films show us energetic people who are dressed to impress and who are able to combine work, parenthood, sports, social contacts, holidays, executive positions and an education without a hitch. Heartburn problems? No sweat: there is a pill for that. That way you can go on with your bustling business without any interference. Scientists have examined how our rate of speech has increased in the last fifty years and how we have started to walk faster. Just watch an old film and you may well fall asleep when you see how slow the pace is.

It is your Pusher who helps you combine all these activities. And he prefers to do this at peak efficiency. He is always chasing you to go one step further. If this means he has to breathe down your neck the whole time, then that is what he will do. 'An idle brain is the devil's workshop.' 'Come on, give it your best shot. Imagine how much more you can accomplish.' Your Pusher aims to get the most out of life. This attitude is highly valued in our society.

By the way, your Pusher does not care what it is you are doing so long as you are busy. This is why retirees are often just as busy as they were when they were working. They still have the same amount of drive and passion. It is just that now they are occupied with other activities.



Your Pusher sees to it that you get somewhere in life. He wants you to be loved and rewarded with respect for all the hard work you put in. This provides you with security and self-esteem.



### **THE ORIGIN OF THE PUSHER**

The development of a Pusher starts early on in life. Children start to have fully packed schedules at increasingly younger ages. They go from classroom to after-school activity, from a club to a party, or from piano practice to the theatre, grabbing a quick bite to eat in between. All the while they are texting their friends and checking what is new on YouTube. If they end up being bored for just one second, the response they get is 'Then go and find something to do!' Nowadays, there is no more room for sitting around and doing nothing. The importance of performing well is being imprinted upon us at increasingly younger ages and our talents are being reinforced from early on. 'Thou shalt get the maximum out of thyself' seems to have become the eleventh commandment!

Parents have high expectations of their offspring and children are also highly influenced by their parents. If you grow up in an achievement-oriented culture, the creation of a Pusher is a natural consequence. There can

be only one outcome: the Pusher will make sure you live up to all these expectations. Even when parents and teachers place few demands on you, a Pusher can still become a dominant part of your life. He is out to prove that you are worthwhile. By constantly prompting you to take action, he protects you from the undermining feeling of worthlessness.

*Eric's father had a grocery store and he worked day and night. He hardly ever had time for his sons. Eric would get average grades while his brother always brought home very high marks from school. His brother would get compliments and Eric would get nothing. As a result, he learned that you only get attention by performing outstandingly. A few years ago his father had a heart attack. Eric took over the business and ever since then his Pusher has been running his life. Without realizing it, Eric is working himself to the bone to prove to his father that he is actually a good shopkeeper.*

*Miriam learned from her mother that it is important to give your children a lot of attention. Her father had encouraged her to build a career. Miriam, 32 years old, is now a mother of two and works full time as a lawyer. In order to meet all expectations, her Pusher urges her to be both a caring mother and an excellent lawyer. As a result, she gets up at half past five on Monday morning to prepare a goody bag for her daughter's birthday. Then, after working all day, she comes home in time to prepare a birthday dinner and she still has time left over to read a legal report at ten in the evening. Her Pusher seamlessly combines all of her responsibilities.*

#### **THE PUSHER PUT INTO PRACTICE**

What does someone with a strong Pusher look like? Ann, a young, dynamic and self-confident woman has one.

*For five years, Ann studied for degrees in both business administration and psychology and is now working full time as a junior management consultant with a renowned consultancy firm. At work she is a real whirlwind: she takes as many courses as she can and sinks her teeth into any consultancy project that comes her way. Even though her agenda is already overflowing*

*with things to do, her Pusher always manages to find room for an extra assignment. Her Pusher never says no because he always thinks that Ann is capable of doing more. As a result, she literally moves mountains of work. Her Pusher chronically overestimates what a human being can do in 24 hours and Ann frequently ends up having far too many appointments during the weekend – alongside her plans to read a book, finish a business proposal, clean her house, call her brothers and take a walk in the woods! Pushers just love mobile phones and any other technology that can help you get more done in the same amount of time.*

*Ann's Pusher also makes her go to the gym at least twice a week at seven in the morning. If she leaves the gym there by eight she will make it to the office just in time. Her Pusher knows exactly how long it takes to drive to the office and does not allow for any delays on the way. As he is always optimistic, he thinks that Ann will make it there on time. 'Drive faster! Get a move on!' Ann's already been given two speeding tickets in this month alone. She is always in a hurry and lazing about is not in her repertoire. She even has yoga on her action list because a modern woman 'must' find time to relax. Ann's Pusher just squeezes it in there somewhere. Her Pusher does not have an eye for communication between people. The fact that Ann sometimes overwhelms her colleagues is completely unnoticed by her Pusher.*

We ask the Pusher what he is trying to accomplish for her.

*Ann's Pusher: 'To me, getting Ann to complete her to-do list as soon as possible is a sport. I am constantly adding new chores to the list. I see to it that she is successful in a wide range of areas and that she doesn't miss out on anything. And when I have succeeded yet again at getting a million things done, this leaves a very satisfying feeling. I don't like it when she sits around in the evening doing nothing. I always make her feel restless when that happens. If she has time left over, then she might as well review her agenda for tomorrow and check her e-mail. That will save her some time.'*

Does it make you feel tense just reading this? Of course! But Ann's Pusher does not notice that Ann is stressed. That would just add an unnecessary complication.

### **ENJOY YOUR PUSHER**

Your Pusher is extremely valuable. The entire economy revolves around Pushers and without them nothing would get done. Your Pusher helps you engage, persevere and see things through.

*If Barack Obama did not have a Pusher he would have never become President of the United States. His mother taught him from early on how to keep up. When his family was living in Indonesia she would get him out of bed at four in the morning and teach him English for three hours before he went to school.*

### **WHAT DOES YOUR PUSHER PROTECT YOU FROM?**

Your Pusher tries to prevent you from failure. He pushes you even harder the second he thinks your social success is threatened. For instance, an economic recession can cause a great deal of uncertainty: 'Will I still be able to make a living?', 'Will I have enough for my retirement?' or 'What will happen if my company goes bankrupt?' Your Pusher is poised and ready to shield you from disaster and to get you to take action. He is the one that gets you to check the current status of your pension fund, or he gets you started on the search for alternative sources of income. There is nothing wrong with a healthy dose of realism. However, when your Pusher is the only one confronting the recession, you run the risk of not taking enough time to calmly think things through and let things settle a bit.

### **THE DRAWBACKS OF THE PUSHER**

You have read how Ann's Pusher keeps her busy all the time. For a while, this can actually be a good thing. But if Ann's Pusher calls the shots all the time that will eventually take its toll. She will be running around like a headless chicken, all tense and agitated. Sometimes she is up at six in the morning doing her ironing and she is still up late at night adding the final

touches to some business estimates. This will wear her out in the long run. Exhaustion, burn-out, high blood pressure and heart problems are all lying in wait. It is literally vital to her health that she separates from her Pusher. The same is necessary if she wants to be more successful in her love life, because a Pusher can really hold you back in that area. He is completely oblivious when it comes to intimacy and sexuality. Being extremely busy simply does not mix with surrender and relaxation.

### **OPPOSITES: REST, BEING, RELAXING, DOING NOTHING**

One of the opposites of doing is Being or Rest. In this day and age there is a serious need for this. Take a look at the increased interest in silence, meditation, yoga and spirituality. Wellness is a booming business. There is even a term for this: *slowing down*. A search for the term 'slowing down' shows 11,300,000 hits on Google and the top links take you to the official site of IINDM, the International Institute of Not Doing Much, and to The Slow Movement which supports a growing cultural shift towards slowing down. Rest comes from sitting around, being quiet, not being ambitious, aiming for nothing, being here and now, being completely absorbed in gazing at the clouds over a meadow or staring at the fire.

Rest is not geared towards acting or deciding. When in Rest, details suddenly start to stand out, details that your Pusher does not notice when he is in a hurry: you hear a blackbird in the garden or you see the dimples in your colleague's cheeks for the first time. Rest knows what is really important for you. Rest is essential for intimacy.

*Catherine is Rest personified. She lives on a houseboat on a river. She sometimes strolls by the water for hours and she is easily moved by the sunset or at the sight of a gracious swan with its playful cygnet. Catherine has a part-time job with a travel agency. It's a fun job with no stress. She takes it easy on her weekends. She makes no plans, but just sees what will come her way. What an amazing sense of timelessness!*

What would happen if Ann traded places with Catherine?

**THERE IS ANOTHER WAY ... USE YOUR AWARE EGO**

If Ann were to separate from her Pusher she would still be able to make use of his services, only now she would not lose her boundaries. If she were to allow herself to have more Rest she would become better at distinguishing between what she truly finds important and what can wait until later.

*It's Sunday evening. Ann's Pusher wants her to turn on her computer and finish a business proposal. That way it will be ready to be sent out tomorrow. But Ann is tired and just wants to lie back on the couch and watch a nice film. Her Pusher starts shouting at her. 'What the...!? You're wasting your time! Do you want to build a career or not? This is an important client!' Ann almost gives in to the pressure but her Rest self stops her in her tracks. 'That proposal isn't going anywhere and your career definitely won't depend on it. Plus, if you relax tonight then you'll be in much better shape tomorrow.' The Pusher tries again. 'One more hour. You can still watch a film after that. The night is still young.' That sounds reasonable but it is already nine o'clock. Ann doesn't let herself be seduced into working any more and settles down on the couch in front of her TV.*

Questions

- What do you have on your to-do list?
- What did your parents teach you about achievement and perseverance?
- What would it be like if you could sit around more often and do nothing?

Tips

- Leave open slots in your schedule.
- Take a few minutes at work to relax every once in a while. Take a few deep breaths in and out and ask yourself the following question: 'Am I working at a nice pace or do I feel agitated?' In the latter case, try and gear things down to a more pleasant rhythm.

- Choose an activity that is not result oriented, one that is more focused on pleasure. Do something you enjoy. This can be anything: spend an evening at home cooking (but don't turn it into an achievement!), go for a walk in the woods, spend an afternoon relaxing in front of the TV or listening to music.

### **IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A PUSHER...**

The west is simply swarming with Pushers. But there are also enough people who have disowned him. For example, there are people who grew up in a family where making the time to enjoy things and taking it easy were highly valued and where achieving was seen as showing off. These people will not be getting overstressed any time soon. However, this can also be too much of a good thing. Are you not getting much done these days? Then developing your Pusher might help you to get moving.

#### THE PUSHER IN A NUTSHELL

##### *How can you recognize Pushers?*

By their high pace and their endless to-do lists. It is your Pusher who tries to quickly finish this and then also do that.

##### *What does your Pusher protect you from?*

He prevents you from amounting to nothing, from being passive and from putting your talents to waste. He protects you from the thought of being worthless and from feelings of low self-esteem. He sees to it that you are less disturbed by things in your environment.

##### *Benefits*

Your Pusher helps you get somewhere in life, he helps you to become successful and to earn the respect and appreciation of others. He provides you with stability. →

*Risks and drawbacks*

The effect it has on you: physical complaints, exhaustion, burn-out, lack of intimacy. As a result of your being so task oriented you fail to see what is really going on between people.

The effect it has on others: you stress them out, you overwhelm them, and they notice you are not really paying attention.

*How does the Pusher try to convince you to listen to him anyway?*

He agitates you and tells you, 'You can still finish this', 'Go and do it now!' and 'You're wasting your time'.

*Opposites of the Pusher:*

Rest, being, lazing about, relaxing, not striving for, dreaming, contact.



## 2.4 The Rational Mind

*I think therefore I am.*

René Descartes (1596-1650)

### IT'S QUITE LOGICAL: MEET THE RATIONAL MIND

There is a part of you that thinks rationally and that controls the world around you by figuring out how things work: your Rational Mind. He brings order to chaos and he thinks logically. He is only interested in facts and objective reality. He is appalled by intuition, emotions and irrationality. The Rational Mind is extremely curious and wants to know everything. He loves nothing more than to share his knowledge with others and to explain to them how something works. The Rational Mind cannot stand it when he does not understand something; he will not stop until he gets it.

Do you have a Rational Mind? Has reading this book worked up his appetite for more? What does he say to you while you are reading and what is he interested in learning more about?

### THE ORIGIN OF THE RATIONAL MIND

Your Rational Mind comes into being the second you begin to think about the things around you. You have probably already noticed the tirelessness with which children ask questions about any thing and every thing.

*Reuben is taking a walk in the woods with his father. 'Daddy, why do birds fly? Why don't they fall down?' His father explains 'That's because birds have wings.' Reuben: 'But how do they work?' Father: 'The wings float on the currents in the air.' Reuben then asks 'Ok, but how?' He wants to know all the ins and outs.*

Reuben is curious. What is the problem with that?! This is perfectly normal and the answers his father provides help him gain an understanding of his life. And so he develops a Rational Mind. This is a good thing because Reuben will definitely be needing him.

Rational Minds have been around for ages. People from all over the world have tried to understand the world around them. Is the earth flat or round? Where do storms come from?

Ever since the Enlightenment, the Rational Mind has become one of the most valued subpersonalities. There is a good reason why Hal and Sidra Stone call him 'the king of the subpersonalities'. In the west, the development of the Rational Mind is greatly encouraged. This can be easily explained because, after all, analytical thinking is very lucrative. We can use it to eradicate diseases, fly to the moon and create a worldwide internet. The Rational Mind has been the driving force behind innumerable technological innovations and social advancements.

We rely on science. Everything that is logical and which has been proven we experience to be true. If something has not yet been proven, it is useless. We believe in standard medical practices and are sceptical towards alternative remedies. People frequently ridicule intuition, emotions and paranormal activity, and we judge 'soft' or 'flakey' people in a negative way. In order to be successful in society it is absolutely necessary to have a well-developed brain. This is why children learn to think logically in school and why an academic degree is so highly respected. And so the Rational Mind becomes a great influence on us all. For some people, he grows into a massive bodyguard. The more you need him to keep yourself upright, the more persuasive he becomes, as in the following examples.

*At Edward's house there was always a lot of talk around the dinner table on Sunday evenings. Politics, the economy, war – pretty much everything was up for discussion. Edward's father was only interested in logical conversation and rational arguments would fly around the room. 'What you're saying doesn't make any sense because...' 'It does, because...' Outdoing the other person with hard facts was good fun. And the best arguments would always win. All Edward's brothers were very rational. Edward did not really get it yet, but the message was crystal clear: knowledge is power. Because this was constantly being re-emphasized, Edward developed a Rational Mind. That way he could join in the conversation. And Edward's father always rewarded him for contributing.*

*At Antoinette's house, little attention is given to emotions. Just before they go on holiday, she tells her father she is scared of flying. Her father says 'Nonsense! Flying is perfectly safe. Statistically speaking, you have the least chance of being in an accident when you're on a plane.' Antoinette still thinks it's scary but she stops bringing it up. After all, flying isn't dangerous, right? Also, it appears that feelings are nonsense too, so she had better just ignore them. When one of her friends asks her if she is scared of flying Antoinette's Rational Mind answers 'Nah, flying is perfectly safe.'*

By the way, a Rational Mind can also come into being to counterbalance an overdose of emotions:

*Charlie's parents are constantly arguing with each other. Agitation and fighting are rampant at his house. Charlie often finds himself on the receiving end of this animosity as well. This really isn't good for him. Charlie's Rational Mind starts to logically examine why his parents are always so irritable. 'They both have busy jobs and a lot on their plates. No wonder they're acting like this.' And so Charlie's anger, powerlessness and sorrow disappear like snow before the sun – rationalized away.*

### **THE RATIONAL MIND PUT INTO PRACTICE**

What happens when the Rational Mind takes over your adult life? Let's continue with Edward's example from above. Since that point, he has married Ellen. He has three children and is now the director of a successful pharmaceutical company which he runs predominantly with his Rational Mind.

*Since Edward became the boss, everything has become more systematic at the company. Edward's motto is 'Think before you act.' He is cool and concise in thinking out the business strategy. He completely has his act together. His managers give him weekly updates on the status of the organization. The current business plan was just updated and he has some new outlines and models lying on his desk. He personally sees to it that he is up-to-date on all the articles in The International Journal of Medical Sciences and The Lancet.*

Edward's Rational Mind has a clear idea about how to run the company:

*'I do the thinking for Edward and see to it that he makes well-thought-out decisions. I don't like impulsive action. There's a lot of money at stake in his company. Decisions have big consequences. I provide him with all the necessary information and I lay out all the pros and cons connected to a particular decision. That's the sensible approach. It's especially important to have him regularly discuss developments within the company with his management team. During our discussions, we touch on all aspects of the subject. I always show up well prepared and I expect his managers to back their arguments with facts.'* Sadly enough for his managers, this is often an ordeal. Edward's Rational Mind is a brilliant thinker and an experienced debater. You must have good arguments to be able to convince him. Managers who are not good at formulating their thoughts quickly learn to keep their mouths shut. Since Edward always knows best, he wins almost every debate. Edward is fair, though: when a manager is able to convince him by using a strong argument, he is able to acknowledge that the other person is right.

*His Rational Mind is blind to the consequences of his dominance of Edward's life. In the past few years, a number of experienced managers have left. 'Things here have got too businesslike and cold,' according to one of them. Somewhere deep down, it does bother Edward that these managers left. But his Rational Mind is quick to override those vague sentiments. 'People come and go. That's completely normal.'*

*Edward does not have any close friends. His wife maintains contact with their family and friends. His children jokingly call their father 'our walking encyclopedia'.*

**ENJOY YOUR RATIONAL MIND**

Your Rational Mind is invaluable. He drags you through your final exams and is supportive of your social success. He prevents you from panicking straight away when your computer dies on you and has you calmly check your connection. He prevents you from being guided by your impulses. Sometimes he helps you to be impersonal and untouchable, which can be vital in some situations. Furthermore, it can be simply exhilarating to have your brain running at full speed – whether you are alone or in company.

#### PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL SUBPERSONALITIES

Subpersonalities differ in their way of making contact. Some subpersonalities, like the Pleaser, broadcast openness and involvement. Their antennae are directed towards others. This makes these selves susceptible to the needs and opinions of the outside world. Other examples of personal subpersonalities are the Good Mother, the Caring Father, the Pleasure Seeker, the Inner Child, the Extravert, the Coach, the Aphrodite.

Impersonal subpersonalities are not necessarily geared towards others. Their attention is more focused inwards or they are geared towards knowing or doing. Their mentality is strictly business. To the outside world they appear distant and cool. It is easier to do your own thing with a businesslike attitude. You are not preoccupied with what others want or what they might be thinking. Impersonal subpersonalities are able to set boundaries and say no. Examples: the Independent Self, the Observer, Rest, the Introvert, the Pusher, the Rational Mind.

It is useful to have both personal and impersonal energies at your disposal. This enables you to be open and in contact with other people and at the same time to be businesslike and to set boundaries. For example, you can be intimate with your partner and more distant during negotiations.

- Are you more personal or impersonal?
- When do personal subpersonalities come in handy for you? And what about the impersonal ones?

### WHAT DOES YOUR RATIONAL MIND PROTECT YOU FROM?

The Rational Mind does his best to prevent you from being overwhelmed by anger, sorrow, affection and inner chaos. As long as he rationalizes your emotions, you do not have to deal with them. This helps keep things calmer for you. He keeps your emotions in check the same way a sea wall holds back the ocean. If the water breaks through during a powerful storm, the disaster can be immeasurable. Your Rational Mind is simply terrified of you becoming overwhelmed by emotions or confusion. Using his logic, he imposes order on chaos using facts and objectivity to hold back the surging waves. He also wants to prevent other people from seeing you as a sentimental weakling. This is how he keeps them from seeing your weak spots.

### THE DRAWBACKS OF THE RATIONAL MIND

Your Rational Mind can jeopardize your relationships in a variety of ways. He is poor at making contact and does not know how to just make small talk. He is oblivious to nonverbal signals. He only operates from within the confines of your head and knows nothing about the rest of your body. He is clumsy when it comes to flirting and he is not comfortable with physical contact. All of this is detrimental to intimacy and sexuality in your life. When the Rational Mind plays the lead role in your life there is no room for your intuition, your desires, spontaneity and spirituality. You also end up lacking empathy. We can clearly see this in Edward's case:

*Edward is rarely personal. When Ted, one of the managers in the company, tells Edward that his wife has had a miscarriage, Edward's Rational Mind responds by spouting facts: 'That happens frequently in the first three months. Usually something is wrong with the placenta and the body rejects the embryo.' Ted did not really want a cold reaction like that. He could use some empathy. But Edward's Rational Mind has no idea how to do that. Moreover, he has no idea that his response is inappropriate and not what Ted needed at that moment.*

*The same thing happens at home. Whenever Edward has, once again, reacted insensitively to something that his wife Ellen is worrying about, she sighs 'For once, could you empathize a bit! Couldn't you just listen to me?' Edward's Rational Mind genuinely can't understand what she is saying. 'But I am listening to you! What do you want from me?' he replies desperately. His Rational Mind is doing everything he can to understand Ellen. After all, he isn't such a bad person! Sadly, this is not what Ellen was implying. She wants to feel that Edward understands her. But the Rational Mind hasn't the faintest idea how to do that. This has nothing to do with his being unwilling; he just doesn't know any other way. Emotions are hard for him to deal with. The Rational Mind knows perfectly well how to analyze feelings. He just doesn't know how to experience them.*

Because Edward is so dominated by his Rational Mind, his existence has become flat. Aside from the intense discussions he has with his colleagues and his passion for factual knowledge, he does not experience many ups and downs in life. He does not listen to his desires and impulses and he never does anything out of the ordinary. Sometimes Edward feels empty. In these moments, his Rational Mind contemplates the possible causes. But he simply does not get it: he has everything covered, right?

#### **OPPOSITE: FEELING**

A variety of opposites can help to provide more balance: being irrational, being impulsive and spontaneous, being playful and daring to act crazily, leaving more room for not knowing. A very important opposite of knowing is feeling – both physically and emotionally. At the German university of Potsdam they realized that it is important for bright minds to develop such a self and so offered their I.T. students a course in flirting! You can be sure that there were quite a number of Rational Minds among them and that none of them had the faintest idea how to start a conversation with someone they found attractive.

Learning to trust your intuition can also help to counterbalance the Rational Mind. This can actually save lives as can be seen in the following true story:



*A fire was raging in a house and the firefighters were inside trying to put it out. The fire chief suddenly had a strong feeling that the building was going to collapse and shouted: 'Everybody out now!' He saved the lives of his men as the building actually did collapse. Afterwards, he said he had no objective reason whatsoever to explain his sudden alarm.*

### **THERE IS ANOTHER WAY ... USE YOUR AWARE EGO**

Edward can learn that there is more to life than just rational thought. There is value in learning to acknowledge his feelings even though he has never really had much contact with them. This will prove to be a daunting task for him if he has no idea that he even has a Rational Mind. His Rational Mind? That is just who he is, right?

How can he give more attention to his opposite selves? He can start by focusing his attention on his body and by becoming aware of everything that he is experiencing 'down there'. Initially, this will feel very artificial. Edward might notice that his feet are cold or that he has a dry throat. If he is not careful, his Rational Mind, completely jolted by all this insanity, might call an immediate stop to this experiment: 'What a load of nonsense!' Then Edward can explain to his Rational Mind why he thinks it is important to develop an opposite perspective. After all, the Rational Mind is open to good arguments! From then on, he has to keep practising. The more he practises, the more he will begin to notice that his body is trying to tell him something. Edward can also practise observing the nonverbal behavior of the people around him and learn how to respond with more empathy.

If he keeps it up, he will undoubtedly begin to enjoy his more emotional and intuitive selves as will his wife, children and colleagues – as in his contact with Ted. When Ted tells him his wife has had a miscarriage, Edward's Rational Mind wants to push aside the emotions with an explanation. However, if Edward is able to let his Emotional Self speak for him, he will be able to respond more appropriately: 'How sad for the both of you.' This will also enable him to inquire later on how Ted and his wife are manag-

ing. He will be more in sync with his own emotions and might even feel a lump in his throat when Ted shares his story.

### Questions

- How important is it for you to be able to understand things intellectually and to be able to explain them logically?
- How much room do you leave for your intuition and your emotions?
- How were emotions dealt with when you were growing up? How did people respond when you showed your emotions?

### Tips

- Do you want to be more in touch with your body and your emotions? These things can help: working out, gardening, dancing, yoga, running – any physical activity.
- When emotions are involved and you start to feel uncomfortable, allow the discomfort to enter and don't try to suppress it.
- Ask a friend to point out to you when you are only responding rationally.

### **IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A RATIONAL MIND?**

There are a number of people who do not have a strongly developed Rational Mind. Some people are simply more into action than thinking. If the people around you often tell you 'Stop and think first!', you have probably disowned your Rational Mind and banished it to your boot.

## THE RATIONAL MIND IN A NUTSHELL

### *How can you recognize a Rational Mind?*

He is cool, distant and is only interested in factual knowledge. He analyzes, reasons and collects information.

### *What does your Rational Mind protect you from?*

He does not like emotions and not knowing. He wants to prevent others from thinking you are weak. He protects you from an excess of emotions and from being overwhelmed by the outside world.

### *Benefits*

He helps you think clearly and logically, to create order and to solve problems. He helps you get a grip on your life.

### *Risks and drawbacks*

The effect it has on you: lack of intimacy with others, lack of empathy.

The effect it has on others: people experience you as being cold.

### *How does the Rational Mind try to convince you to listen to him anyway?*

With comments such as: 'Don't be so sentimental', 'You're acting strangely' and 'What nonsense!'

### *Opposites of the Rational Mind:*

Feeling, intuition, spontaneity, playfulness, intimacy, not knowing, impulsiveness.

## 2.5 The Inner Critic

*I'm my worst enemy. Nobody does to me what I do to myself.*

*Corneliu Vadim Tudor*

### **CRITICISM GUARANTEED: MEET THE INNER CRITIC**

Pretty much everybody knows their inner commentator, the one who is always pointing out everything you do wrong. This is your Inner Critic. He compares you to other people and tells you who is smarter, prettier, nicer, better, more authentic, creative, objective, worldly and altruistic than you. Your Inner Critic provides a constant commentary on your life. He is like a non-stop radio that is playing endlessly somewhere in the background. You might not hear him directly, but he is there.

You really need your Inner Critic. Without self-criticism you wouldn't be thinking about yourself so often, and whether or not things could be done better or in a different way. However, your Inner Critic does have a tendency to constantly exaggerate things – to make mountains out of molehills.

*Say you just finished repainting your living room and things have turned out really well. Your Inner Critic is the one who finds that corner where you made a mistake with your paintbrush. 'Sheesh, you really are clumsy and absent-minded, aren't you?' he informs you. He also thinks it looks like you chose the wrong colour. 'You simply have no feeling for this kind of thing. Why don't you let someone else choose the colour next time?' This can immediately crush any good feelings you were starting to have about your new living room.*

Your Inner Critic takes his job deadly seriously and he is never, ever satisfied with you. He criticizes you in all areas of your life: what you eat, how you decorated your house, how you do your job, the way you raise your children, and so on. He says things like 'Boy, that's a clumsy way of saying that', 'This dress really makes you look fat', 'Don't be so insecure' or 'Don't be so distant'. This is not very good for your self-confidence.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE INNER CRITIC

Your environment has its boundaries. Cycling on the pavement is OK, but you are not allowed to cross the street. Mummy made that very clear. If you do it anyway, she becomes furious. That is not allowed! You are also not allowed to tap your little sister on the head. You need to be careful with her. And you cannot yell at Daddy while he is on the phone. If you do any of these things, they will disapprove of you – either explicitly or subtly. This does not feel good. And so you learn ‘how things are supposed to be’. Your Inner Critic comes into being the moment you notice as a child that you are not allowed to do everything you want. He protects you from the criticisms of others and, more precisely, from the consequences these might bring. He wants to shield you from these unpleasant moments. He always pays full attention and he knows all the rules by heart. He tries to preempt the criticisms coming from the outside world by being the first one to criticize you.

*In school, Mark’s teacher once told him that he was tone deaf. Ever since then he has been afraid to sing. When people start singing at birthday parties, his Inner Critic whispers ‘Shhh, sing quietly, or the others will hear you.’ Mark sings as softly as he can. He would rather not sing at all. This is how his Inner Critic makes sure the others do not hear how out of tune he actually is.*

If your Inner Critic is constantly rubbing your nose in it whenever you fall short, then other people will not have to do it for you. He is always explaining to you the requirements you must meet – according to him at least. From a very young age, he lets you know in which areas you are no good. With a strongly developed Inner Critic at your side, who needs enemies?

### CRITICISM IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

No matter where you live in the world, everyone develops an Inner Critic. However, what precisely the Inner Critic comments on is different for each individual and for each culture. Italian sons are immediately chastised

by their Inner Critic when they do not call their mother as often as they should. In Northern European countries, on the other hand, men are criticized when they hang around the nest for too long.

*Our Inner Critic is helping us write this book, and he just said 'You're generalizing! That's not true for all Italian and Northern European men.' If we were to listen to this voice, we would have to rewrite that sentence and see to it that it is more nuanced. In this way you, the reader, would not end up thinking that we do not know that there are mothers in Italy who would go crazy if their sons were to call them each and every day. You might also have noticed that this last sentence was actually written by our Inner Critic. He is shrewdly taking this opportunity to let you know that we are actually aware of the fact that we need to be nuanced in our choice of words.*

*Feeling a bit confused? We are! If we had listened to this voice the whole time we were writing this book, we would never have finished it; we would have become completely bogged down in all the little details.*

Back to our point: no matter who you are, no matter where you grew up, you will always be criticized by your Inner Critic. The subject of this criticism is simply different for each person. What tone the Inner Critic strikes is also different for each person. For some people he sounds a bit more forgiving:

*'That beige coat makes you look slightly pale. A bit more colour would suit you better.'*

*'You did not deal with that conversation very well. I hope you learned from it.'*

For other people, an Inner Critic can be absolutely devastating when he says things like 'You're a total loser' or 'You're horrible' or 'You'd better keep your lips sealed during the meeting. You'll only end up talking nonsense.'

### THE INNER CRITIC WANTS YOU TO STICK TO THE RULES

How does your Inner Critic know how everything is supposed to be so well? Where does he get his information? Throughout your entire existence, he has been watching closely and he knows all the rules of each and every one of your bodyguards. And he is constantly monitoring whether or not you are abiding by all their rules. If you are not, then prepare to be criticized. If you have a strong Pleaser, for instance, and you are not nice enough to someone, then your Inner Critic might say 'That sounded pretty rough!' In fact, he would rather prevent you from saying anything unkind before you even get the chance. If you have a strong Independent Self, then your Inner Critic might say 'Hey, don't let yourself be pushed around like that!' whenever you give in to one of your partner's propositions. If you listen closely to what your Inner Critic is saying, then you can discover precisely who your primary selves are.

Your Inner Critic is up to speed on all the rules and regulations with regards to your profession. If you are a secretary, then he will know exactly what is expected of a qualified secretary these days and will make sure to tell you in which areas you do not meet the requirements. And if you are not careful, you will even start to believe it is true. Let's take a look at how the Inner Critic operates within Jacqueline. He always goes to work on her.

### THE INNER CRITIC PUT INTO PRACTICE

Jacqueline is giving a presentation to the management team this afternoon. She prepares everything meticulously and the presentation goes very well. Her colleagues are fascinated by what she has to say. Even her boss is enthusiastic. She, on the other hand, is not pleased with how things went.

*It started that morning in front of her wardrobe. The trousers she puts on are slightly wrinkled and her Inner Critic fires off: 'You should have ironed your trousers yesterday. They look hideous.' Later on, in front of the mirror he says: 'Gosh, your hair looks flat.' Jacqueline gets upset and quickly tries*

*to add some more volume to it. When she wants to start with her presentation, she has some problems getting her PowerPoint up on the big screen. One of her colleagues rushes over and helps her get the beamer to work. Her Inner Critic sneers at her: 'Moron, you should have checked that before everyone got here. This is making you look really stupid!' This knocks her off balance for a moment. It starts to make her nervous. During her presentation, a colleague asks Jacqueline a question she does not have the answer to. Her Inner Critic, on the other hand, is quick to come up with a response: 'What? Cat got your tongue? Didn't do much of a job preparing this, did you?'*

*This goes on for the remainder of her presentation. Judging by her exterior, you can hardly tell she has all this commentary going on in the background. At most you would say that Jacqueline is a bit tense. However, on the inside, this is having a devastating effect. She is becoming terribly insecure. Her spontaneity is all but gone. It doesn't matter how well she prepared herself or and how pleased the others are. If things continue in this way, she will never be satisfied with herself.*

How does Jacqueline's Inner Critic go to work? He observes the rules of her Perfectionist, because he knows perfectly well what a presentation should look like. After the presentation, we have an interview with her Inner Critic. He looks serious and strict.

*'That presentation was way below par. I'm really curious about what her colleagues think of her right now. They probably think she's stupid. She didn't even know how to work the beamer. She does everything wrong. Her timing is off, she has no sense of humour and she's so uptight. She's just not sure enough of herself! She's just standing there hesitating, and those spots on her neck look horrible! Plus, she had far too much text and didn't leave enough room for questions. You wouldn't expect that from someone of her calibre. Her colleague would have no problem succeeding with a presentation like that. At least he knows how to keep his cool. Jacqueline is just no good at these things. Now she can wave that promotion goodbye.'*



That is a substantial amount of criticism. No wonder Jacqueline has a knot in her stomach.



### **ENJOY YOUR INNER CRITIC**

Well, 'enjoyment' might be overstating it. This is not exactly our idea of a good time. Nevertheless, you still need your Inner Critic. He encourages you to improve and correct yourself. He steers you away from behaviours that can get you into trouble. Comments like 'You're driving far too fast!' are necessary when you are flying down the road at lightning speed. And when you are having a hard time fitting into any of your clothes, it might be a good idea to lose some weight. A lot of what he says is relevant and can be put to good use. The art is to let your Inner Critic work for you instead of you doing everything your Inner Critic says. If you can learn to

listen to his criticism and only use the parts that you think are useful, he can really come in handy.

### **WHAT DOES THE INNER CRITIC PROTECT YOU FROM?**

When you ask an Inner Critic what his intentions are, it becomes clear that he is acting out of a deep-rooted concern for your well-being. But what is he so worried about? He is afraid that you might end up all alone if you are not slender enough, or dressed well enough; or that you might end up homeless under a bridge for not doing your job well enough; or that you might be rejected by everyone for behaving so extravagantly. Fear is the driving force behind all his criticism. But usually we are not aware of that. We hear his comments, but not his underlying concerns. Let us listen some more to Jacqueline's Inner Critic:

*'Jacqueline couldn't keep up in school. It was really important to her parents that she got good marks. When she brought home her report card, her father was noticeably disappointed. It was as if he thought she wasn't worthwhile. Whenever she didn't know the answer to one of her teacher's questions, she felt stupid. Once her teacher was condescending towards her: 'Let's see if blondie here has been paying attention.' Jacqueline was mortified. Ever since then I have tried to prevent her from failing. That way people won't think she's stupid. I don't want her to be humiliated ever again. I believe that people won't find her worthwhile if she doesn't perform well enough.'*

Your Inner Critic wants nothing but the best for you. Sadly, the way in which he goes about this is not very supportive of your self-confidence.

### **THE DRAWBACKS OF THE INNER CRITIC**

No other subpersonality has such a negative impact on your life as the Inner Critic. He is the cause of much suffering. He is never satisfied and he always finds something to fuss about. He is the only one who is capable of disabling you entirely and bringing your personal growth process to a complete stop. This can also be hard on the people around you. Jacque-

line's boss is becoming more and more irritated by the fact that she is always so hard on herself.

When your Inner Critic is eighty per cent active, only twenty per cent of your self-confidence is left over. He makes life far more serious than it has to be. People with a severe Inner Critic can really go crazy from all his comments. They would love nothing more than to bring him down a peg or two. But the Inner Critic never stops and always continues to comment on everything. Even when you change during the course of your life and begin to develop different subpersonalities, he just grows right along with you.

*Jacqueline's boss tells her that she should be more satisfied with herself. She agrees. Her Inner Critic was listening in on this and simply added this new rule to his collection. The next time Jacqueline is displeased with herself, her Inner Critic says: 'Come on! Don't be so hard on yourself!'*

In short: there is no escaping your Inner Critic! Trying to please him is nearly impossible. This makes it all the more important to become aware of this subpersonality.

#### **OPPOSITE: SAY YES TO YOUR IMPERFECTIONS**

The best counterbalance to the Inner Critic is to take it easy on yourself and completely accept yourself the way you are – both your positive and your less positive sides. This way, you will learn that you are human and that you do not have to be perfect. When you come to terms with who you are, life becomes a lot lighter. It becomes easier to put the Inner Critic's fears into perspective. He is scared that you will end up alone if you do not lose a little weight – but you know better. Your happiness really does not depend on that. But how do you do this? How do you develop self-acceptance and learn to not be burdened by all his comments?

#### **THERE IS ANOTHER WAY ... AND IT IS EXTREMELY LIBERATING**

Back to Jacqueline. How can she free herself from the grip of her Inner Critic?

The most important step in this process is for her to learn to see her Inner Critic as just another voice inside her.

She must come to understand that there is a radio station continuously buzzing in the background. This realization often comes as a huge revelation. When she starts to pay more attention, she will discover just how often she actually comes down hard on herself. The more she realizes this is a voice within her, the less hold her Inner Critic will have over her.

The next time she hears his criticism, she can compassionately say ‘Ah, you again?’ By doing this she will be able to separate from her Inner Critic and listen to his voice more objectively.

Secondly, it is crucial that she ask her Inner Critic what he is so concerned about.

*‘I’m scared that other people will think Jacqueline is stupid. I want to prevent this at all cost. I criticize her in the hope that she will do well. Only then will they think she is worthwhile.’*

Ah, so that is what this is about! There is a serious fear lying beneath the surface. If Jacqueline takes yet another step back, she will realize that her Inner Critic is scared, but that she herself does not need to be.

In this way, the potential for gaining perspective and self-acceptance becomes possible:

*‘Your presentation went fine, even if you didn’t know the answer to a question. You don’t need to be perfect in order to be appreciated.’*

She puts her Inner Critic at ease. As a result, the level of fear decreases and she becomes more pleased with herself. The Inner Critic’s criticism is still there, but it sounds less harsh than before. Most importantly, it does not affect her as much as it used to.

### Questions

- Make a list of the things your Inner Critic comments on. What does he think about your appearance, about what you eat and drink, about

how you interact with your parents, about what you spend your money on, about your level of professionalism and so on?

- In what areas of your life is he most active?
- What is your Inner Critic's underlying concern? What is he afraid of?
- What were you taught about 'how things are supposed to be' and what rules you should follow?

### Tips

- Imagine the list you just made is not yours but that it belongs to a good friend. How would you judge your friend based on this list? Do you still love this friend just as much? You probably do. So why would you make such a big deal about it when it comes to yourself?
- Take another look at your list and behind each point of criticism write: 'and there's nothing wrong with that'. For example:
  - I have love handles around my waist, and there's nothing wrong with that.
  - I talk too much, and there's nothing wrong with that.
  - I'm terrible at pingpong, and there's nothing wrong with that.
  - My Inner Critic really bothers me, and there's nothing wrong with that.

### **IF YOU DO NOT HAVE AN INNER CRITIC**

It doesn't often happen that an Inner Critic is completely disowned. Almost everyone has a certain dose of self-criticism. People who rarely criticize themselves often have a powerful Judge at work. The Judge behaves in pretty much the same way as the Inner Critic, only he has his sights set on the outside world. He externalizes everything. It is the other people who are always doing everything wrong.

Some people use their Judge in their job: people such as stand-up comedians, critics, journalists and government lawyers. Judges can also be found in politics. However, most of us have both an Inner Critic and a Judge working simultaneously.

## THE INNER CRITIC IN A NUTSHELL

### *How can you recognize an Inner Critic?*

Constant self-criticism in all areas of your life.

He checks whether or not you are abiding by the rules of all your primary subpersonalities.

### *What does your Inner Critic protect you from?*

From the criticism and judgments of others, from humiliation, pain and shame.

He has fundamental human fears: the fear of being abandoned, the fear of not being worthwhile, the fear of danger, and so on.

### *Benefits*

He encourages you to improve and correct yourself. He shields you from danger.

### *Risks and drawbacks*

The effect it has on you: lack of self-confidence, loss of joy and spontaneity, jeopardizing your own efforts.

The effect it has on others: initially, they will try and talk you out of your self-criticism. In the long run, however, someone with too much self-criticism can become annoying.

### *How does the Inner Critic try to convince you to listen to him anyway?*

He makes you feel insecure. He makes you feel bad about yourself. He says things like 'You can't do that' or 'You look horrible'.

### *Opposites of the Inner Critic:*

Self-acceptance, compassion, moderation, ability to put things in perspective, caring for yourself, good is good enough.

## 2.6 The Inner Child

*On and on the rain will fall, like tears from a star, like tears from a star  
On and on the rain will say, how fragile we are, how fragile we are.*  
Fragile – Sting

### **A REDISCOVERY: MEET YOUR INNER CHILD**

We all began life as children. You were once a newborn baby: defenceless and wordless. You could have been a shy child who, when overwhelmed by the attention of others, would hide your head under your mother's arm. You could have been afraid of the monster under your bed. You could have spontaneously yelled out 'I think you're stupid', or 'You're nice'. You could have fantasized a lot as well: your shoe was a boat, your brother was the mayor and a cardboard box became a castle. Now that you are an adult, you still have all these aspects within you. They are part of what we call your Inner Child.

Thinking back to your first years of life, your Inner Child can hardly be thought of as a separate subpersonality: you *are* the child. You are uncensored, open, welcoming, imaginative, intuitive, scared, sad, shy, stubborn, playful and spontaneous. As you grew, you began to develop other subpersonalities. Now, you are no longer a child, but you still have that Inner Child within you.

### **THE INNER CHILD IS PROTECTED AND FADES TO THE BACKGROUND**

In chapter 1, you read how your primary selves come into being because your Inner Child is so sensitive. For example, when a little boy is punished, he will immediately start to cry out of fear. When that toddler spontaneously starts to sing a song and is laughed at, this can hit him pretty hard. Primary subpersonalities protect you from this pain. And all the behaviors that endanger your Inner Child become disowned. Ultimately it is a good thing that you develop your team of bodyguards; after all, you cannot go through life as a child all the time. You would have no life. You would never dare to drive a car because your Inner Child thinks that would be

far too scary. Furthermore, society often responds negatively when you show weakness. Usually it is the other way around: being firm, tough and strong is held in much higher esteem.

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ME, MY SELVES AND I



*Can you imagine the CEO of Heineken starting off the shareholder's meeting by saying in a trembling voice that he is terrified of presenting the disappointing annual figures? He would never find a job again!*

As a result, throughout the course of your development, you withdraw, more and more, from your Inner Child.



You might lose your playfulness, your fantasy and your ability to dream. Your primary selves do their job so thoroughly that you do not even notice it when you become hurt or afraid – with all the consequences this might bring. Let's take a look at how this translates into life.

## **AFRAID**

An extreme example is the story of Alain Robert, a.k.a. the French Spiderman.

*When Alain was a child, he was absolutely crippled by his fear of heights. In order to conquer this fear, he started climbing. Now he climbs the outsides of the tallest buildings in the world – illegally and without any fail-safes. In his flashy outfit, he jumps out of a taxi, sprints towards the building and climbs up the walls, leaving bewildered security guards far below him. He has become world-famous for his feats and it is incredibly exciting to watch him climb.*

*When asked about the dangers of his solo climbs, he says 'I know exactly what I'm doing. I don't take any risks. I prepare myself to the maximum. I train my body and I explore the buildings I am going to climb. I'm very rational and methodical when it comes to my profession.' It seems that Alain is no longer scared, even though he has already fallen seven times and was once in a coma for five days after one of his falls. He is now partially disabled. What would his Inner Child have to say about all of this?*

Alain has developed a number of powerful bodyguards to protect his Inner Child, one of them being his Fearless Muscular Solo Climber. He saw to it that Alain overcame his humiliating fear of heights. His Solo Climber developed so strongly that he even managed to earn Alain a lot of money in the process. Alain also has a Rational Mind put in place to help him rationalize away the fear of falling. Combined, these two heavyweights see to it that Alain does not even notice his fear any more. Whenever he goes climbing, his wife and children are all the more fearful.

**SHY**

Brian, in our next example, does not want to listen to his Inner Child. *Brian is an importer of wicker furniture. Altogether, he employs fifteen people. Every January, they hold a New Year's reception for all the employees and their partners. Brian is not much of a talker and does not really like parties. Still, as the manager, he does have to give some kind of a speech. His Inner Child still remembers how awkwardly he gave his presentation on dolphins back in primary school. A few of the children were giggling in the back of the class. Brian is feeling somewhat reluctant to go to the reception, but a 'Don't be so childish' voice helps him get past that. Five beers do the rest. Slightly tipsy, he proceeds to give a short and standoffish speech. The redness he feels forming on his face is because of all the beers he has drunk. And just like last year, his employees sit through it feeling a sense of vicarious shame.*

Brian is right: his feelings are childish because they belong to his Inner Child. It does occur to him that he is feeling tense and that he is starting to blush, but mostly he thinks it is annoying and he feels ashamed. He does not want to make a bad impression on his employees. It does not occur to him that he is actually very shy and that he is afraid of being laughed at. He does not know how to deal with his clumsiness. Brian is only able to overcome this when his Inner Critic and his Tough Self override his shyness by using a few beers in order to feel stronger. Sadly, he ends up creating exactly what he was afraid of.

**PLAYFUL**

This example shows a loss of spontaneity and playfulness. *Maureen, an ambitious and serious business economist, was recently appointed as team leader. During her first weeks she notices that the atmosphere in the department is a bit too casual. A lot of jokes are tossed around and just last week she saw a colleague oinking and crawling through the office on all fours. Everybody was laughing. Maureen didn't like it at all. She wants to see results from the team and she doesn't like this kind of non-*

*sense. How is she supposed to lead this pack of toddlers? Maureen plans to lead her team meetings with an iron fist.*

Maureen is no longer in touch with her playfulness. She used to like acting crazy, but since highschool she has become very serious. She saw how her older brother was punished for his wild behavior and sent to another school. That would never happen to her! Her Studious Student saw to it that she always got results: she now has a nice job title and promising career advancement. Sadly though, the fun has completely seeped out of her life. A few months after her arrival, there is hardly any laughter in Maureen's team meetings.

#### **WHAT CAN YOU GAIN FROM BANNING YOUR INNER CHILD TO THE BACKGROUND?**

Do you recognize yourself in any of these examples? Imagine that your Inner Child was the only one who had a say in your life? Would you still have the nerve to board a plane? Would you still go to the dentist to have one of your wisdom teeth extracted? How do you deal with situations where you feel clumsy or afraid? When was the last time you had the giggles?

The primary subpersonalities in the examples above are doing their job very well. Alain has a lot to gain from his Solo Climber who prevents him from being afraid. The chances of him crashing down would probably increase if he were to allow more room for his fear. Brian does not feel how shy he is as long as his Tough Self and his Inner Critic are calling the shots. He does what he is supposed to do and gives his speech. And Maureen's Studious Student sees to it that she no longer has to be afraid of failing. She has a successful career. Problem avoided. Job well done!

How are things going for the Inner Child in each of these examples? Are they still there? Of course they are! But they are hidden behind the primary selves and it is not easy to get them to speak up.

### THE INNER CHILD TAKES THE STAGE

Suppose we let the Inner Child in Alain, Brian and Maureen have a chance to speak. What would that sound like? Let's start up a conversation with Alain's Child. He only comes out when he feels very safe and is given full attention. He is a timid boy and he gently says:

'I don't want Alain to climb at all. I keep telling him not to go, because I'm always scared to death every time we reach the top and he looks down over the ledge. Then I can't breathe. But he doesn't know me any more. He sent me away.'

Brian's Inner Child whispers:

'I don't like parties. When Brian has to give a speech, everybody is watching. They might laugh at him. It's scary. I want to hide. I'd rather just crawl under the table. Then they wouldn't be able to see me.'

When Maureen's Inner Child is given some attention, she immediately starts to cry. After a while she says:

*'Maureen never plays with me anymore. I love to play. I love acting crazy.'*  
(Her eyes begin to shine and she starts grinning.)

When you talk with the Inner Child a little longer, he really comes to life. This is quite a moving experience. You might be thinking 'So?! What's the point? What good is a scared, sobbing, shy little child anyway? I learned to keep him out of the picture for a reason, right? That's where everything started, didn't it?' Indeed, you are right. The idea is not that you go back to behaving like a Child or that you do whatever it wants you to. If that were the case, Brian would never give another speech and do what is expected of him. The idea is that you learn how to reconnect with the qualities of your Inner Child. By only listening to your primary selves, you have literally thrown out the Child with the bathwater. A life without being in touch with your sensitivity, playfulness, fantasy and intimacy is an incomplete life. There is a cost attached to the protection your bodyguards provide you with. Something essential is lost.

### **WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING YOUR INNER CHILD?**

For starters, you miss out on a ton of valuable information. Your Inner Child can warn you of dangers. After all, Alain's Child is right: what Alain does *is* extremely dangerous and has already partially disabled him. Your Inner Child can also sense perfectly who to trust and who not to trust. He knows intuitively whether or not that new job will suit you and if the person you are in love with is the one for you. The Child is unable to explain to you why he knows all these things, but his intuition is reliable nonetheless. It is precisely because we ignore this 'knowing' that we often end up in a tough spot. Furthermore, by ignoring your Inner Child, you lose out on a lot of fun and vitality, and it can become difficult for you to be intimate with others.

There is another catch to all of this. If you ignore your Inner Child, you will often end up rejecting it in other people as well. Maureen is annoyed with her teammates whenever they start giggling. Alain is annoyed with scaredy-cats. Suppose his daughter was afraid of horses – the chances are he would not take her fear seriously and condemn it. And so history would repeat itself.

Finally, there is one more consequence: without your Inner Child, arguments with your partner will remain a source of pain. How does this work? Say you are angry with your partner and as a result have shrouded yourself in silence, or instead, lashed out. This means that, right before you became angry, something struck a chord inside you. Your Inner Child knows exactly what that is. But if you are not aware of it, you will never be able to tell your partner the actual reason why you became so angry. For example, maybe you were feeling ignored or being asked too many questions or not taken seriously enough. When you disown your Inner Child, arguments tend to become hurtful experiences rather than painful though productive confrontations in which you can actually learn something from each other. We will explore how this works in chapter 3.

### **ENJOY YOUR INNER CHILD**

The qualities of your Inner Child are numerous. To mention just a few:

- He knows intuitively what suits you and what does not.
- He knows when something is dangerous.
- He knows when you are going too far.
- He knows the difference between true love and infatuation.
- He is spontaneous, playful and knows how to make jokes.
- He embodies your lust for life and your vitality.
- He loves pointlessness and engages with the here and now.
- He is creative.
- He senses perfectly what is going on between people beneath the surface.
- Unlike any other part of you, he is capable of great intimacy with the people you love.

And this will remain so. Your Inner Child does not grow up.

### **THERE IS ANOTHER WAY: TAKING CARE OF YOUR OWN VULNERABILITY**

Now that you are an adult and your bodyguards seem perfectly capable of protecting you, there is, paradoxically, more room for you to start paying attention to your Inner Child. This will bring about a more engaged and richly diverse life. You will learn once again to notice when you are moved by something or feel shy, humiliated or rejected. You will learn how to tolerate these emotions. Sweet, sour, bitter and salty – you get to experience them all over again. You will not need your primary selves as much in order to protect your Inner Child. You will listen to your Inner Child and at the same time you will see to it that the Inner Child does not completely take over. How can you do this?

*For the past few years, Caroline has been taking care of her children as they have been growing up. But now she would, once again, like to have a paying job. Tomorrow she has an interview and she is quite nervous. Her Inner Child is afraid she might be rejected. She has been out of the job market for quite some time now, and does not have much experience with computers. Caro-*

*line also has a Tough Self that is not afraid at all. He serves as a bodyguard whenever Caroline is feeling reluctant to do something.*

Caroline now has a number of options. She can switch to autopilot and only listen to her Tough Self. She can also choose to identify with her Inner Child.

Suppose she only listens to her Tough Self and ignores her Inner Child: *Caroline is still nervous, but she is ignoring it. During the interview, when the employer asks her about her knowledge of computers, her Tough Self answers assertively: 'Oh, no problem. I have some experience and I'm a quick learner.' The Tough Self is overplaying Caroline's qualities. He is drowning out her doubts. The question is whether or not the answer the Tough Self provided will convince the employer. If he is paying attention, he will notice that she is bluffing and this will not encourage him to trust her. Can Caroline work with computers or is she just pretending? When he continues asking questions, Caroline must admit she does not know how to use PowerPoint or Excel. After the interview, Caroline's stomach is hurting. Her Inner Child is convinced she will get a call informing her that the other candidate got the job.*

Suppose Caroline only listens to her Inner Child: *Then she will mostly be scared and lose her strength. If her Inner Child takes part in the job interview, then her doubts will get the better of her. During the interview, when the employer asks her about her knowledge of computers, her Inner child hesitantly answers 'Gosh, I'm not at all sure about that. I hardly have any experience with computers. I don't know if I'll be able to do that.' This makes her blush. This doesn't give the employer's trust in her much of a boost either. He is afraid that this prospective employee might require too much attention. 'I'm not going down that road.' Caroline's Tough Side is furious. Why did she make herself small like that? She's competent enough!*

How can Caroline go to the interview without overplaying her capabilities and still show enough strength?

There are a few steps that can help here.

**STEP 1 NOTICE THE INNER CHILD**

We are so used to overriding our fears that we often do not notice they are there. The first step for Caroline is to notice that she is nervous. That could go something like this:

*Caroline sits down for a minute and focuses her attention on the 'knots' in her throat and her stomach. Instead of trying to repress her nerves, she attempts to find out what they are trying to tell her. She notices the tension in her stomach and the beating of the pulse in her throat. If she listens a while longer, she also discovers where these physical reactions are coming from. Her Inner Child says 'I think the interview tomorrow is scary. You've been off work for a while now. And you don't have that much experience with computers. They might think you're too old. I'm scared of being rejected.'*

**STEP 2 ACKNOWLEDGE THESE EMOTIONS**

Whether Caroline likes it or not, her Inner Child is afraid. It is now up to Caroline to take this seriously. She must allow herself to experience the tension. This is crucial, because before she realizes it, her Tough Side and her Inner Critic will take over with a 'What a bunch of nonsense!' and a 'Don't be so dramatic!' Her Inner Child will disappear quickly.

How do you take the fear seriously? This is easier said than done. This no longer has anything to do with the art of doing but rather with the art of letting it be – letting your feelings be there and not passing any judgments on them. You could compare it to the weather. Sometimes it is sunny and other times it is raining cats and dogs. This is not good or bad. That is just the way it is. Now the sun is shining. Now it is pouring. Of course, we tend to appreciate sunshine a bit more than rain. Still, no matter what you think of it, it will not change a thing. The same goes for the feelings of your Inner Child. They are simply there. You do not need to solve them and they do not need to go anywhere. Furthermore, you do not need to blow them up or get lost because of them. What a relief!



*As soon as Caroline stops resisting her fear and starts to acknowledge it, she will begin to feel more relaxed. Her Inner Child will feel heard and calm down. At the same time, knowing what she is afraid of, Caroline can take some precautionary measures.*

### **STEP 3    EXAMINE WHAT THE INNER CHILD NEEDS**

OK, so now Caroline knows what she is afraid of and she is not repressing it. What next? Now she can examine what her Inner Child needs. Sometimes a little reassurance can help:

*'I know you feel it's a tense situation. It's true: I haven't been working for some time now. We don't need to hide that tomorrow either. But I also know that I'm a fast learner and I'll pick up what I need to learn in no time. And if they think I'm too old, then I'll just keep on looking for another job. My life doesn't depend on this.'*

*Caroline's Inner Child wants her to prepare herself for when the employer starts asking tough questions. That evening, Caroline and her husband sit down together and come up with a list of hard questions. Together, they think of what Caroline would answer if the employer were to ask one of these questions. They rehearse the interview a few times. Caroline even starts enjoying it. Her Inner Child is feeling a lot more secure.*

### **STEP 4    STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE TOUGH SELF**

Caroline's Tough Self is still there, and there is nothing wrong with him coming along tomorrow. He can offer her strength and self-awareness.

What would the interview be like if Caroline were to use both her Inner Child and her Tough Self? The employer asks her about her experience with computers.

*Caroline answers calmly: 'To be honest, I don't have any experience with PowerPoint and Excel. If I had to use those programs right away, that could present a problem. In my last job I did do some work with Word. Naturally, I*

*would like to learn how to use these new programs and I would be surprised if I didn't catch on quickly.'*

Caroline is now answering the questions with a lot more resolution and without having to overplay her qualities. In doing so, she will leave a much more balanced impression. This will not guarantee that she gets the job, but she will be able to walk out of the interview feeling much more satisfied with herself: 'I did everything I could. If they still don't want me, then I guess I just don't belong there.'

Maybe you are thinking 'What a hassle! Do I have to look at myself through a magnifying glass the whole day? What kind of life is that?' Of course you do not have to do this all the time. We are talking about the moments that really matter. It is precisely at these moments that you should take the time to ask yourself some questions: Why am I getting so angry now? What is affecting me emotionally? What is causing me to withdraw? What is making me so sad all of a sudden? What am I really afraid of?

### Questions

- What did your parents teach you about playing, being silly, crying, being afraid, being angry, being intimate and using your intuition?
- What did you love to do as a child? Do you still do it occasionally?
- What were you punished for when you were a child?

### Tips

- Are you feeling vulnerable? Comforting and pampering yourself can sometimes work miracles. For example, you could crawl onto the couch and lie under a comfy blanket for half an hour. What do you do to find comfort?
- Allow yourself to behave childishly every once in a while. Experiment with skipping, making funny faces, talking childishly or whining. How does it feel to do these things?

- Examine your surroundings and see if they are safe enough for you to allow your Inner Child to come forward. How could you create such an environment for yourself?

#### THE INNER CHILD IN A NUTSHELL

##### *How can you recognize the Inner Child?*

It is sensitive, open, intuitive and welcoming. It knows fear, sorrow, pain, pleasure, love. It is playful, creative, imaginative. It manifests itself through your body: butterflies in your stomach, nervousness, a lump in your throat, cold sweats and so on.

##### *What does your Inner Child protect you from?*

It did not come into being to protect you. Rather, it is in need of protection. Initially, your primary selves take care of this. Later on, you must learn – with your Aware Ego – to take care of your Inner Child.

##### *Benefits*

It is capable of being intimate with others unlike any other subpersonality. Your Inner Child is like a powerful compass that warns you of possible dangers. It helps you shine and provides you with fun and playfulness.

##### *Risks and drawbacks*

The effect it has on you: you are defenceless, vulnerable, a victim. The effect it has on others: others will want to take care of you or will abuse your openness.

##### *Opposites of the Inner Child:*

Unlike the other subpersonalities, the Inner Child does not really have any opposites.

It is protected by your primary selves, your bodyguards.

## 2.7 More subpersonalities ...

*I sometimes think that I'm too many people. The husband  
or the hedonist. The businessman or the communist. The  
artist or the showbiz creep. The lover or the nervous geek.  
The question of identity is one that's always haunted me*  
Pet Shop Boys

The Pleaser, the Pusher, the Rational Mind, the Inner Critic and the Inner Child – these five subpersonalities are just the beginning. People sometimes ask us ‘How many subpersonalities are there?’ We always answer ‘Too many to count. Hundreds in each individual.’ Our Perfectionist would want us to be as complete as possible in writing this book and to discuss each and every subpersonality in detail. That would be impossible, so we went ahead and ignored him. Instead, we have limited ourselves to an additional handful of descriptions – a modest selection of recognizable subpersonalities. You will now meet a few of them and we have included one possible opposite for each.

### THE CONTROLLER AND THE CAREFREE SELF

Most of us know that part within ourselves which wants to keep things under control. He prevents you from bursting into tears at the wrong moment. Or he checks whether or not you blew out the candles. A Controller can come in pretty handy. For some people, though, he can become a heavyweight, constantly focusing on each and every thing that could possibly go wrong. He tries to prevent this from happening by using control, order and oversight.

*Leo is always alert. Whenever he leaves home to go to the office, he first checks if all the windows and doors are shut. Not that anyone ever broke in, but you can never know for sure. Whenever he has an appointment, he always double-checks if he brought all his notes with him and whether his mobile phone is fully charged. When he leaves the office, he checks with his secretary to make sure she won't forget to put his package with the outgo-*

*ing mail. He asked her a while ago, but it can't hurt to ask her again. You know, just to be sure.*

*As soon as Marianne feels tears welling up, her Controller jumps into action. He suppresses her tears. He does not want the others to see her cry. Whenever she gets angry, her Controller also steps in and holds her back. He quickly sees to it that she restrains herself. A third glass of wine? Her Controller quickly puts a stop to that. He does not like uninhibited exuberance.*

Your Controller keeps you in check. He does this because he does not know what would happen if he were to let you run loose. He is afraid of the uncontrollable and he does not like being overwhelmed because it would make it impossible for him to manage. By suppressing your rage, your lust and your spontaneity, he keeps the world in order. In his eyes, this is the only way to get attention and love. He also keeps your surroundings in good order. Things can happen out there as well, things he cannot control, so it is better to stay one step ahead of things. His control is necessary because he wants to prevent you from building up too much inner tension. This way, you can feel at ease. Everything is under control, but he finds intimate relationships tough to deal with.

#### INSTINCTIVE ENERGY

People have innate urges. In Voice Dialogue, we refer to these as instinctual energies. Take aggression for instance, or rage, lust, power, territoriality, sensuality, sexuality, survival instinct and the ability to kill. Your Controller simply loathes these parts of you. He is afraid of their destructive power. He would rather keep your aggression immobilized. Subduing energies in this way is a lot like keeping a wild tiger in a cage. The Controller is afraid that, the second the cage is opened, the tiger will tear the entire village to shreds. This is why instinctual energies are often disowned – even though these parts are very important for our survival. →

In Voice Dialogue, you learn how to manage your instinctual energies as opposed to simply controlling them. In this way, these aspects will be at your service when you need them, without causing any unnecessary damage.

You have probably got the message: when you are too identified with your Controller, you are constantly on the lookout for anything that could create tension, and so all the fun, power and passion drain from your existence. If Leo remains identified with his Controller, he will never find peace. Marianne is incapable of relaxing and she is never really herself. Both of them could use an opposite energy. A number of subpersonalities could contribute in this situation, like the Libertine, the Carefree Self and the Faithful Self. These are all selves who – unlike the Controller – are very good at surrendering to life or allowing themselves to be protected. Let's look at one of them: the Carefree Self.

The Carefree Self is not at all concerned with what could possibly go wrong. He thinks this is unimportant. On the contrary, he is very good at letting go and relaxing.

*Nathan always shows up late for everything. He doesn't do this on purpose. His Carefree Self simply loses track of time. If need be, he'll give it everything he's got. At the last company talent show, he let himself completely sing his heart out in front of everybody. Awesome! OK, so he sings completely out of tune, but so what? His Carefree Self doesn't care what other people think. Is there some fun going on somewhere? Nathan will dive in head first and give it all he's got. He follows his impulses.*

*Rose has no problem leaving her back door unlocked. Her Carefree Self doesn't like closing everything off. Once, a burglar snuck in and took her TV. Rose locked her door for two weeks after that, but then she just forgot to lock it again. Too much hassle. When Rose visits her friend's place, she always ends up forgetting her coat or her diary or phone or something. Her*

*friends know this by now. 'Do you have everything with you? Weren't you wearing a coat?' A while ago, her computer crashed. Apparently she hadn't made a backup of her files in months. It had just slipped her mind.*

Your Carefree Self protects you from a stressful life and helps to liven things up. Unlike the Controller, he is not in the least bit cautious and restrained. Trying to keep everything under control gives him the creeps. If you are too identified with your Carefree Self, you do run the risk that things will go wrong. In that case, it can help to stay more in touch with your Controller so you do not end up making mistakes that will cost you dearly.

### **THE PERFECTIONIST AND THE PLEASURE SEEKER**

Your Perfectionist wants you to do everything in your life perfectly. He has this ideal image in his head of how things should be and you need to live up to this at all times. He wants you to look perfect, to have an amazing relationship, to do your job without making any mistakes, to give your children a fantastic upbringing and for your house to be clean as a whistle.

*Ben is a manager and he notices everything. He has the eyes of an eagle. If there is a broken light somewhere in the office, Ben will see it right away. Or, in other words, his Perfectionist sees it and wants Ben to solve the problem straight away. It bothers the Perfectionist when a painting is hanging slightly crooked. That doesn't look harmonious. The Perfectionist sees all of Ben's 'mistakes' and everything that everybody else does wrong. Like that typo his colleague made in a business proposal, even though it had already been printed out twice, that mistake had to go. Only then was it good enough to be sent out! If it were possible, Ben would rather do everything himself. But of course that isn't possible. He understands that. Ben can't help himself. His Perfectionist is stronger than him. Sometimes this really weighs heavily on the people around him and he can make some of his colleagues really nervous. Which imperfection is he going to point out this time? Others respond rebelliously or lose their own eye for detail. Ben will pick out all the mistakes, so why should they bother?*

*Monica has been working on a policy statement for weeks now. Her boss has already asked her a few times when it's going to be ready, but Monica is still not satisfied. The wording could still use some fine-tuning and the main line of thought still feels somewhat unsubstantiated. She scratches some parts out and rewrites others. She carefully considers every aspect. She continues to edit it because her Perfectionist thinks the text is still not good enough. Her boss is growing more and more impatient and is starting to get annoyed. He asked her for a brief statement, not an entire book! But as long as Monica is identified with her Perfectionist, she will not be able to provide him with something that is 'more or less finished'.*

Your Perfectionist cannot tolerate the thought that others might see you as imperfect. He is afraid you might get criticized, that you will not be taken seriously or that you will be seen as incomplete. He wants to prevent you from being exposed. As long as you do your utmost, at least you will not be criticized. Sadly, your Perfectionist does not understand that it is not humanly possible to live up to his ideal. After all, there will always be room for improvement. Too much perfectionism comes at the expense of being able to enjoy what is already there. Furthermore, it takes up huge amounts of time and undermines your self-confidence. The second somebody has something to say about you, your Perfectionist is already completely stressed out. 'You see? I told you you could have done a better job!'

Does the Perfectionist remind you of the Inner Critic? Indeed, they are very similar and they love to work together. Still, they are not the same. Your Inner Critic comments on everything you do and is never ever satisfied. For instance, he can also comment on the fact that you should not be so perfectionistic. Your Perfectionist simply wants everything to be perfectly in place. Unlike your Inner Critic, he is capable of being satisfied. When everything adds up, the Perfectionist is at ease.

Who could you turn to for some counterbalance? You could turn to your Slob or your Pleasure Seeker, for example, or to Good-is-good-enough. Let's take a look at the Pleasure Seeker. He will see to it that your lust for



life gets all the space it needs. People with a strongly developed Pleasure Seeker hardly ever get stressed out.

*More often than not, the minute she sees sunshine you can find Amy sitting in front of her favorite restaurant having lunch with a glass of white wine. That follow-up call to one of her clients can wait until tomorrow. You only live once and besides, it might start raining tomorrow. Seize the day! Amy's Pleasure Seeker loves the good life. Amy would like to lose some weight, but her Pleasure Seeker doesn't think much of that idea. He is scanning the menu for desserts and this place makes the best tiramisu. He starts to drool over the menu. He seduces Amy by saying 'Tomorrow we'll take it easy on the snacks.' Before Amy has the opportunity to object, her Pleasure Seeker has placed the order.*

*Peter is a laid-back kind of man. He doesn't really care much about social rules or conventions. Rules are there to be broken. Whenever he has to go abroad for his job, he likes to add a few days of holiday to the trip. After all, you shouldn't take life too seriously! Peter's Pleasure Seeker can enjoy a fresh flower popping out of its bud, the passing wink of an eye, or a romantic movie. He is relaxed and fulfilled. He doesn't walk faster than is ever necessary. Peter is a bit disorganized and forgetful. His Pleasure Seeker doesn't lose any sleep over any of that. At the end of the day, life is not about accomplishments.*

And so your Pleasure Seeker can serve as the perfect counterweight to the Perfectionist. However, if you completely identify with the Pleasure Seeker, you will probably not get much done. You will be someone who lacks perseverance and discipline.

### **BEING SPECIAL AND BEING ORDINARY**

*During the memorial concert for Michael Jackson in July of 2009, Brooke Shields shared a few words: 'I used to tease him and I would say: 'You know, I started when I was eleven months old, you slacker. You were what, five?' We both understood what it was like to be in the spotlight at a very young age.'*

She could not have put it any better. Both of these worldwide celebrities became famous when they were very young and were told from early on that they were very special. Throughout their entire life, they were worshiped and admired. Their amazing talents gained them respect all around the world. Being Special became their identity, their second nature. Of course, in order to remain Special, they had to continue to meet the expectations that the outside world had of them. They had to continue to behave in a Special way.

Most people do not become as famous as Brooke or Michael. But all of us can recognize the desire to distinguish ourselves from others. This is a genuine human need. We are encouraged to be unique. Have you ever heard an HR officer ask an applicant 'So, please tell me what is average about you? What makes you ordinary?' Of course not. They always ask 'What makes you Special?' Being Special protects you from the fear of being nobody and amounting to nothing. It gives you a reason for being. Being Special can also have its drawbacks once you begin to identify with it too much. There is an old Chinese proverb that says 'He who sticks his head above the crowd is the first to have it chopped off.' It is a terrifying thought to think you can lose your gifts. It is as if you are being banished from the pantheon of the gods and will end up among the mere mortals.

*Ethan is a brilliant economist and he has rapidly risen amongst the ranks of an international consultancy. He is only thirty and is already travelling all over the globe. He is giving speeches to packed auditoriums and is receiving standing ovations. Ethan is really enjoying all the attention that comes with his glamour-filled life. Every once in a while he visits his parents in the village where he grew up. What a different world!*

*One morning, Ethan notices that he can't hold his coffee cup still. He tells himself it's because of fatigue. He's been travelling a lot these past few weeks. But in the following weeks, the trembling doesn't go away. He is embarrassed and has stopped drinking coffee during meetings. His doctor cannot find any physical cause for his symptoms and sends him to a psy-*

*chologist. There, he learns about the drawbacks of his success. He realizes how often he has been lying awake in bed, worrying about his next performance. His creativity is drying up. He is running out of inspiration and this is making him extremely nervous. After all, his audience expects him to blow them away.*

No wonder Ethan has got the jitters. He has become so attached to his success that his fear of losing it all is constantly growing. What will happen when his audience has had enough of him? Who will he be? Ethan has forgotten that, even without all his achievements, he is still valuable. There is more to life than big stages and applause. He has disowned his Being Ordinary. And this is exactly what can help him restore the balance in his life. The minute he figures this out, the shaking stops. He still gives lectures, but he has now put his success into perspective.

*When Henry was lying on his deathbed, his wife asked him 'What kind of funeral would you like?' Henry answered 'Just do what everyone else does. That'll be just fine.' Henry was given an ordinary funeral – no bells, no whistles, pretty much the same way all the other villagers were buried.*

Being Ordinary allows you to be satisfied with everyday things – having a chat with the neighbour, playing a game of cards or watching a pair of sparrows chattering in the backyard. Nothing special or headline worthy. Being Ordinary has nothing to lose. You do not need to accomplish anything in order to justify your existence. You are fine just the way you are.

*Amber works part-time at a bank as an administrative assistant. Her boss offered her a promotion but she turned him down. She does not feel the need to climb any higher up the ladder. That does not suit her. She is satisfied with her life and with herself. She does not feel the need to be the best at anything. At noon she takes care of her children and in the evening she and her husband watch some TV after dinner. Nothing special. Totally relaxed.*

Being Ordinary will not necessarily bring you eternal bliss. If you completely identify with Being Ordinary you run the risk of being too modest and keeping your talents to yourself. This can lead to your shying away from challenges or giving up too easily. In this case, it can help if you get in touch with Being Special so you can bring more excitement into your life.

### **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWER AND THE NON-KNOWING LISTENER**

More and more people are becoming interested in communication and personal growth; bookshops are filled with literature on relationships, psychology, emotional intelligence and so on. Many people have attended workshops or consulted a coach. This knowledge can be very useful to help you gain insight into yourself and your relationships. This knowledge also serves as food for your Psychological Knower. This subpersonality has made it his hobby to analyze people and relationships. He is genuinely interested in people and tries to understand them. Why do they do what they do?

He talks about psychological matters with a vast amount of knowledge and certainty. Imagine you wake up nervous one morning. Your Psychological Knower is standing next to your bed, doing his best to explain to you why you are so nervous. He wants to give you guidance. You might still be nervous after his explanation but at least now you know why!

The Psychological Knower also focuses his attention on how other people function. He loves to explain to other people precisely how their psyche works and why they have the problems they have. However, this is not appreciated by everyone.

*Paul just had a meeting with his management coach. He comes home in a good mood and, later on at the dinner table, he tells his wife about all the realizations he has had. His Psychological Knower joins the conversation and has some advice to share with his wife: 'Now I totally understand why you and your brother are always arguing. You simply can't stand each other!' The Psychological Knower was trying to make it clear to her that he un-*

*derstands what goes on between her and her brother. To Paul's amazement, his wife is annoyed with him. 'Spare me your psychological mumbo-jumbo!' she says. Paul does not understand her reaction. All he wants is to help her!*

Paul's wife did not react to what the Psychological Knower had to say, but to how he said it.

The Psychological Knower tends to talk to you – and about you – from a distance, as if you are the subject of a method or theory. He knows exactly what makes you tick! He speaks without making any real contact and it often seems as if he is talking down to you. And you can feel it as well. This is what annoys people or what makes them withdraw, because they do not feel helped at all.

Many coaches, trainers and caregivers have a Psychological Knower. After all, it is their job to observe people closely and to analyse their problems and a Psychological Knower can be extremely helpful with this. But if they identify with him too much, then something essential is missing from his guidance: human contact. Every coach needs an opposite of the Psychological Knower, like the Non-Knowing Listener.

The Non-Knowing Listener is focused on the relationship with others and feels no need to explain or to solve anything. He trusts his intuition and whatever might come from the interaction. He is convinced that people know what is best for them.

*When you talk with Isabel, you instantly feel at ease. She listens very attentively. You can tell her anything and she never thinks anything is crazy. Every now and then she asks a question, but she never gives you an opinion or any advice. You are given all the space you need to discover for yourself what something means to you. And if she cannot come up with an answer, she has no problem saying 'I don't know either.' She just listens to you. She is with you. It is a very wholesome experience.*

Still, you will not engage fully with just your Non-Knowing Listener. He does not have much to offer in terms of feedback. Although this can be useful, the Non-Knowing Listener can be a bit too compliant. If you only act from this self, it might be that you are not using enough of your own knowledge and wisdom, because sometimes it is helpful to give advice and to say how you would tackle something. It is in these moments that the Psychological Knower comes in handy.

### **THE FIGHTER AND THE AID SEEKER**

The last pair of subpersonalities in this chapter are another common duo: the Fighter and the Aid Seeker. They embody the human search for balance between independence and interdependence. Let's start with the Fighter.

Everyone feels the need to be able to rely on their own strength. Your Fighter is of immeasurable value when it comes to this. He will compete and fight for your interests, even when this comes at the expense of others. You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. Your Fighter protects you from injustice and prevents others from abusing your weaknesses. There are moments in life when it is necessary to fight. But if your Fighter is always standing on the front line, your life can become a constant battlefield.

*Dave doesn't need anybody. The only person you can really count on is yourself. He never asks for help, because he sees this as a sign of weakness. He doesn't want people thinking he is a coward! He takes care of his own problems. Dave's Fighter wants Dave to be the best and he is quick to think that other people are out to mess with Dave's interests. There are only two options: win or lose. And losing is not in his dictionary. Whenever Dave brings his Fighter to a meeting, arguments soon follow. The Fighter always says what he thinks and he doesn't mind hitting below the belt. Some colleagues shy away from him. The Fighter loves this sense of power. When Dave likes someone, he will do anything for that person. He always stands up for the weak.*

Unfortunately for Dave, the people at his work are not really pleased with his Fighter's behavior. He is ruining the team spirit and a number of colleagues do not want to work with Dave any longer. If Dave wants to keep his job with his current employer, he will need a different self – one like the Aid Seeker.

What does this subpersonality have to offer? Your Aid Seeker trusts other people's qualities and has the courage to ask for help. He has a good idea of what you can and cannot do. He also has a good idea of who can help you. Your Aid Seeker understands that it is nice for someone else to be able to help you.

*Whenever Aziz doesn't know something or how to do something, he always goes and asks for help. He doesn't feel the need to prove himself. He likes working with people and he doesn't worry about what others might think of how he contributed to the end result. We're all in this together. It's fun to work with him.*

Still, it is possible to pay too much attention to your Aid Seeker. You could become too dependent on the help of others and this can lead to disappointment. You could become a victim of circumstance: 'It's not my fault. I can't do anything about it.' You might never learn to stick your head above the crowd and take responsibility. A bit more fighting spirit can go a long way.

### **THERE ARE A LOT MORE SUBPERSONALITIES**

To conclude this chapter, here is a list of various subpersonalities and their opposites.

- the Responsible Self and the Freeloader
- the Femme Fatale and the Lady
- the Spiritual Self and the Worldly Self
- the Idealist and the Materialist
- the Introvert and the Extravert
- the Socialist and the Capitalist

- the Always-Open-and-Honest and the Diplomat
- the Dreamer and the Doer
- the Precise Self and the Slob
- the Winner and the Loser
- the Perpetrator and the Victim
- the Independent Self and the Dependent Self
- the Clown and the Serious Self
- the Ambitious Self and the Idle Self
- the Task-Oriented Self and the People-Oriented Self
- the Honest Self and the Schemer
- the Generous Self and the Cheapskate
- the Strict Self and the Moderate Self
- the Rebel and the Well-Adjusted Self

The list goes on and on. Imagine you were to meet each and every one of them. How would you recognize them?

## 2.8 Archetypal subpersonalities and the Patriarch

*Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if at the same time she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good looking, good tempered, well groomed and unaggressive.*

Leslie M. McIntyre

There is one category of subpersonalities that we have not discussed yet: the ancient voices that still resonate in each and every one of us, such as the Inner Patriarch. For as long as man can remember, the Patriarch has told us how men and women are supposed to behave. Or the Hero, who we know from the cinema and tales of courage and perseverance, and who overcomes great danger. These types of voices are on a totally different plane than all the other subpersonalities. They are archetypal characters. Their presence cannot be explained by simply examining your own



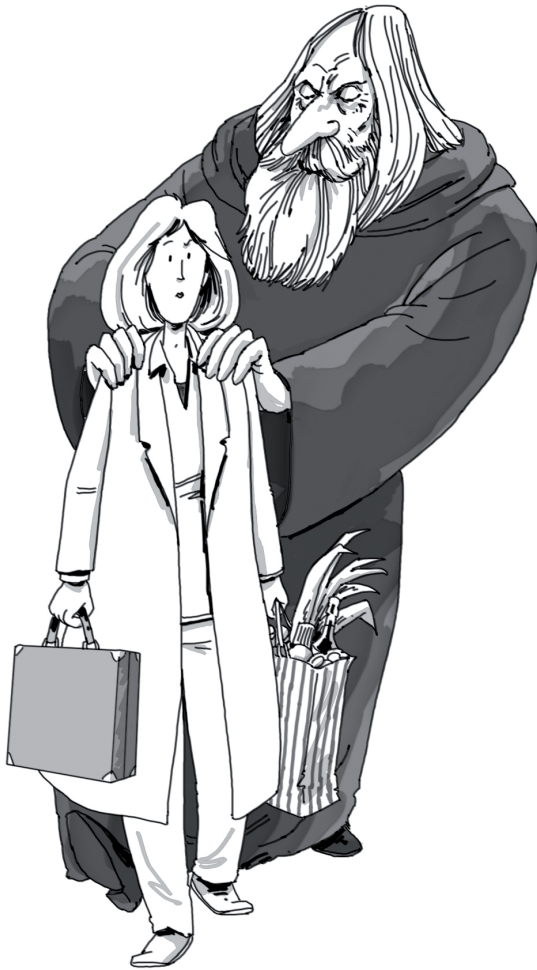
personal history. They can be traced back to the collective history of the entire human race. Archetypes – a term coined by Carl Jung – represent our collective images of fatherhood, motherhood, struggle, death, power, love, surrender, the source of life and so on. These images are universal and eternal. They have been described in fairy tales, myths and legends. They are the stories that we still read and share even though they are thousands of years old. They lie at the root of all the stereotypical characteristics of mankind.

There are many archetypes, such as the Warrior, the Joker, the Witch, the Good Fairy, the Giant, the Knight and the Lady. Take a look at the gods and goddesses, like Aphrodite who represents your sensuality. They also appear in your dreams. You might dream of a snake or of accomplishing something of great magnitude. All archetypes represent a primordial force. You might have disowned them or they just might be primary within you. You can use these forces. When you unleash the power of your Inner Warrior, you become unstoppable. At times, this can be really useful. Your Inner Amazon gets you in touch with independence and freedom. A lot can be said about archetypes, but we will limit ourselves to describing the most influential one among this illustrious crowd: the Patriarch.

### **THE PATRIARCH**

All of our images of the primeval father can be found in the Patriarch. He is like an old-fashioned father who tells you how you must behave as a woman or as a man. In his eyes, men and women simply have different roles. This is the logical order of things. Furthermore, he will not tolerate any objections. His will is law. He is the spokesperson of the patriarchal system. He represents the ancient traditions, values and norms as they have been passed on from generation to generation.

The Patriarch lives in both men and women and he has a different message for the different sexes. According to him, the natural roles for a woman are those of the daughter, the wife, the mother, the housewife, the hostess and the diva in the matrimonial bed. The woman is vulnerable, weak and emotional.



The man is the guardian of the law, the protector of women and children and the one who has final responsibility. The man is strong, brave and in control of his emotions. This is how the Patriarch thinks of men and women. And he expects you to behave according to this image because if everyone could take their role within the whole seriously, then nothing would go wrong.

The Patriarch is hard to recognize within yourself. As a modern woman or man, you are often not aware of his messages, judgments and prejudices. You will not easily recognize yourself in his convictions. In fact, many women and men completely disagree with his views. Our emancipated, feminist and liberal subpersonalities have taken on the Patriarch – and quite successfully, one might add.

Throughout the last hundred years, a lot has changed regarding to the roles of men and women. Women received the right to vote and now combine work with motherhood. Nowadays, men with pushchairs are looked at with endearment and the phenomenon of the ‘house husband’ is becoming very common. We feel free to not attend church, a man can become a nurse and a woman can become a surgeon. The Patriarch has lost a great deal of his power. But beware: appearances can be deceptive. Despite all of these changes, he is still active in all of us. We are simply not aware of it.

*Rosemary and her husband Michael just went shopping. Rosemary is carrying a heavy bag of groceries to the front door. Michael is empty-handed. ‘You’re supposed to carry this bag! You’re the man!’ the Patriarch hisses. Michael feels like an idiot.*

*Sophia is an ambitious lawyer and she loves working at her firm. She dreams of becoming a partner there. Six weeks after the birth of her first child, she goes back to work full time. The baby is doing fine and Sophia hired a really sweet nanny to take care of the baby while she’s at work. However, Sophia constantly feels guilty. ‘You’re neglecting your child,’ her Patriarch says. Her husband, Ethan, went back to work two days after her baby was born. He also works full time. He has no feelings of guilt whatsoever. After all, his Inner Patriarch does not expect him to take care of the baby. Six months later, Sophia hands in her notice.*

*Sylvia Borren, who was the director of the Dutch NGO Oxfam Novib until 1 February 2008, grew up with the idea that girls were a lesser species. When she was a student, she told her father she was in love with another woman. He disowned her: 'I was undermining his patriarchal power.' He ordered her to come and live at home and to leave both the university and her girlfriend. He even wanted to have her put under psychiatric treatment. 'My father was a master at sending out mixed messages. He didn't allow me to wear make-up and at the same time he thought my sister and I weren't feminine enough.'*

Many men and women struggle with the contradictory messages they get from their Patriarch on the one hand and the demands of modern life on the other. A man's Patriarch wants him to be strong. His wife, on the other hand, wants him to share his feelings with her. Quite a dilemma! There is another element that adds to this tension. It has become a taboo to think of men and women in an 'old-fashioned way'. And if you happen to respond in a patriarchal way, this can cause a great deal of shame – as in Adam's case.

*Adam, a highly educated man, is unaware that he has a Patriarch operating within him. His Patriarch couldn't be any less interested in what his female colleagues have to say. But what can you do? These days, it is simply not done to think about women in that way, let alone talk about it. Adam has repressed his Patriarch. His Patriarch is deprived of the opportunity to openly express his contempt. However, his Patriarch is quite resourceful and has a few subtle tricks of his own up his sleeve. During one of the meetings with his colleagues Betty and Lewis, and while Betty is sharing her ideas, Adam inattentively leafs through his papers. He briefly nods and quickly turns to Lewis. 'Thanks... So! Lewis. Tell me. What are your thoughts on all of this?'*

*Betty doesn't feel as though she is being taken seriously, but she can't put her finger on where this feeling is coming from. Adam asked her for her opinion, didn't he? So what is she complaining about? Afterwards, before he leaves, she pulls Adam aside and tells him 'It's like you don't see me as an*

*equal. It's as if I'm sitting there like a piece of furniture.' Adam feels exposed and ashamed. He offers his apologies and says he will pay more attention in the future.*

What an outrage! Adam's Patriarch has misogynistic thoughts. No wonder he is called the Patriarch. And, because Adam represses his Patriarch, it is difficult for him to examine the unconscious patriarchal patterns within himself. If he were able to see that it is only his Patriarch who thinks this way, and that he also has other subpersonalities who do see women as equals, it would be a lot easier for him to deal with this situation. Similarly, in society, if we were able to talk more openly about these feelings without being immediately judged, the emancipation of men and women would probably go a lot smoothly.

Incidentally, there are still many people who do appreciate the ideas of the Patriarch. They often find themselves in difficult positions.

*I know this way of thinking doesn't really tie in with current popular opinion. It just feels more and more like we are no longer allowed to propagate the idea that men should take care of the income and that women should take care of the family. Erica (30), member of the Christian Political Party.*

*I'm almost afraid to tell people that I don't have a job and that I want to be there for my children at all times. When I'm at parties, I always end up in discussions where I have to defend myself.*

The Patriarch in these women feels that he is no longer welcome. And this hurts.

### **THE WOMAN GETS THE SHORT END OF THE STICK**

The Patriarch has double standards when it comes to men and women. Most often, women get the short end of the stick. Even if they do live up to the ideal image of how a woman is supposed to be, they usually finish up second: after all, women are weak and emotional and the Patriarch simply does not like that. He has more appreciation for men. If you listen closely,

you can find the (sometimes hidden) contempt for women and appreciation for men in the daily language of both men and women alike. Listen to what the Patriarch had to say in an interview with Claudia de Breij – a well-known Dutch cabaret artist.

*'I think that women easily start whining for no reason. Men just talk about what they saw on the Discovery channel. With women, it's always about feelings, about the relationship with their children and their mother. Emotional men talk about music and literature.'*

*'The difference lies in autonomy. Men who have children stay themselves while women tend to lose themselves completely.'*

*'While the women were back at home looking after the children, the guys said 'Hey, I'm going to go look over there. And they discovered America.'*

*Her thoughts on the glass ceiling: 'Men buy a couple of six-packs of beer and bring along six friends to destroy it. Women bring a rag to buff it up.'*

These statements are filled with negative judgments towards female characteristics. In the same interview, she went on to say 'Women don't need men to suppress them. They're perfectly capable of doing that themselves.' She pretty much hit the nail on the head.

What happens when a woman does not live up to the classical image and becomes strong and independent? On the one hand, the Patriarch can appreciate it because, at the end of the day, he thinks that masculine characteristics are simply better than feminine ones. But this does not come without its complications, because in the eyes of the Patriarch, this woman has now become too masculine and he does not like that either. He has no problem saying: 'She isn't a real woman. You'll see. She'll never find a man.' Nothing she does will ever be any good. And so the Patriarch keeps the woman trapped in the traditional gender role of the caring, nurturing mother. And as long as she is unaware of the fact that her Patriarch is the cause of all of this, she will never be able to free herself.

### **THE MAN DOESN'T HAVE IT ANY EASIER**

For the Patriarch, a man has to live up to the patriarchal male image as well. A man does have one advantage in that he can count on a bit more appreciation from the Patriarch. After all, he is the natural-born leader. We find this expressed in society in many different ways. For one thing, men still earn more than women as well as holding almost all the executive positions.

But a man does not have much leeway either. Woe to him if he deviates from the classical male image. The Patriarch does not tolerate any weakness or vulnerability. A man does not cry, and he raises his voice if necessary. If he does not, then he is a weakling. And what if a man is homosexual? His Patriarch is disgusted and would love nothing more than to put a quick end to it. The man in question must not only deal with a society that disapproves of his homosexuality, but he must also deal with an attack from his own Patriarch within. This can cause great disruption in someone's life and can lead to much self-hatred. It is no wonder that there is so much violence towards homosexuals around the world. The Patriarch forces men to suppress these feelings within themselves and to stamp them out in others, with all the horrible consequences this brings. Real men carry a lot of responsibility. If a man wants to take it easy for a while, then feelings of guilt are lying in wait. And so the man has his hands tied, being both the breadwinner and the bogeyman. He is also burdened by the Patriarch and can only separate from him when he realizes that the images he carries inside are coming from his own Patriarch.

### **WHAT DOES YOUR PATRIARCH PROTECT YOU FROM?**

It is important to realise that your Patriarch's intervention comes from a genuine concern for your well-being and the need to protect you. He provides discipline, order and rules. He sees it as his responsibility to protect heterosexual relationships, the institution of marriage and family values. By doing so, he ensures our survival. He feels responsible for children and for the less fortunate. He organizes society so that it corresponds to what he sees as the natural order of things. Men, women and children: when

everyone knows their place, then society will stay organized. Otherwise, he is afraid that chaos will erupt. He only cares about one thing: the continuity of mankind. He only knows one reality. This is what Creation was about and this is how it should be.

### **ENJOY YOUR PATRIARCH**

Once you become aware of your Patriarch, you can begin to use his power in a positive way. In the end, he actually does represent values that are important: caring for children, protecting the elderly, justice, discipline. After you have separated from his voice, you can still uphold these values and give them a place in your life. He knows better than anyone what dangers linger in society and he can provide you with very valuable advice on how to deal with them. He can help you to set boundaries. And when you stand up for your interests using the certainty and the willpower of the Patriarch, you can truly move mountains.

### **SEPARATING FROM YOUR PATRIARCH**

Most people already have other voices readily available who can help them to counterbalance the Patriarch. Nevertheless, he will always be able to influence you, as his power is so deeply embedded in our society as a whole. Naturally, the extent of his influence varies from person to person.

In order for you to be able to separate from him, it is especially important that you become aware of his presence. This will give you more freedom to make your own choices, even when they do not meet with his approval. This way, you will feel less burdened by his oppressive character. Does your Patriarch have you in a stranglehold? Then it can help to ask yourself what someone of the other sex would do in your position.

*Jane receives a phone call that she has got the job as CEO of an insurance company. She has years of experience and she is perfect for the job. Still, she has to stop and ask herself 'Can I really do this? Am I good enough?' These questions start to make her nervous. When one of her girlfriends asks her*



*'How would you react if you were a man?'*, her worried face brightens up. *'Then I would have to say: It's about time! Of course I'm the person for this job. Who else?'* She immediately regains her power and is able to experience how delighted she is with her new challenge.

*One of Max's best friends suddenly died. Max is totally devastated. At the funeral, he starts to feel tears welling up inside. He does his best to hold them back. His throat starts to hurt and he feels a stinging headache setting on. His wife is sitting next to him. She has no problem letting out the tears. When Max sees this, he thinks to himself 'So what if they see me?' and expresses his sorrow freely.*

If you are interested in learning more about archetypes, there are some interesting titles in the reading list at the back of the book.

## 3 PATTERNS IN RELATIONSHIPS

*We are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love.*

Sigmund Freud

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### 3.1 Bonding patterns

No other type of relationship provides such rich conversational material, or causes tempers to become so heated as a love relationship. We all know the pain, sorrow and joy these relationships can bring. Emotions can also run high in cooperative relationships: your boss makes demands on you until you feel burnt out, an employee constantly tries your patience, or a colleague deprives you of your job satisfaction. Research shows that 60 to 80 per cent of all difficulties in organizations stem from strained relationships between employees, and not from deficits in an individual employee's skill or motivation. This is reason enough for us to take a look at what happens when we come into contact with other people.

Although each one of your relationships is unique, you will find that specific patterns emerge in every one of them. You could think of these patterns as doorways, because they grant you access to a lot of information about yourself. And behind these patterns lie the answers to such questions as: How did a conversation that started out so nicely turn into a heated argument? Why do I keep ending up in the same dynamic in all

my relationships? Why am I always given the same role when I am in the company of others?

Gaining insight into these patterns gives you the opportunity to make some actual changes. Do you really want to learn more about yourself? Then examine what happens when you come into contact with others. The moments in which you explode, in which you start throwing accusations, in which you feel dependent, guilty or completely indifferent will guide you through this process. You do not have to stop behaving in any of these ways. On the contrary, we invite you to examine exactly what happens at these times.

As you know by now, you are made up of many different selves. Whenever you meet someone, there are not two people meeting each other but two groups of subpersonalities. Try and imagine what that would look like – one collection of selves running into another collection of selves.

#### **DINING WITH A SMALL VILLAGE**

A family is having dinner together at the Blue Bird restaurant: the grandparents, their daughter Olivia with her husband Toby and granddaughter Sienna (16). They are celebrating grandpa's seventy-fifth birthday.

*'Would you like some more salad?' grandma asks her granddaughter Sienna. 'Yes, thanks, grandma.' Even though Sienna doesn't really like salad, she scoops some more onto her plate. Her grandparents are treating everyone to dinner and she does not want to seem ungrateful. Then grandma presents her husband with the dish. 'You should have some too!' she urges him. Grandpa responds, rather annoyed, 'It's my seventy-fifth birthday! Why don't you let me make my own decisions?' He turns towards his daughter Olivia. 'How about that? Your mother still thinks she has to tell me what's good for me.' Olivia starts to feel uncomfortable. All she wants is to have a cozy evening together with the family. Toby remains silent. He has learned by now that it's best to stay out of it. Olivia gently lays her hand on her mother's arm: 'Oh, mum, why don't you just leave him alone. After all, it*

*is his birthday!’ Grandma brusquely puts the dish back down on the table. Grandpa pours himself another glass of wine.*

Do you recognize any of this? Undoubtedly! You have probably encountered similar situations in your own daily life: at work, at a family outing or with your partner. There are not five people having dinner together but five collections of subpersonalities. It is the selves of each family member who are not only interacting with the events as they unfold but who are primarily responding to each other. Above, we illustrated what can happen between the family members in less than a minute. Imagine if we made a film of what happened within each of the dinner guests individually. It would look something like this:

*The Responsible Mother in grandma always used to make sure that everyone in the family had a healthy diet. It is this Responsible Mother who turns to her granddaughter with the words ‘Would you like some more salad?’ Sienna’s Independent Self immediately yells ‘I don’t want any salad.’ Her Pleaser silences this voice and sees to it that Sienna has some more salad. The Pleaser wants to put grandma at ease. Meanwhile, grandpa feels like he is being punished by grandma’s Responsible Mother. What she says doesn’t sound like a question but more like a chore, and his Rebel doesn’t appreciate this at all. His Rebel thinks ‘Am I going to let my wife tell me what I should eat on my own birthday? I’ll do what I please, thank you very much. It’s my party!’ The Rebel doesn’t like it when others try to force him into doing something and so he snaps back. Olivia’s Inner Child feels uncomfortable when her parents behave this way, so her Diplomat quickly steps in to ease the tension. Toby withdraws to his Silent Self. On the ride over to the the Blue Bird, Toby’s Obedient Self solemnly promised to his wife that he would do his best to make sure the evening went well. Grandpa’s Pleasure Seeker pours himself another glass of wine.*

Have you lost the thread of what is going on here? Of course you do not have to analyze who is speaking on behalf of whom and when. That would be impossible. However, what is useful here is to realize that you

are never alone in a conversation. There are a number of subpersonalities within you who are in contact with the various subpersonalities in the other person. So, in the situation above, there is not a family of five sitting at a table having dinner together, but an entire village of subpersonalities.

#### **WHO IS RESPONDING TO WHOM?**

The family dinner is an example that everybody recognizes. What was supposed to be a lovely evening together turns into constant bickering. And what sets things off is usually quite trivial, as in the situation above. After all, what is all the fuss about? About salad?! Of course not. And yet we usually respond to what is being said and we do not pay any attention to who within us is actually speaking. It is precisely by paying attention to which subpersonalities are responding to each other that it becomes easier to understand why such an encounter can end up going so wrong.

Let us return to the example of Sienna and her grandmother. Sienna's Pleaser notices that her grandmother wants Sienna to have some more salad. Her Independent Self does not want any. Here, Sienna listens to her Pleaser. Only when Sienna feels free to say 'no' to her grandmother can we say she has freedom of choice. If she does not, then she will end up in a *bonding pattern*. In her interaction with her grandmother, she is trapped within her Pleaser. When this subpersonality takes over her personality, she can only respond to her grandmother from within this subpersonality. The Aware Ego, who is also in touch with other subpersonalities such as the Independent Self, is not involved in the interaction.

#### **WHAT IS A BONDING PATTERN?**

When you are in a bonding pattern, one of your subpersonalities takes over the steering wheel of your personality bus, both for you and for the other person. You can only respond to the other person using the behaviours of this subpersonality.

And these are limited. The more you are trapped in one of your selves, the stronger the bonding pattern becomes. Many of your relationships,

especially those with family and friends, consist of bonding patterns. They offer structure and security: you know what is expected of you, what you can and cannot do. You respond to each other automatically. Bonding patterns are therefore quite normal. We all spend a great deal of time in these patterns every day. We can distinguish between positive bonding patterns and negative bonding patterns.

### **POSITIVE BONDING PATTERNS**

*Brandon, Marleen's boss, is the supervisor of the payment transactions department of a large bank. He has a strong and charming personality. The only thing he is not good at is organizing. He has no problem admitting it either. Marleen, his personal assistant, makes all his arrangements. She takes care of his schedule, reminds him of his appointments and makes coffee and tea for all his guests. She even sees to it that he remembers birthdays and she takes care of presents for his family members and other important contacts. Brandon is rather forgetful when it comes to these things. He totally relies on her to take care of them for him. 'Can I please take you home with me?' Brandon jokes quite often, 'Then you can make me my coffee in the morning and tell me what I have to do that day. I would be completely helpless without you!' Marleen simply loves this. She enjoys the fact that he is so dependent on her. In turn, Brandon enjoys the fact that he does not have to be the strong executive whenever he is with Marleen.*

Brandon and Marleen are in a positive *bonding pattern* with each other. They have a good thing going on and they make good use of each other's qualities. However, their way of dealing with each other follows a strict set of rules. They have no other way of dealing with each other. How can you map a bonding pattern? Ask yourself: which one of my subpersonalities takes over the wheel or who do I become when I interact with the other person? When we examine Brandon and Marleen, it becomes apparent that Marleen's Caring Mother is triggered and that Brandon turns more and more into a Needy Little Boy. In this case, both Marleen and Brandon find the experience to be enjoyable. The Caring Mother in Marleen likes the fact that there is someone to take care of. The Needy Little

Boy in Brandon also feels comfortable. He has someone who takes care of all the difficult chores for him. The Caring Mother and the Needy Little Boy need each other. These subpersonalities summon each other and reinforce each other. Why do we call this a positive bonding pattern? Not because the pattern is positive but because both of them experience it in a positive way. Wonderful! Yes, you would think so. The fact that they are in a positive bonding pattern is not the problem here. The problem is that they are not aware of it.

Another example.

*Every Friday, Marco heads over to the house of his partner Stefan. He loves to cook and every weekend he goes all out. When Marco comes in, the table has been beautifully set and there is a glass of Merlot waiting for him. 'Thank God it's Friday!' Stefan cheerfully sings from the kitchen. And so it goes, weekend after weekend.*

#### **THINGS WILL GO WRONG! OR MAYBE NOT?**

What was going through your mind when you read Marco's example, the one who has a glass of wine waiting for him every Friday evening? And what about Marleen, the personal assistant? If these were the first few scenes of a film, you would know straight away that something is going to go wrong here – even if there is nothing directly indicating it. You are probably even hoping for something to happen. Suppose you were allowed to write the rest of the story yourself. You would not need much imagination to have the people from our examples ending up in conflict. For instance, what if Brandon were to call Marleen at home in the middle of the night for something completely insignificant: 'Where are my car keys?' 'How do I insert an image into a Word document?' Or what if Marleen started putting flower decorations all over the office and set up an appointment with a client that Brandon was actually trying to get rid of? And then there is Marco who comes home one day with a terrible headache. The last thing on his mind is a glass of wine, and definitely not another 'Thank God it's Friday!' routine.

You could probably come up with a lot more situations that could disrupt these relationships. It is almost fun to do. And do you know why? That's right: otherwise things get extremely boring. And that is precisely what happens when a positive bonding pattern goes on for too long: it becomes a drag. Aside from it being amusing to think up worst-case scenarios, it is not all that hard to do. As the reader, you can feel where the tension is building and which reactions and emotions the main characters are bottling up in order to keep the pattern going. Chances are the interaction will turn into a negative bonding pattern.



### **NEGATIVE BONDING PATTERNS**

*Whenever Angela has to work together with Peter, she leaves an hour earlier than usual. She makes sure that the room they're going to give a presentation in is ready and she lays out brochures for all the clients. You simply can't rely on Peter. He always shows up at the last minute, after everyone*



*else, and he always comes unprepared. Whenever she teams up with Peter, Angela's Responsible Self takes over.*

Carlos always looks on the bright side of things. He is a genuine optimist. William, his colleague, is under the impression that Carlos isn't taking the economic crisis very seriously, and that he is overlooking how serious the consequences for the company and his team could be. 'Where there's a will there's a way!' is Carlos's motto. Every time they have a conversation, William tries to counter Carlos's attitude by re-emphasizing how slowly the economy is moving and how grim the future looks. He is increasingly assuming the role of the Pessimist.

*For some reason, conversations with Emma, one of Lizzy's employees, always end up in tears. Emma often bursts through the door carrying a bunch of papers, going on and on about how she's far too busy and how she can barely get things done. Lizzy is having a hard time understanding her. 'Could you tell me what your schedule looks like and maybe explain what's taking up so much of your time?' Lizzy asks her. Emma goes on an incoherent rant and starts to cry. She accuses her boss Lizzy of not understanding her. Lizzy is becoming more and more Rational and Businesslike in her relationship with Emma.*

These are everyday situations, much like the family dinner. There is nothing wrong with the way the people from our examples are dealing with each other. They are simply doing what they are used to and responding to each other automatically.

### **THE SELVES POLARIZE**

In the examples above, you can see how the subpersonalities are reacting to each other with ever-increasing intensity. They are constantly pushing each other further and further into the opposite position. The more pessimistic William becomes, the more optimistic Carlos becomes. The more rationally Lizzy responds, the more emotionally Emma behaves. Eventually, they will have no other behaviours left with which they can relate to

one another. This is how people keep each other in balance, as it were. It is not a conscious choice. It happens automatically. This happens in both positive and negative bonding patterns. The various selves polarize: the subpersonalities become each other's opposite. In this case, they become more and more annoyed with each other and they disapprove of one another more and more frequently.

*Conversations between Lizzy and Emma often end in tears. Emma blames her boss Lizzy for being distant and lacking empathy. In turn, Lizzy responds by saying that she does not understand why Emma is making such a fuss.*

Lizzy and Emma have ended up in a bonding pattern. Their subpersonalities are the only ones communicating with each other. The Rational, Businesslike subpersonality in Lizzy reacts to the Emotional Self in Emma. *Who* is speaking is important here. As long as Lizzy's Rational subpersonality is speaking, Emma's Emotional Self will react and vice versa. This is a negative bonding pattern, not because it is negative, but because the pattern is experienced negatively.

#### EXERCISE 4    RECOGNIZING BONDING PATTERNS

Think of someone you feel like you always behave with in a set pattern.

- The more I ..., the more the other ... .
- Which one of your subpersonalities emerges? Which one of the other person's subpersonalities emerges?

#### SUMMARY

- *When you are in a relationship with someone, the relationship does not exist between two people but between two groups of subpersonalities. After all, you are made up of a range of subpersonalities.*

- *When you are in a bonding pattern, a number of your subpersonalities engage in a relationship with one or more of the other person's subpersonalities. The Aware Ego has no part in this.*
- *The stronger one person's behaviour becomes a reaction to the other person's behaviour, the stronger the pattern. The subpersonalities polarize, summon one another and reinforce each other.*
- *A bonding pattern can be positive or negative. This does not mean that one pattern is good and that the other is bad. It means that one pattern is experienced positively and the other negatively.*

### 3.2 Past selves in present relationships

#### **PRIMARY SELVES FROM THE PAST ARE STILL IN CONTROL**

Because your life is mostly determined by your primary selves, they also affect your relationships with other people. The selves you developed in your parental home are still active in your current relationships. Unconsciously, they have the tendency to repeat past experiences in your present interactions.

*Alex's mother was a teacher. Because she thought the education system wasn't good enough, she took Alex and his little sister out of school and home-schooled them. Whenever Alex acted up, she would threaten to send him to a boarding school. He would always quickly fall into line because he didn't want to go to one. Now Alex is an adult, he is always very quick to adapt to different situations. He shies away from confrontation. His wife determines how long he can sit behind his computer. She takes care of the family budget and arranges their holidays. Alex's friends say his wife is 'the one wearing the trousers in his family'. At work, Alex has a hard time dealing with his boss. He thinks his boss is very domineering and he doesn't feel very appreciated.*

Alex has developed a primary self that always conforms to what other people want. When he was young, he really needed this self as it helped

him to survive in difficult circumstances. However, in his present life, he does not really need this self as much as he used to. This self could easily allow himself to relax more often. But, as you know by now, the primary selves are not too keen on giving up their job as bodyguards. In the eyes of Alex's primary self, it is essential that Alex keeps adapting himself to his environment. This is why this particular self easily connects with people he can conform to, people who behave in an authoritarian way, the same way his mother used to behave.

### **YOU MEET YOUR DISOWNED SIDES IN THE OTHER PERSON**

Do you feel irresistibly attracted to someone? Or do you strongly dislike a certain type of person? There's big chance that they represent one or more of your disowned selves. Your relationships with others can teach you a lot about yourself. They offer a wide range of possibilities. For one thing, they give you the opportunity to develop parts of yourself where you previously had no room to do so. For instance, Alex could allow some more room to develop his Authoritarian Self. Not so that he could become authoritarian himself, but so that he could gain more strength and get things done the way he wants them to be done. If he does not appropriate some aspects of this self, he will never be able to deal with domineering people and he will always end up adapting and conforming. His wife has developed this side more than he has. In her case, she could learn to listen to the side of herself that just says 'yes' to things, the side that has a flexible and cooperative attitude. This is something she is not very good at.

Alex's boss and Alex's wife are two different people. He has a different kind of relationship with each of them. And yet there are similarities in the way Alex positions himself in these relationships and in the way each of them responds to him. The dynamic in both relationships is very similar. Alex finds this uncomfortable and frustrating at the same time. His relationships have become a kind of template for all his encounters, one in which the standard settings of his personality are activated time and time again. This is a very common phenomenon. The primary selves are

largely responsible for you constantly ending up in the same pattern in your relationships, even though you find this very annoying.

### 3.3 Subpersonalities and their impact on relationships

*Frederic ran into Mary a few months ago. She's a designer, who is creative and adventurous. He works as a lawyer for the city and his colleagues see him as a capable, reliable and rational type of person. He immediately fell for her sparkling personality. Since he's been spending time with her, his life has become exciting. Every evening, Mary cooks something very exotic. This is quite different from the meat and two vegetables Frederic is used to eating. She likes doing this and Frederic is enjoying all the new tastes. He has begun to relax and can even be very funny at times. He listens to her worries and calmly helps her to recognize all the facts. Since she met Frederic, Mary has been spending a lot more time at home. Watching a film and sitting on the couch with Frederic is a pretty big change for her.*

Frederic and Mary's primary selves are completely different. Frederic has a strong Responsible Self. He developed this self during his childhood. He was the eldest son in the family and, after his parents got divorced, he took on the role of the father. They did not have a lot of money. Frederic grew up with the idea that 'a penny saved is a penny earned'. Mary, on the other hand, has a Big Spender as one of her primary selves. She does not know the meaning of the word frugal. She was always the apple of her father's eye. He was a wealthy businessman with very refined tastes and he would sometimes take her along with him to the most luxurious locations. He was on the road a lot and would always bring back beautiful presents when he came home. He often said he would die if he had to sit at home on the couch. 'Live life to the fullest' was his motto. Mary has repressed the side in her that is happy with being ordinary. Her father did not care much for Average Joe.

The selves in Frederic's boot are the ones that are sitting up front in Mary's personality bus. The same goes for Mary: the selves that she has banished are the ones she sees in Frederic. The selves that you have lost are often the selves that initially attract you to your partner. This is how Beauty falls for the Beast, how the sophisticated Mark Darcy falls for the clumsy Bridget Jones and why the proper Charlotte York from *Sex in the City* falls for the uninhibited Harry Goldenblatt.

### **IN LOVE!**

*Frederic is going through a major transformation. Even his colleagues can notice the change in his personality. They are very surprised when Frederic asks them all to join him after work for a drink in the bar around the corner. Since he fell in love, his primary selves have loosened up and his Pleasure Seeker has been given more space.*

*Mary has been behaving differently as well. She used to think that sitting at home watching TV was so mundane. But with Frederic she actually enjoys it. Whenever Frederic is around, her Homebody Self is allowed to come forward. It's as though they were a match made in heaven.*

When people are in love, their primary selves become less vigilant. The Inner Child feels appreciated, loved and supported by the other person, so it shows itself more frequently. With Frederic around, Mary does not have to prove that she is special or eccentric. He already thinks she is – whenever she presents him with an exotic dish. Frederic does not have to worry that Mary will think he is boring. On the contrary: she appreciates it when he recognizes all the facts for her. A few weeks ago, he made her a financial plan which gave her a better overview of her income and her expenses. It made her feel much more relaxed. She feels she can rely on Frederic.

Mary sometimes yearns for more stability and consistency. Her Big Spender and her Freeloader ignore these needs and even see them as a threat. They are afraid that Mary will become boring. In their eyes, this means

that she will not be attractive and loveable. However, Frederic has reawakened her desire for peace and quiet.

In turn, Frederic could use some more activity. All his days pretty much look the same. His Responsible Self ignores his desire to be spontaneous and go and do something fun. According to his Responsible Self, this would endanger Frederic's stability. But since he met Mary, life has once again come knocking on his door.

You usually forget the selves that are stuck in the boot of your personality bus. You never stop to consider the fact that they are still there. That is, until you meet someone who has these exact selves sitting in front of their bus. Thanks to each other, Frederic and Mary become aware of the parts of themselves which they had been overlooking for so long. It is a relief for both of them. Mary was neglecting her self that appreciates peace and quiet. Frederic was neglecting his impulsive side.

You would think that because they now realize they have these selves that they would listen to them more closely. Sadly, this is rarely the case. Why? Firstly, this is not how people tend to look at relationships. Secondly, it is more tempting to leave the care of the disowned selves in the hands of the other person. After all, they are very good at taking care of those selves. Frederic becomes responsible for taking care of the peace and quiet in the relationship. Mary provides the sense of adventure. And so the relationship polarizes. They have outsourced their subpersonalities to each other.

#### **THE POSITIVE BONDING PATTERN TIGHTENS ITS GRIP**

What if Frederic and Mary really *were* made for each other? This does not mean that the fairy tale will continue to last. Despite their best efforts to prevent it from happening, eventually they will reach a point in their relationship where the poles will shift. In the beginning of every relationship, both partners are very willing to do (or not do) something for the other person. During this initial period, it is easy to put your own needs aside.

*Meanwhile, Mary has moved in with Frederic. The first period of their relationship is amazing. Mary cooks an exotic meal every evening. This is very different from what Frederic is used to. Still, every once in a while, Frederic would like to have a plain old meatball. However, when he sees how much effort Mary puts into making their dinner, he quickly represses this desire. Then the pricetag on the bottle of wine catches his eye. What an outrageous amount of money! Oh well, that's just how Mary is. She celebrates life. Besides, that's what he likes about her: she doesn't think too much and just does what comes naturally. They toast their love.*

When Mary does not watch her money, Frederic usually makes little of it. Big deal, so she does not like to penny-pinch. What's wrong with spending a bit more for that little extra? She enjoys it and, besides, she has good taste. The meatballs can wait until the next time she goes out with her friends and he is alone.

*Mary likes the fact that Frederic is loosening up. After all, she has been trying very hard. His house has undergone a complete metamorphosis. She has transformed it from a barren bachelor pad into a warm home with candles and flowers. She really has a woman's touch when it comes to decorating. That night, when they go to bed, Frederic says he'd rather stay home tomorrow instead of grabbing something to eat somewhere and going to the theatre. 'After all, no restaurant can match your culinary skills,' he laughs, 'and there's going to be a great film on TV.' 'Another evening at home,' she thinks. Oh well. He really enjoys the coziness. And besides, they have their entire lives ahead of them to do all sorts of exciting things together. She gives him a goodnight kiss.*

Whenever Frederic would rather stay home when they have plans to go out, Mary does not make a fuss about it. This is exactly what she likes about Frederic, the fact that he does not need a lot. Just sitting together on the couch is enough for him.



Frederic and Mary love each other. They do not want to blame each other for anything. After all, relationships are all about compromise. Subpersonalities who have desires that might endanger their relationship are quickly pushed aside. Mary ignores the fact that she sometimes gets bored when they sit on the couch and Frederic ignores the fact that he does not like it when she spends so much money on unnecessary things. They think their needs are unreasonable or even selfish and so they keep them to themselves.

As you know by now, this does not mean that the subpersonalities or their desires have gone away. They are simply lying dormant under the surface. The result is that both Frederic and Mary are feeling more and more confined. This is a gradual process. There will always be parts of your personality that do not fit in very well with your relationship. What do you do when the other person is not around? Do you leave your clothes all over the place? Do you eat pizza in front of the TV? Do you play loud rock music that your partner cannot stand? Do you sit up all night working at your desk? In the end, none of these parts pose such a big threat. As long as you know they are there, these parts will not be knocking you off balance any time soon. However, usually you are not that aware of their presence and then they suddenly barge in and take over.

Keeping a positive bonding pattern going forever is a daunting task. You could compare it to a pose where you and your partner are lying intertwined, your partner's head resting comfortably on your arm. Then, after a while, your arm starts to fall asleep. What started out as a comfortable position gradually becomes unpleasant. And yet you want to remain in this position. It has become so cozy and you do not want to wake up your partner. Your arm starts tingling more and more. Your desire to tear yourself away from the entanglement becomes more and more intense. Positive bonding patterns are very much the same. What started out as an amazing experience begins to change. It starts to hurt. In order to stay in the pattern, you have to ignore your own needs. If you do this for too long, the pattern can suddenly turn around one hundred and eighty degrees.

Out of nowhere, you push your unsuspecting partner away. You blame him or her for hurting you! You start to argue and you end up in a negative pattern. A negative pattern is one way of getting out of a positive pattern. Relationships largely consist of sequences of these patterns, from positive to negative and vice versa.

#### **THE BOMB BURSTS: FROM POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE**

*Mary wants to redecorate Frederic's bathroom. She takes him with her to check out a interior-design store. Frederic starts to feel uneasy when he sees the prices on everything. But when he sees how delighted she is, he gives in. They buy an Italian vanity sink with a matching toilet, bath and shower.*

That night, Frederic is tossing and turning in bed. He is annoyed and angry and, in his mind, he blames Mary for being so hasty and irresponsible when it comes to money. 'Mary's a spoiled brat,' Frederic thinks to himself. 'She never stops to think how expensive something really is and she never considers the fact that I don't like it when my bank account is in the red. What was she thinking? She can't just run around all the time doing whatever she pleases!' The next morning, Frederic is in a bad mood and he leaves for work earlier than usual. 'Don't make such a big deal out of dinner tonight, OK?' he says. 'And maybe you could buy an ordinary bottle of wine for once. You *think* that more expensive bottles taste better, but that's all in your head!' 'What in god's name is going on?' Mary asks herself. 'Did I say something wrong?' She feels hurt. A while later, she's boiling on the inside. 'Frederic can really be grumpy at times. What a bore!'

*Mary makes plans to go to the theatre with a friend later that evening. 'Have a nice time napping in front of the TV all night', she says to Frederic before she leaves. 'That way you won't have to spend any money. When you die, I'll make sure to find you the cheapest coffin I can possibly find. Or even better, how about no coffin at all!' She slams the door behind her on her way out.*

Who is the guilty one here? Frederic or Mary? Who started all of this? When you are in a negative bonding pattern, the other person always gets the blame when in fact it is the bonding pattern that is causing all the misery. The rest of their conversation might look something like this:

Mary *It's not all in my head. I just think this particular wine has more flavour to it.*

Frederic *OK, then I propose a taste test. I'll buy two bottles of wine: an expensive one and a cheap one.  
You guess which one is which. I bet you won't even be able to taste the difference!*

Mary *Be my guest. And besides, none of it matters anyway. I'll just buy the wine with my own money.  
I can still decide what I spend my own money on, can't I?  
Just because you want to take everything to your grave doesn't mean everybody else has to.*

Frederic *Very well then.  
Just don't come crying to me the next time you can't withdraw any money from your bank account.*

They continue to argue for quite some time, and mostly about trivial matters, or so it would seem. This is very common. To make any sense out of it, it is important not to focus on the content of the argument but rather on which subpersonalities are expressing themselves.

You probably recognize this. Someone says something or does something that has a major effect on you. Steam starts coming out of your ears and you feel agitated, or you might feel deeply hurt. Or alternatively, something puts you in an extremely good mood. Relationships are where our vulnerability really comes into play. Mary feels hurt by Frederic and, in response, she tries to hurt him back. And vice versa. This is how both of them end up in a negative bonding pattern. When you end up in a negative bonding pattern, you can easily assume that:

- you have been in a positive pattern until now
- your Aware Ego is not involved
- both of you feel one of your soft spots or vulnerabilities is exposed and is somehow being hurt
- you are not discussing this vulnerability – instead, you are becoming angry, you are wrapping yourself in silence, you are acting cool and distant, you are behaving pedantically or doing something similar.

The more emotionally you respond, the more likely it is that someone struck a chord inside you. It is as if you are snapped back to the past by an invisible rubber band. Your standard set of responses has been reactivated. The primary selves which were once indispensable for your survival throw themselves back into your present relationship to once again serve as your bodyguards.

Frederic despises irresponsible behavior. He has had his fair share of first-hand experiences with financial troubles. He knows how threatening it feels not to have any money and to have to squeeze every penny. When he sees how deeply in debt Mary gets herself and how she throws her money out of the window, the helplessness he once felt during his childhood comes floating to the surface. But before he has a chance to realize what is happening, his Responsible Self comes forward and responds angrily.

Mary starts to feel small and insecure whenever she is questioned about responsibility and discipline. It makes her feel as though she is not allowed to be herself and that what she wants is unimportant. But before she can truly get in touch with these feelings, her Freeloader jumps in. All he can feel is just how much he despises boredom. It is easy to imagine how these reactions reinforce each other. The subpersonalities polarize, and Mary and Frederic become more and more annoyed with each other.

### 3.4 How can you break through the patterns?

When you begin to look at relationships from the perspective of bonding patterns, you will also begin to understand how a 'perfect match' can easily turn into a relationship between 'clashing personalities'. Quite often, love has nothing to do with it – strangely enough. The internet is full of stories from men and women who were surprised by how their relationship suddenly took a turn for the worse.

*'Our relationship seemed to be going perfectly. We were having so much fun all the time. We spent pretty much every weekend together. Our parents were getting along fine as well. Everything seemed perfect. After two years, though, I began to feel the need to go and do something different at the weekend, like hang out with my friends. My girlfriend didn't appreciate this at all. We started arguing a lot because I was simply no fun when I was around her. I preferred going out with my friends, even though I was still mad about her. And she broke up with me.'*

*(Raymond, 20, internet forum)*

*'Everything was perfect. The day before she ended the relationship, she had even called me the woman of her dreams. And now, well, now everything is just ruined. After seven years she suddenly thinks we are too different and she claims she had been adapting herself to what I wanted the whole time. Oh well!'*

*(Norma, 38)*

Most theories on relationships believe that when there is a 'perfect match' the relationship is 'good' and that when two people are constantly arguing the relationship is 'bad'. It is rather obvious that one situation feels great and the other feels horrible. However, in both situations, the fact remains that both partners are caught up in a pattern. It is only natural that things will eventually switch around. Raymond's desire to go and hang out with his friends during the weekend is perfectly understandable. He

wants to break away from the bonding pattern, not from the relationship. His girlfriend objects and so they end up in a negative bonding pattern.

You spend most of your time engaged in bonding patterns with other people. You can use these patterns to:

- track down one of your soft spots that is feeling hurt
- discover your primary and disowned selves
- expand your Aware Ego

This will help you to enlarge your repertoire for dealing with a particular type of situation. This means you will have more ways of responding to certain situations than your standard set of responses. In the next section, we will explain how you can break out of a bonding pattern.

### **STEP 1    RECOGNIZE THE BONDING PATTERN**

The first thing that helps you to get out of a bonding pattern is to simply become aware of the fact that you are in one. Even if this is the only thing you do, this is the first step in breaking the pattern.

#### *Recognizing a positive bonding pattern*

How can you recognize a positive bonding pattern? The answer is simple: it feels great! Everything you do with the other person goes so smoothly. Your new colleague is a breath of fresh air, your new boss is amazing, the new student in your class is the apple of your eye. Everyone is cheering on the new president. Our advice: enjoy it as much as you can. After all, a positive bonding pattern is a really comfortable place to be. It is an amazing feeling when everything happens so naturally. Who wouldn't want things to stay like that?

However, in order to maintain this delightful state of being, you have to repress any reaction that might upset the situation. The minute you feel you have to force yourself in order to preserve the harmony, the bonding pattern has already begun to tighten its grip. Initially, you are not aware of this. In the beginning of every relationship it is especially easy to allow for the other person. At that time, you are more than willing to be accom-

modating. Over time, though, it can begin to seem as if you have seriously misjudged the other person.

*Norma is having a hard time understanding why her girlfriend Edith wants to end their relationship after seven years. Everything was so perfect in the beginning. Now, Edith suddenly says she's been sacrificing herself for years. Norma is heartbroken. The family and children they shared together have fallen apart. It was a joint decision to go live outside the city, wasn't it? According to Edith, it was mostly Norma's decision, one of the many decisions she felt she had conformed to over the years. Norma simply can't understand how or why Edith experienced it that way. This only reinforces Edith's decision. The fact that Norma didn't even realize it says enough!*

Edith and Norma were in a positive bonding pattern for too long and neither of them was aware of it. Indeed, their life together was idyllic in the beginning. And Edith wanted to keep it that way. She did not notice how she began to set her needs aside more and more frequently. After they moved, though, she was no longer able to keep everything bottled up. She saw no other way out of it than to break off the commitment. This is the paradox: when you sacrifice too much of yourself, you actually end up destroying the relationship you are trying so hard to protect. It is important not to lose sight of your own wishes. Not just so you can go around demanding everything be done the way you want it to, but rather so you can embrace the things you truly value. In order for you to be able to do this, you first need to realize what your needs are. The next two questions can help you figure this out. Ask yourself:

1. What *do* I do in this relationship that I actually *wouldn't* want to do?
2. What *don't* I do in this relationship that I actually *would* want to do?

#### *Recognizing a negative bonding pattern*

Only a minute ago, the two of you were smiling and laughing, walking hand in hand to the restaurant where your table was waiting for you. Just before you reached the entrance, the mood suddenly took a turn for the worse. You can recognize a negative bonding pattern straight away: the

interaction is not going smoothly at all. When you are experiencing intense emotions that are not proportional to what is actually going on, you have ended up in a negative pattern. You can be sure that, for both parties, old soft spots are being stepped on. You are usually not aware of this. What you do notice is that you are annoyed, furious or that you have suddenly become very judgmental of the other person. Do you want to get out of the cycle? Then focus all your attention on what is going on between the two of you and not on the content of the argument. Ask yourself: What is the main accusation the other person is making? What is your reaction to this? Which of your primary selves are responding to which of the other persons's primary selves?

## **STEP 2 EXAMINE WHAT ACTIVATED THE PATTERN**

If you continue to ignore your own needs and remain in a positive bonding pattern for too long, eventually it will turn on you: the pattern will become negative. This also happens when vulnerable emotions are at stake, emotions you are unaware of or which you have been ignoring. By looking back at a conflict situation you can discover a lot about these painful areas. What precisely happened? What did someone say or do? What was it that actually struck you? Maybe you were annoyed by your colleague who started whistling and packing his briefcase at 5 p.m. and, all after he had showed up for work that day long after you had arrived. Then perhaps you have been ignoring your own need for rest or for lazying about. By taking a minute to examine your emotions you can gain more insight into your own desires. Do you have a hard time remembering when you last felt cheerful or relaxed? Do you feel like you are missing out on something? You will end up in a negative pattern if you do not take notice of these feelings.

In order to get out of a bonding pattern, it is necessary that you:

- become aware of your own needs and your own vulnerability
- are able to express these needs through the Aware Ego



### 1. *Being in touch with your vulnerability*

It is hard to survive the everyday jungle of life when you are vulnerable all the time. Whether you are manoeuvring through the workplace or society at large, you need to call upon your strengths most of the time. For this, you need to be firmly rooted and to be able to act assertively. However, in order for you to be able to experience intimacy and connect with others, you need to be in touch with your vulnerable side, with your Inner Child.

It is not easy to allow yourself to be vulnerable. Most of the time you avoid it. You wave it away. 'Don't worry about it,' you tell your lunch date who arrived twenty minutes late, 'these things happen.' And the whole time you were sitting there asking yourself 'He or she couldn't have forgotten, right?' or 'Did I make a mistake? Did something bad happen? How hard can it be to come on time or to make a simple phone call? Will the other people here start to think that I have been stood up? Should I order something or should I wait a while longer?' You probably think these kinds of thoughts are childish and so you push them away. So what if someone shows up a bit late? You are not going to make a song and dance out of it, are you? After all, you are not always so punctual. By berating yourself you push your vulnerable feelings aside.

However, choosing to criticize the other person's behaviour is another way of not having to deal with feelings of vulnerability. You think the other person is being lazy and annoying and you have no problem saying so either! As soon as your date arrives, you irritably glance at your watch and, in an angry voice, you say 'You're late!' Whenever you pass judgment on someone else, you immediately start to feel more powerful and, as a result, you feel less bothered by the unpleasant feelings which lie at the root of your frustration.

In the same way you allow yourself to feel the joy you experience when you listen to music, when the sun is shining on your skin or when you are enjoying a nice glass of wine, you can also allow yourself to feel the less pleasant moments. Your new partner's son is ignoring you and you

feel hurt. A critical email from one of your colleagues made you lose your focus and now you cannot get your work done. Experience it, notice it. Pay as much attention to the moments in which you feel wonderful as you do to the moments in which you feel uncomfortable, however short the moment or small the feeling may be. If you cannot come into contact with your vulnerability you will not be able to feel what your needs are. You will not be able to notice when something is wrong with yourself or with your partner – whether or not there is anything at all worth paying attention to. Do you want to look after your own needs and sensitivities? Then the first thing you have to do is notice them.

EXERCISE 5    WHAT ARE YOUR SOFT SPOTS?

- When do you feel uncomfortable? What takes (or moves) you off balance?
- When do you notice yourself becoming overcritical of yourself and/or others?
- When were you ever disappointed but you did not show it?
- When did you ever do things you did not want to do?
- When were you tired or hungry and yet you still pushed yourself over your limits?

2. *Expressing your needs*

It is not always necessary to tell the other person that you feel hurt. Sometimes it is enough to simply pay attention to your vulnerability. You feel annoyed with your colleague who has been cutting one too many corners recently. This helps you realize that you have been having too much on your mind lately, and not enough time to relax. This does not mean you have to tell the other person what is bothering you. The realization that you could use some more time off is enough. Still, sometimes it can help to express your displeasure; for instance, if you want to improve the cooperation or the relationship between the two of you. Nevertheless, people often hold themselves back from going so far. They are afraid the other

person will abuse the opportunity, that they will try to gain power over them. After all, those who know where your soft spots are also have the ability to hit you the hardest.

*Rachel has written a proposal for a new marketing plan. Rick, her colleague, has a few ideas of his own. 'Do you really think there are companies out there waiting in line for that kind of campaign?!' Marcel, one of Rick's buddies, adds insult to injury. 'Yeah! Really! What were you thinking?!' Rachel feels hurt. She tells her colleagues she does not appreciate the way they responded to her idea. She feels like they're ganging up on her.*

*'Well, occasionally, I don't like what people have to say either!' Rick replies. 'Yeah, don't be such a baby', Marcel adds. Rachel walks away in tears. Her boss saw the whole conversation. He invites Rachel into his office to talk it over. He thinks she overreacted and that she doesn't really know how to deal with feedback.*

Rachel tells her colleagues that they hurt her feelings. Instead of them agreeing with her or offering their apologies, they proceed to hurt her again. She thus remains in a negative bonding pattern with them. Should she have left things the way they were? Good question! When you are dealing with people like that, sometimes the wise thing to do is to simply keep your mouth shut and avoid them altogether.

Suppose Rachel decides to tell her colleagues how she feels. The important thing would be to first pay attention to her own vulnerability. She is feeling terribly anxious about sharing her proposal with everyone in the office. After all, she has spent a great deal of time putting it together. What's more, her idea is rather creative and somewhat unusual. All of this makes her even more sensitive to any form of criticism. Any criticism that comes her way will end up hitting her twice as hard. If she takes the time to become aware of this before going public with her proposal, she will be able to take the necessary precautionary measures to protect herself. For example, she could tell her colleagues up front that she is curious to hear their opinion but that she is also feeling somewhat apprehensive

about presenting her proposal. Or she could ask them to mention two things they like, two things they do not like as much and to leave it at that. The possibilities are endless. Even if her colleagues end up responding the same way as described earlier, it will most likely end up hurting less.

Perhaps Rachel's colleagues simply felt like being annoying. But they could just as well have been made to feel insecure by her proposal. After all, it is the team that is going to have to sell the idea to the client later on, and not just Rachel. You usually do not stop to consider whether or not you are feeling vulnerable, not even if other people are. Still, what generally holds true for you tends to hold true for others as well.

Your chances of breaking through a bonding pattern grow the more you communicate from within an Aware Ego. This manager of the selves is in touch with your vulnerable feelings as well as with your strengths. You do not end up accusing the other person of anything, and you also do not demand that they assume a different attitude. You simply put the cards on the table and tell them what is bothering you so that it does not continue to linger beneath the surface of your relationship. If you are successful in doing this from within an Aware Ego, your partner will notice both your firmness as well as your sensitivity. In turn, this will enable the other person to feel both of these sides within themselves as well. As a result, the bonding pattern will loosen up.

Using your strength without having to repress your sensitive side: this is what happens to the characters in the movie *As It Is In Heaven*. For years, the members of the local church choir have been engaged in various types of bonding patterns with one another. That is until they break free and a new kind of connection is brought about. Slowly but surely, one of the main characters, Gabriella, finds the courage to leave her abusive husband. When she finally transcends her limits and sings 'Gabriella's Song' in front of a large audience, no one is left unmoved. Even her husband cannot help but wipe a tear away. Maybe you have a favourite song that touches you because of its combination of gentleness and power. If you

were to speak up for yourself from within the state of mind that song puts you in, chances are you would be speaking from within your Aware Ego.

### **STEP 3      FIND OUT WHICH OF YOUR DISOWNED SELVES THE OTHER PERSON IS CARRYING**

The third step consists of finding out – through the other person – which subpersonalities you have disowned so you can develop these selves within yourself. How do you do this? You have probably experienced hurt in your relationships with other people. This is pretty much inevitable. And when the threat of emotional injury begins to arise once again, your bodyguards intervene and take you over. You then fall back on your default settings, the way you usually protect yourself from getting hurt.

Your primary selves become fully operational. They polarize with the other person's selves and you become more and more entangled in the bonding pattern. You begin to mirror each other more and more. When you are emotional, the other person becomes more and more distant. When you begin to loosen up, the other person starts laying down rules and regulations and so on. The selves you repress within yourself are the ones that begin to show themselves in the other person. This is what fuels the pattern, and it can go on and on.

Although the content of the argument is different for every relationship, quite often it is the same set of subpersonalities that continue to wage war on one another. There are a number of selves that show up frequently in conflicts and have the tendency to polarize, such as:

- the Responsible Self – the Slacker
- the Rational Self or the Businesslike Self – the Emotional Self
- the Introvert – the Extravert
- the Independent Self – the Dependent Self
- the Pusher or the Doer – the Relaxed Self or the Lazy Self
- the Organized Self – the Chaotic Self
- the Group-Oriented Self – the Individualist

As painful as the negative bonding pattern may be, you can use it to become aware of the fact that the other person has a subpersonality that you yourself have disowned and that you could benefit from appropriating some of its aspects. What is paradoxical about all of this is that the pattern will begin to polarize a lot less when you allow some room for the other person's primary selves within your own personality.

**EXERCISE 6    EXPLORE THE SELVES IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP**

In the first few chapters of this book, you read about the many different selves there can be. Now take a few minutes to compare yourself to someone else, like your partner, your boss, a colleague, a family member or a friend.

My primary selves

His/her primary selves

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You will see that some characteristics are shared and that others are directly opposed to one another. The characteristics which are each other's opposite are the ones that fuel the bonding pattern. Instead of constantly fighting them off, you could embrace them and turn them into allies.

**YOUR RELATIONSHIP AS TEACHER**

If you want your business to run smoothly and successfully, then you have to make an effort. It will not happen by itself. You need to constantly adapt to recent developments. There are good times and bad times. You

need to constantly maintain contact with your customers, to discuss your business relationship and make an assessment of what needs to improve, to plan and look ahead. This all sounds very obvious when you have a business to run. When it comes to relationships, however, the prevailing thought seems to be that 'everything comes naturally in a good relationship'. This is probably true for most of your contacts. Still, we recommend you look at your relationships in the same way you look at running a joint venture. Does that make it sound less fun or romantic? Not necessarily. The idea is that, every once in a while, you take a minute and ask yourself: How are things going? Is the workload still well distributed? How is the partnership working out? What can we expect in the upcoming year?

You do not have to do this all the time and, no matter how hard you try, you will inevitably end up in bonding patterns. Life and relationships are to be lived. Bonding patterns simply come with the territory. Most of the time we live together in positive bonding patterns. Trying not to live in bonding patterns is the same as wanting to be in an Aware Ego all the time. It is precisely by trying so hard not to end up in a bonding pattern that you do end up in one. Bonding patterns are a natural aspect of relationships and they provide you with an invaluable source of information about yourself. Relationships offer you a wide range of possibilities for learning and growing, whether it is with your family, partners, friends or colleagues.

If you never take the time to consciously think about the state of your relationships, it is very likely that your primary selves will take over and have you behave the way they are used to behaving. It is in their nature to do so. You keep returning to your standard settings. Is that such a bad thing? Not really. It is completely normal and as natural as gravity constantly pulling you back towards the earth.

Still, every once in a while it can help to ask yourself the question: What am I not doing in this relationship that I actually do want to do? Or what am I doing that I would rather not do? And these can be small things.

What is important is that you do not trivialize them so that they end up becoming the big things that can jeopardize your relationship.

It is in bonding patterns with other people that you not only meet the selves that are familiar to you but also the selves which you have disowned and which you despise, or perhaps envy, in other people. The dynamics in relationships present you with an opportunity to discover which of your primary selves take over the wheel and which of your vulnerabilities they are out to protect. Relationships give you the opportunity to meet with the selves you have banished to your boot and to offer them a seat somewhere in the bus. This process enriches your life experience.

#### SUMMARY

- *Because your life is mostly determined by your primary selves, so are your relationships with other people. These selves, which you developed early in your life, are still active in your current relationships. They have the unconscious tendency to repeat experiences from past relationships in your present-day interactions.*
- *One aspect of the vision of Voice Dialogue is that, when it comes to relationships, 'lying in a bed of roses' is just as good as being caught in a pattern of 'doom and gloom'. It is only logical that these patterns alternate. We all spend most of our time in these patterns. They are very common.*
- *The problem is not that you are in a bonding pattern but that you are unaware of the fact that you are in one.*
- *Bonding patterns in your relationships with other people are an important doorway to self-actualization. Your interactions with other people can teach you a lot about yourself and the many selves you are housing.*
- *In order for you to get out of a bonding pattern, it is necessary that you get in touch with both your strength and your vulnerability.*
- *When you frequently find yourself in a negative bonding pattern with someone, this person is often carrying your disowned selves. They see to it that the bonding pattern keeps going.*



## 4 HOW DOES THE VOICE DIALOGUE METHOD WORK?

*I consider it my task to encourage and assist the clients in recognizing, accepting and integrating the various aspects of themselves.*

Carl Gustav Jung

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In the previous chapters you were introduced to the Psychology of Selves, the *theory* of Voice Dialogue. You probably gained some insight into which selves are predominant in your life and which could use some more time in the spotlight. You discovered how the selves operate in your relationships. You also learned that working with Voice Dialogue does not consist of analyzing and understanding things rationally but in simply getting to know the various subpersonalities. Now comes the practical part. Besides the psychological model of Voice Dialogue, there is also a *method* for working with subpersonalities. This method can be used for guiding individuals in coaching, care-giving and therapeutic settings. It is also used successfully in relationship therapy. In a Voice Dialogue session the facilitator engages in a dialogue with your various subpersonalities. This enables you to get to know your inner field of energies and to learn how to manage yourself more effectively with all these selves included. Voice Dialogue is an adventurous and nonjudgmental method that leads to profound insights and lasting results. In this chapter, we really get down to business.

## 4.1 The goal of the method

The goal of a *Voice Dialogue session* is to explore and experience your various subpersonalities with the help and guidance of a facilitator. Voice Dialogue helps you to develop an Aware Ego in order to make better choices and to provide you with more flexibility, balance and awareness. You learn how to stand in between two of your opposing selves, to embrace them and to discover what is valuable and acceptable to both of them. It also helps you to regain a lot of energy. After all, keeping your disowned selves repressed on a daily basis is an exhausting thing to do. Holding down the lid of your boot takes up a lot of energy.

Here is an example of what a session could help you achieve. Say you have a strong Pleaser and you are going to your friend's place for dinner and a film. This primary self might have the tendency to nod its head the whole time and agree to everything your friend has to say. In a Voice Dialogue session, you can meet the part of you that occasionally disagrees with your friend. If you then learn how to use this part more effectively, you can choose to go home a bit earlier when you start to get bored, instead of sitting around for another two hours watching a film you did not really feel like watching to begin with. This might not seem like such a big change, but your freedom of choice will have increased.

## 4.2 What type of challenges does the method lend itself to?

Voice Dialogue can be used in all sorts of situations. For example:

- When you are trapped in a (work) situation and you are having a hard time making up your mind.
- When you are looking for more balance and creativity.
- When you want more freedom to choose how to live your life.
- If you think Voice Dialogue would be a fun and inspiring way of furthering your personal development.

- When you are faced with such dilemmas as ‘Do I want to become an executive or would I rather stay in my role as an expert?’ or ‘Has the time come for me to start my own business?’.
- When you are having relationship problems. Voice Dialogue can help you get or stay out of both positive and negative bonding patterns.
- If you are a coach, trainer or therapist and you would like to experience first-hand how Voice Dialogue works to see if you might want to use it in your own practice.

### 4.3 The form of a session: Mary

What can you expect from a session? How does talking to subpersonalities actually work? Every Voice Dialogue session is different. Thank goodness, because otherwise it would be a boring and predictable method. However, each session does follow a somewhat similar course, as is demonstrated in the following example with Mary.

Mary and her colleague, Sebastian, have a consultancy that specializes in career guidance. Mary frequently ends up in arguments with Sebastian. She thinks he does not see her as an equal and that he bosses her around. She is considering ending their business relationship. Mary has approached a Voice Dialogue facilitator to guide her in making a decision. During their first conversation they explored the issue and got to know each other very well. The facilitator never starts with Voice Dialogue straight away. First, he or she discusses your background and takes an inventory of all the questions you are dealing with. Then, together, you formulate the goals, or what it is you wish to achieve during the sessions.

Mary has read a thing or two about Voice Dialogue. She is eager to get started and she is feeling comfortable with the facilitator. Today will be her second session. She wants to explore possible ways to move the situation with Sebastian forward.

Mary and her facilitator are sitting facing each other. There are a few chairs spread throughout the room. These will be needed later on when Mary's subpersonalities are invited to share their story. In order to make a clear distinction between Mary as a whole and her subpersonalities, one main chair is placed in the center of the room. Mary will return to this chair frequently throughout the session. We call this place the ego chair or the centre chair. It is in this place that the facilitator speaks with Mary's Aware Ego.

Facilitator        *Mary, what would you like to talk about today?*

Mary                *I've been having a really hard time at work the past few months. It's all because of Sebastian. He's so self-centered. He always puts himself first and is always turning the conversation towards himself whenever we're with clients. It's like he thinks he's God's greatest gift to mankind. I usually just let him do his thing, but it's becoming harder and harder for me to let it go. I'm even losing sleep over it. I want to see if I could maybe benefit from going my own way, you know, to continue to do what I'm doing without him. Yet, at the same time I think I would have a hard time ending our business relationship. After all, he just bought a new house. Still, I think it's about time I stood up for myself.*

While Mary is speaking, the facilitator listens to her story very attentively. Which of Mary's selves can be observed and how do they play a role in the questions she is raising?

Facilitator        *It seems as if there are multiple selves speaking simultaneously. There's one self that sympathizes with Sebastian and one self that thinks it's time for you to stand up for yourself. Does that sound about right?*

Mary *Yes, precisely. I just can't make up my mind. I want to know what I should do.*

Facilitator *Which response do you feel you can relate to the most?*

The facilitator always wants to talk with a primary self first because this side has protected you for so long and has helped to ensure your survival. It is important to get to know this self and to discover what function he performs for you. Starting with this self will also help you to get permission, later on, for the other selves to speak up.

Mary *The response that it's not an easy situation for him either. I mean, I really feel for Sebastian.*

Facilitator *OK. Then let's give this self the first chance to speak. Where would you like this voice to be seated?*

The facilitator asks Mary to give her subpersonality a place in the room, one different from where she is currently seated. The idea here is that Mary needs to let her subpersonality speak separately. Most often, a subpersonality knows exactly where he wants to sit or stand in relation to the client: to the left, to the right, nearby or further away. Some subpersonalities enjoy sitting close to the facilitator while others prefer to keep their distance.

Mary *(places a chair to the right of her ego chair and sits down)*

Facilitator *Welcome. Who do I have the pleasure of speaking with?*

The facilitator starts a conversation with the subpersonality as if he were a flesh and blood person, with his own opinions, emotions and behaviours. While seated on this separate chair, Mary completely enters into this self and begins to talk entirely as if she were this subpersonality. The facilitator uses the names that Mary gives to her subpersonalities.

Understanding Self *I'm the part of Mary that understands Sebastian very well. Our customers enjoy listening to him and he really has a way of explaining how our whole operation works. Mary shouldn't be bothering him at this time. He has enough stress as it is, with the renovations going on in his new house. Financially speaking, the whole thing was a major setback for Sebastian. Yesterday, he seemed rather pale. Maybe he's going through a really tough time. Mary should be asking him about that instead. I really don't like it when she puts herself first. Nobody wants to see that part of her, and especially not Sebastian. Besides, it would be really tough for Mary if she decided to go her own way. The best option here is to just continue with things the way they are and live in peace and harmony.*

Facilitator *Are you only around when Mary is at work? Or do you play a part in her private life as well?*

Understanding Self *I'm always around. I can sense exactly how other people are feeling and I really understand their behaviour. It's the same at home too. I always do the best I can to make sure everyone else feels comfortable.*

The facilitator gives Mary's Understanding Self all the space he needs. The facilitator assumes an empathic and nonjudgmental position and invites the self to talk about his emotions and how he thinks. This way, Mary can fully enter into her subpersonality's frame of mind. She identifies with this self. She becomes her Understanding Self and he fully comes to life. Mary can physically feel the Understanding Self in her body and she is in touch with his motives, with what drives him.



The facilitator tunes into the energy that a particular subpersonality emits. Each subpersonality has his own personal energy: warm, personable, accessible, open, compelling, intense, cold, threatening, seductive, playful and so on. The facilitator tries to summon the same energy within himself so that he is able to communicate on the same wavelength as the client's subpersonality. He pays attention to the gestures, intonation and expression of the subpersonality and adjusts his own posture, voice and vocabulary accordingly. The client's subpersonality will notice this and will begin to feel welcome, secure in the fact that he can truly be himself. For example, when the facilitator is dealing with a rational subpersonality, he will not begin to ask questions about emotions but rather speak in a steady, sober and analytical way. He will also keep an eye out for when any changes or gaps occur in the subpersonality's energy. When the energy changes, the facilitator will ask that particular subpersonality to seek out a new place in the room and then tune into the new frequency.

It is also important that Mary does not force herself. Only then will her subpersonality be able to be 'genuine' and truly himself – one who feels welcome and accepted. The facilitator continues the conversation with the Understanding Self so that he can fully come to life. He continues to

focus on what role this subpersonality plays in Mary's life and, finally, he says:

Facilitator *What would you do if you had the final say in this?*

*Does it even matter whether or not it's Mary's turn to speak? I just don't want her to become one of those bitches who always makes herself the center of attention. This isn't about her. It's important to me that people think Mary's a nice person. Otherwise she'll end up an old maid, one who's been abandoned by everyone.*

*(Suddenly Mary's facial expression changes. She sits up straight and raises her chin. Her face turns slightly red and she becomes visibly annoyed.)*

Understanding Self *It's about time Mary got her life together!*

This is one of Mary's other voices. When a primary subpersonality has been given enough time to share his views and to blow off some steam, something different happens. Giving unlimited space to Mary's Understanding Self has gradually enabled him to put everything, including himself, in perspective. The voice has said everything it had to say and a place has opened up for his opposite. An experienced Voice Dialogue facilitator can immediately notice when a primary self has finished talking and an opposite self has come forward. After all, the facilitator does not only pay attention to what is being said but also to who is doing the talking.

Facilitator *That sounds like a completely different voice than before. Please return to the ego chair.*

Mary returns to her own chair, the one facing the facilitator. Here, she can feel the physical difference between herself and her Understanding Self.



Mary *I feel a bit stronger in this chair than when I was sitting in the Understanding Self's chair. I know that side of myself all too well. Always taking others into account and not considering myself important enough. But I didn't know that this self was doing all of that so that I wouldn't end up all alone. I find that very moving. (Mary's eyes fill with tears) But abandoned by everyone?! Come on! There are enough people who love me. I'll be fine.*

By allowing her Understanding Self to speak, Mary has discovered what this self protects her from and how he does this. She has literally experienced this subpersonality. She remembers old pains from her past. Now her Aware Ego can begin to take care of these emotions. Her Understanding Self is very afraid of being abandoned, but Mary knows that everything will turn out fine.

Mary *It really is about time that I stood up for myself more often!*

Facilitator *May I also have a minute to speak with this self, the one that wants you to stand up for yourself? Please stand or have a seat somewhere else and allow this other self to share his thoughts on the matter.*

Mary places a chair in the corner of the room, at a considerable distance from the ego chair. She sits down and does not seem to be feeling quite comfortable. She has come into contact with one of her disowned selves.

Facilitator *I can tell that Mary would rather you remain silent, but I would still like to speak with you for a minute. It sounds like you feel concerned and that you are trying to give her some advice.*

Autonomous Self      *That's right. I appreciate the fact that you've asked my opinion. Mary never listens to me. She doesn't like me at all. She hardly ever lets me say anything.*

Facilitator              *You've made me curious as to what you could do for Mary.*

A disowned self will not let itself be seen or heard that easily. It is therefore important that the facilitator takes his time and let this subpersonality feel that he is welcome.

Autonomous Self      (slightly more at ease) *I know how she should deal with this. I know how to make money, how you can profile yourself, how you can influence customers. She doesn't even know what she wants. She spends far too much time worrying about whether or not people like her.*

Facilitator              *You don't worry about those things?*

Autonomous Self      *Not at all. People think I'm clear. I like being the centre of attention. It's fun to be around me. (satisfied smiles) I'm cheerful and smart. I come up with creative ideas. I tell it like it is and I don't beat around the bush. I'm a lot like Sebastian.*

Facilitator              *And what if people don't like her? Mary is worried about this.*

Autonomous Self      *I already said I don't care about that. She thinks I'm selfish but I'm not. I could really make her shine. I can be extremely convincing and charming when I have to be. I would be great at selling our products. I know how to use my femininity and playfulness. I find out what works and I don't waste any time worrying.*

Facilitator *So you know what works. Then what would you do in this situation if it were up to you?*

Autonomous Self *When she and Sebastian meet up with a customer, I want her to clearly mark her territory. She's much too modest and that's why people don't listen to her. If she took me with her, she would feel much more sure of herself. I would make clear agreements with Sebastian and tell him what I want. (Mary is getting more colour in her face and her voice is becoming stronger. She is getting very excited with all these new ideas. She is exuding a new sense of self-confidence and seems extremely focused.) I feel like giving that a try. She doesn't have to end their working relationship. All she has to do is show more of herself.*

Facilitator *I'm glad I had the chance to speak with you. I'd like to return to Mary now and see what she thinks of all this. After all, she's the boss. She's the one who will be making the decision.*

Mary returns to the ego chair. She has become more aware of both selves and she is now more capable of making clear decisions. Her Aware Ego is responsible for solving the problems and not the facilitator. He only guides the process.

Facilitator *Can you feel a difference, now that you're back in the chair of 'Mary as a whole'?*

Mary *It's so strange. What an experience. When I was sitting in that chair a minute ago I felt so strong and fearless. Very confident. I didn't know I had it in me. When I was in that place I truly didn't care what other people thought of me. It was so liberating.*

*Now that I'm sitting here in the middle again, I can feel myself shrinking under the influence of the Understanding Side who's sitting right here next to me. I really feel like I'm stuck in the middle of it all.*

Subpersonalities have an enormous effect on how you feel. It is a lot like music: jazz feels a lot different in your body than classical music. Your Playful Child makes you feel cheerful. Your Responsible Self lays a heavy burden on your shoulders. The second you switch between subpersonalities, your energy changes as well. Mary feels stronger and bigger when she is identified with her Autonomous Side. When she is in her Understanding Self, she feels smaller and more dependent. For people who have their first encounter with Voice Dialogue, feeling the different energies of the various subpersonalities is an experience that often leaves a very deep impression and that can have a dramatic effect on them. They are surprised at how real each subpersonality feels. The same person, the same body, but a totally different experience. These effects can also be seen very distinctly on the outside by the facilitator.

Facilitator *So, we've listened to both your Understanding and your Autonomous Selves. What conclusions have you drawn from this session?*

Mary *I don't want to be the Understanding one anymore. I'm fed up with it. I'm kicking him out! All he does is cause me trouble.*

This reaction is very understandable. But it is not that easy to get rid of a primary self. You need all your subpersonalities as each of them has a specific purpose.

Facilitator *Let's try not to be too hard on your Understanding Self. He just explained to me how much work he's actually done for you in the past and that it is largely thanks to*

*him that people enjoy dealing with you. OK? For now, I suggest that, in your mind, you try to position the Understanding Self on one side of you and the Autonomous Self on the other side. Now, when you listen to both of their stories, what do you choose?*

Mary can feel the Understanding Self on one side and the Autonomous Self on the other side. She then listens to both voices from where she is sitting in the middle. She feels their energy and experiences the tension between the two of them. She is able to appreciate both of them and to make a decision from within this central position.

Mary *I think the time has come to have a talk with Sebastian and to make some clear agreements. But it's important that we do this at an appropriate time: not when he has so much on his mind. I'm going to address it neutrally, without getting emotional. I want to be both clear and friendly because I want our relationship to remain positive. It's nice to be able to hear both opinions separately and to take the best from both sides. Thank you very much.*

Facilitator *Now, in your mind, I would like you to put one arm around your Understanding Self and the other arm around your Autonomous Self. They are both allowed to be there. Now you are aware of the polarity between them, of their opposing views. Finally, may I ask that you come and stand next to me? Then we can review the session together.*

At the end of the session, the facilitator asks Mary to come and stand beside him so she can look back on the session from the position of Awareness. Awareness is the part of you that has the ability to witness yourself. The facilitator briefly reviews the session and summarizes the essential

points while Mary listens. She looks at the places where, only a minute ago, her Aware Ego and her subpersonalities came forward and she tries to look back at the session from this neutral position, without judging or analyzing. Throughout the summary, the facilitator refers to Mary in the third person. After this, Mary returns to her own chair. She is given the opportunity to share any last thoughts she might have and then the session ends.

#### 4.4 Is that all?

People sometimes ask us ‘Is that all? No solutions, no tips?’ Once you’ve discovered that you have subpersonalities, then what? The answer is simple: yes, that’s it. As Hal and Sidra Stone wrote in the foreword of this book, *Voice Dialogue* is not about changing yourself. The method focuses on cultivating awareness. You discover who you are and how you can increase your options for managing your own life. It helps you to feel freer, to allow yourself to be who you are, and to access your full potential.

While the method might seem deceptively simple at first, every time you get to know a new subpersonality will demonstrate what an impact it can actually have on your life. The key ingredients of the method are discovering your subpersonalities and separating yourself from them. By making contact with a specific subpersonality, you come to fully experience this self and discover that you actually have it. This can come as quite a surprise. You can hear what this self thinks and wants. Acquiring this information can be extremely valuable. It often helps you to be more compassionate with yourself. By working with *Voice Dialogue*, your awareness of your subpersonality’s presence increases along with your ability to determine how and when you want to use this side of yourself. You learn how to remain seated behind the wheel of your bus and to consult with the passengers when you feel it is necessary. Or, to use a different metaphor, you become the conductor of your own orchestra and learn how to direct each orchestra member individually. Sometimes you will want the

violin section to play fortissimo and other times you will ask them to play pianissimo. Sometimes you will engage the percussion section. In other situations you might want to call upon the harp.

## 4.5 The role of the facilitator

The Voice Dialogue facilitator helps you gain a better understanding of yourself and your inner field of energies. He or she gives little or no advice and does not draw any conclusions. A facilitator does not force anything upon you and has a listening and nonjudgmental attitude. The facilitator has been trained to welcome subpersonalities and not to criticize them. It is this attitude that helps you to meet and experience your various subpersonalities and to separate from, or to allow more room for, a particular side of yourself. The facilitator helps you explore your disowned selves and gain access to their talents. Through the course of a session, you can discover how to adjust the volume of each subpersonality individually. You decide what balance suits you the best. Together, all of these discoveries form the essence of the Voice Dialogue method.

Voice Dialogue can be integrated into other theoretical approaches. Hal and Sidra Stone describe it as follows: 'We have found that the more extensive the background of the facilitator is, and the deeper his or her insight, the more powerful the instrument (Voice Dialogue) becomes. We see Voice Dialogue as a musical instrument. The instrument is the same for everyone, but the music that comes out of it mainly depends on the individual experience and talent of the facilitator.'

### **THREE LEVELS OF LEARNING: THREE LEVELS OF AWARENESS**

In a Voice Dialogue session, we work on the development of the Aware Ego. This awareness is constantly changing and develops on three different levels.

### 1. *Experiencing your different subpersonalities*

The first level consists of you becoming aware of your subpersonalities by literally experiencing them. You explore your subpersonalities by filling their shoes and giving them a place in the room. You completely identify with them. In doing so, you discover who your subpersonalities are, how they think, how they act, and when and why they become active. You learn what their motives are and you experience how your body feels and how it responds when a specific subpersonality is active.

### 2. *Developing an Aware Ego*

Once you have explored a subpersonality, it becomes easier for you to separate from him. You 'disidentify' yourself from him. Mary became aware of the fact that she has an Understanding Self as well as an Autonomous Self. She can now look at her subpersonalities from a distance and realize that they are only different parts of her. Her Aware Ego has grown. As a result, she can choose more carefully which side of herself she wants to use and when. Her Aware Ego embraces and manages all the various subpersonalities.

### 3. *Awareness*

This happens at the end of a session. The facilitator summarizes the essence of the session and the client listens as a neutral witness. Awareness provides the client with perspective and distance, which has an integrating effect.

#### EXERCISE 7 VOICE DIALOGUE ON YOUR OWN

Is it possible to use Voice Dialogue without a facilitator? Setting up an elaborate session, similar to the one described above, without a facilitator is not recommended. However, you can try out a more simplified version of Voice Dialogue if, for example, you want to solve a dilemma. Here's how:

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- Formulate the question to which you want the answer. Have a seat in the middle of a bench or place a chair to your left and another one to your right. On the left side, for instance, you place ‘Yes, I’m going to do it’ with all his thoughts and emotions. To your right you have ‘No, I’m not going to do it’.
- Examine which side’s presence you feel is the strongest. If this is the ‘yes’ side, then move over to the left.
- Focus on this voice and let him speak his mind. You can do this out loud or in your thoughts. You will soon begin to feel the ‘no’ pulling at you from the other direction – ignore this side for now. The important thing here is to spend more time than you usually would with just one side. When you are finished with this side, write down everything he had to say.
- Now take a seat on the right side, the ‘no’ side, and do exactly the same as you did with the other side.
- When you are finished with this side, return to the middle and allow your Aware Ego, the manager of your selves, to speak. Separate yourself from all the thoughts and feelings from both left and right. Calmly perceive everything as it presented itself to you, and take note of the fact that all of it is yours and that all of it is true. Consider the value of what both left and right had to say about your question. Finally, what conclusion have you made yourself? Has a compromise of any kind been made?

#### SUMMARY

- *Voice Dialogue is a powerful method for getting to know yourself better, and taking all of your selves into account.*
- *In the Voice Dialogue method, the facilitator literally engages in a conversation with your various selves.*
- *First, the primary selves get a chance to speak. Afterwards, space automatically opens up for the disowned selves.*

- *All selves are welcome and every self is listened to with respect.*
- *You learn about yourself on three levels: by experiencing your selves (identifying), by separating from your selves (dis-identifying), and by becoming more aware of them (Aware ego and non-judgmental Awareness).*
- *By practicing Voice Dialogue you learn to manage your behaviour, and your selves, more effectively.*
- *The facilitator has a nonjudgmental and facilitating role.*

## THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is a product of our shared passion for Voice Dialogue. The three of us have been able to share and deepen this passion thanks to our many encounters with participants, coachees and colleagues. Therefore, we would first like to thank all of those who gave us their trust and who let us meet their inspiring, complex, cheerful, gloomy, challenging, hair-splitting and vulnerable selves. We would especially like to thank the participants of our courses, training sessions and workshops in Voice Dialogue and other drama techniques. They were the ones who enabled us to continue working with Voice Dialogue, to go through new experiences and to gain ever deeper insights. We also had a lot of fun with them because nothing is more exciting than meeting subpersonalities.

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We wish to sincerely express our deep appreciation to all the people we have learned so much from. First and foremost, we would like to thank our teachers, Hal and Sidra Stone, the founders of Voice Dialogue. They have developed an incredibly rich and powerful method and, even though they are both getting on in years, they still share their knowledge in an intelligent, inspiring and loving way. We would also like to thank Robert Stamboliev and Jerien Koolbergen who, in 1982, pioneered the use of Voice Dialogue in the Netherlands. All three of us were trained by Robert. He used a great deal of effort spreading the Voice Dialogue method through the Netherlands and all over Europe. We also cherish fond memories of other educators we learned so many things from in the Netherlands: Maria Daniëls, Peter Dellensen, Wieke Leenstra, Marian van Riemsdijk. And

also Martha-Lou Wolff, Judith Hendin, and Tamar Stone from the USA, who regularly come to Europe to teach us. Special thanks goes to our teacher and colleague Lex Mulder who introduced us to Voice Dialogue and how it can be applied in drama techniques. He creatively integrated Psychodrama and Voice Dialogue into Voicedrama.

We would also like to thank Ellen van der Hart and Monique Lindzen, our publishers, for their trust, enthusiasm and constructive comments. We would like to pay tribute to our life companions Jannieke Bosch (Karin), René Meijer (Judith), and Lex Mulder (Berry) and his daughter Marjolijne. They read our script on Ibiza. Despite the many distractions the island has to offer, they really buckled down, read through our texts and provided us with some very valuable feedback. Our friend and editor Lenny Langerveld provided us with her final comments. Thanks to all our dear family members, friends and colleagues for responding so enthusiastically to our writing and, by doing so, encouraging us to keep going. They courageously endured our endless stories about 'The Book'. We want to thank Frank Meijer and our excellent translator Thomas Blaye for checking the Dutch text on intercultural differences. Our special thanks go to Mary Disharoon (licensed psychotherapist and director Voice Dialogue California) and to John Kent (Voice Dialogue facilitator and director Voice Dialogue UK) for giving us feedback on the English translation. They have been doing an incredible job for us. See also his website [www.voicedialogueonline.com](http://www.voicedialogueonline.com) for his remarkable online Voice Dialogue program.

More thanks go to Luuk Poorthuis for his witty and inspiring illustrations. It is truly amazing how he was able to capture the essence of Voice Dialogue and the subpersonalities with his humorous sketches. Last but not least we would like to thank each other. We will always remember the intense teamwork, fun, frustration, encouragement, and exhaustion, but especially how amazing it is to work with so much inspiration and perspiration. We look forward to seeing the use of Voice Dialogue spread even further in the Netherlands and throughout the world.

*Karin Brugman, Judith Budde and Berry Collewijn*

PS Thanks to our selves:

Aphrodite	Idealist	Perfectionist
Apollo	Innocence	Playboy
Artist	Inquisitor	Playful Child
Bon Vivant	Introvert	Pleaser
Career Hound	Jekyll	Professor
Clown	Jewish Mother	Pusher
Controller	Joker	Quasimodo
Critic	King	Queen
Dionysus	Lazy Bones	Rational Mind
Doubter	Libertine	Responsible Self
Dreamer	Lover	Sage
Dutchess	Macchiavelli	Saviour
Extravert	Magical Child	Seeker
Fairy	Magician	Serious Self
Fanatic	Mars	Slob
Farmer	Materialist	Special Self
Femme Fatale	Mickey Mouse	Strict Schoolteacher
Florence Nightingale	Missionary	Superman
Fool	Mistress	Troll
Free Woman	Moralist	Upholder of the Law
Freeloader	Mother Earth	Victim
General	Mystic	Vulnerable Child
Gorilla	Narcisist	Walker
Greta Garbo	Nervous Lapdog	Warrior
Hedonist	Nomad	Witch
Hermit	Nutcase	Wizard
Hero	Ordinary Self	Xanthippe
Heroine	Orphan	...and many others
Hyde	Pacifist	

# APPENDIX 1

## The history of Voice Dialogue

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*I find the notion that there is only one single self  
an extremely harsh, simplified and incorrect assumption.*

*Hermann Hesse*

Voice Dialogue was developed in the early seventies by two Californian psychologists, Hal Stone (1927) and Sidra Stone (1937). Hal was trained as a Jungian analyst in the 1950s, a training which included time in Zurich and the opportunity of a personal session with Carl Jung. This Jungian psychology has had a strong influence on his life and his work. A natural teacher, he founded the Center For the Healing Arts in the 1970s, one of the first holistic healing centres in the United States. Sidra, who was trained as a behavioural psychologist, was influenced by, among others, Hermann Hesse, who wrote about the ongoing struggle between the opposing forces within us. Sidra was the director of Hamburger House, a residential therapeutic center for teenage girls.

In 1972, Sidra approached Hal because she wanted to learn more about symbolic visualization. During their first conversations, she spoke about her feelings of vulnerability. Instead of starting a long conversation with

her about these feelings, Hal asked if he might be allowed to speak directly with the vulnerable self within her. He suggested that she seek out a different spot in the room and that she become the vulnerability. Sidra sat down on the floor and she then became a completely different person: a little girl who looked at the world in a totally different way. Hal spoke directly to the Little Girl as if he were meeting with a real person. This conversation was a revelation for both of them. If this Inner Child is so lifelike, what else might they discover?

This session was the beginning of what they would later call the Voice Dialogue method.

Their major discovery was that the selves within us behave like genuine human beings and that they want to be treated with respect. When the selves feel they are being criticized or manipulated, they disappear.

Hal and Sidra soon discovered that the work does not begin and end by simply speaking with a subpersonality. Its true power lies in working with polarities, listening to two opposing sides, and developing a leadership capacity they called the Aware Ego. Their work with relationship and their discovery of the Bonding Patterns – the automatic interactions of these selves which underly all relationships – has been central in their approach to all psycho-spiritual development. Dreams and daydreams have played an important role throughout their journey. Dreams are a source of information about what is going on in the unconscious and provide valuable access to what they call ‘the inner teacher’. According to Hal, ‘dreams are a goldmine.’ The last major addition to their work was the role of energetics in psycho-spiritual development.

Their interest in psycho-spiritual development (a combination of psychological and spiritual work) has continued to evolve over the decades, using their own personal experience and the experience of a countless number of clients as a basis for this evolution. They named their theoretical system ‘the Psychology of Selves and the Aware Ego Process’.

Hal and Sidra Stone have demonstrated Voice Dialogue in many different countries and have also trained a large number of people. Robert Stamboliev, (founder of ITP) introduced their work in many European countries and, along with Jerien Koolbergen, in the Netherlands. The very first translation of Hal and Sidra's book *Embracing Our Selves* appeared in the Netherlands and all of their books are available in Dutch. Voice Dialogue is becoming more and more popular among therapists, trainers and coaches in the Netherlands and throughout the world.

Hal and Sidra Stone live in Mendocino County in Northern California and they continue to write, as well as teach in workshop settings. For more information, visit their website at [www.voicedialogue.org](http://www.voicedialogue.org)



## APPENDIX 2

### Addresses for Voice Dialogue sessions and education

All three of us work as coaches. You can contact us with questions pertaining to your work or to your private life. Are you interested in learning how to work with Voice Dialogue professionally? Each one of us holds workshops and training sessions for coaches, trainers and other facilitators. You can reach us at the following addresses.

#### **Karin Brugman – De Onderstroom**

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**Voice Dialogue International**

On Hal and Sidra Stone's website, you can find a list of Voice Dialogue facilitators in the Netherlands and worldwide.

[www.voicedialogue.org](http://www.voicedialogue.org)

# APPENDIX 3

## Glossary

### ARCHETYPES

Archetypes – a term coined by Carl Jung – represent our primordial collective images of fatherhood, motherhood, struggle, death, power, love, surrender, the source of life, and so on. Their presence cannot be explained by simply looking at your own personal history but rather by looking at the history of mankind as a whole. A few archetypes are the Patriarch, the Matriarch, the Warrior, the Hero and the Joker. (See chapter 2.8, page 120)

### AWARE EGO

The part of you that is aware of all your subpersonalities and that is able to lead them. The manager of the selves that knows you consist of multiple selves and can notice when you are coinciding with one of your selves. The Aware Ego is capable of managing the tensions created by the different opinions of all your subpersonalities. It has freedom of choice. The Aware Ego has one arm wrapped around one self and the other arm wrapped around the other self. It respects all the selves. There are no good or bad subpersonalities from the perspective of the Aware Ego. (See chapter 1.4, page 43)

**BONDING PATTERN**

In a bonding pattern, the relationship does not exist between two people but between two groups of subpersonalities. Because your life is mostly determined by your primary selves, they also influence your relationships with others. The Aware Ego is not involved in bonding patterns. Your bodyguards have taken over the wheel of your personality, both for you and for the other person. There are positive and negative bonding patterns. When you frequently end up in a positive or negative bonding pattern with someone, the other person is probably carrying some of your disowned selves and this, plus disowned vulnerability, will enable the bonding pattern to continue. (See chapter 3, page 130)

**BODYGUARDS**

Metaphor for primary subpersonalities. See subpersonalities. (See chapter 1, page 17)

**DISIDENTIFY**

Separating from your inner selves. (See chapters 1, 4, page 45, 49, 176)

**PARTS**

See subpersonalities.

**ENERGETICS OF THE SUBPERSONALITIES**

The energy a subpersonality emits. This is visibly noticeable by their posture, gestures and expression. Energies are constantly changing within you because each subpersonality carries a different energy. When you change from one subpersonality to another, you start to emit a very different energy. You not only think you are someone else, you actually become someone else. The same person, the same body, but a totally different energy. (See chapter 4, page 161)

**FACILITATOR**

Facilitator of a Voice Dialogue session. The facilitator literally engages in a conversation with the various selves of the client. He or she helps you

to meet and experience your subpersonalities, to separate from them or to allow more room for one side to come forth. A facilitator helps you to develop an Aware Ego. (See chapter 4, page 161)

### **AWARENESS**

Awareness is the part of you that has the ability to witness yourself. At the end of a Voice Dialogue session, the facilitator will ask you to come and sit next to them and recall the session while experiencing some distance. The facilitator summarizes the essence of the session and the client listens as a neutral observer. (See chapter 4, page 161)

### **IDENTIFY**

Coinciding with a subpersonality. (See chapter 1, page 17 and chapter 4, page 161)

### **SELVES**

See subpersonalities.

### **MANAGER OF THE SELVES**

Metaphor for the Aware Ego. See Aware Ego.

### **INNER CHILD**

As a baby, you coincide with the Inner Child. You *are* it. Later on, once you have grown up, you still carry this Inner Child within you. It becomes a subpersonality. The Inner Child is very sensitive, open and intuitive. (See chapter 2.7, page 108)

### **SIDES**

See subpersonalities.

### **VOICE DIALOGUE METHOD**

Besides the psychological theory, Voice Dialogue also has a method for working with subpersonalities. In the Voice Dialogue method, your vari-

ous subpersonalities are explicitly invited to come forward. You can then listen to each of them separately. (See chapter 4, page 161)

### **LEVELS OF AWARENESS**

In a Voice Dialogue session, you work on the development of the Aware Ego. This awareness is constantly changing as it develops on three different levels.

1. Experiencing your different subpersonalities. Becoming aware of your subpersonalities by identifying with them and by literally experiencing them.
2. Developing an Aware Ego. The Aware Ego is the part of you that is aware of and can manage all of your subpersonalities. See Aware Ego.
3. Awareness. This develops during the entire session, but time is specifically given at the end of a session. See Awareness.

### **UNDEVELOPED SELVES**

See subpersonalities.

### **PRIMARY SELVES**

See subpersonalities.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL FINGERPRINT**

Who you really are – your essence. It holds all possibilities which lie within your potential.

As a baby, you already possessed all the things that made you unmistakably you. Much like a real fingerprint, your psychological fingerprint looks a lot like other people's and yet it is unique for each person. (See chapter 1, page 17)

### **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELVES**

'The Psychology of Selves' is the theoretical concept that was developed by Hal and Sidra Stone. It begins with the notion that your personality is made up of parts, also called selves or subpersonalities. (See chapter 1, page 17)

## **SUBPERSONALITIES**

Different aspects of your personality, also called parts, inner voices or selves. There are primary, disowned and undeveloped subpersonalities.

1. *Primary selves.* Subpersonalities that spend a lot of time up front. Your personal 'bodyguards'. They largely determine your behaviour and how other people see you.
2. *Disowned selves.* These subpersonalities are less prominent in your life. They have been banished to your subconscious.
3. *Undeveloped selves.* Subpersonalities you do not use that often. These are sides which you did not know you had, simply because they have never been called upon. (See chapter 1, page 17)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Karin Brugman** (behavioural scientist) works as an independent senior trainer and coach. She operates from her own office, 'De Onderstroom' (lit. *The Undercurrent*). During her studies, she worked as a volunteer for the 'Kindertelefoon' (a children's hotline) in Utrecht. This is where she first began her work as a trainer. She continued to hone her skills with the KPC Group where she trained teachers. It was here that she was first introduced to psychodrama techniques, thanks to her colleague Jan Lap. She was pleasantly surprised by how effective this method proved to be. In 1999, Karin joined the Boertiengroep and continued to work there for another nine years. She gave post-vocational training to people who sought to become trainers and coaches themselves, and she also taught courses in personal effectiveness. She attended many courses herself during this period, one of which was the psychodrama course taught by Lex Mulder. In psychodrama, depth and playfulness go hand in hand perfectly, as do humour and sensitivity. These elements also characterize the way in which Karin likes to work. In a very lively way, Lex Mulder successfully combines psychodrama techniques with the Voice Dialogue theory and method. It was here that Karin discovered that she does not consist of one but of a whole bunch of selves, selves that often have their own opposing ideas. This enlightening and respectful way of looking at people touched her and inspired her deeply. This is why, in 2001, she attended a Voice Dialogue course held by Robert Stamboliev. During a visit with the founders of Voice Dialogue, Hal and Sidra Stone, she ran into Judith Budde again. They still knew each other from the Psychodrama course. This

second encounter led to their collaboration in teaching Voice Dialogue at 'het Balkon' (lit. *the Balcony*) and eventually to the writing of this book, together with Berry Collewijn.

**Judith Budde** (Dutch linguist) is head of 'het Balkon', a conference and training center in the Netherlands. She has more than 20 years of experience as a business trainer (NIP-registered, lit. *Dutch Institute of Psychologists*) and coach in the fields of management, personal effectiveness and team development. She has been training trainers and coaches since 1997. In the late 1990s, when she was looking for a way to liven up her courses, she took a course in Psychodrama techniques with Lex Mulder. She enjoyed the playfulness and the joy in his way of working. It was during this course that she first became acquainted with Voice Dialogue, and with Karin Brugman. Shortly thereafter, she met Berry Collewijn who was also very enthusiastic about working with Voice Dialogue. Judith was attracted to the nonjudgmental, accepting and liberating aspects of the method. What a beautiful way of working. She continued to study under Robert Stamboliev and Maria Daniels. She regularly attended training sessions with Hal and Sidra Stone in California and also participated in workshops with Martha-Lou Wolff, Judith Hendin and Tamar Stone. Together with her life partner, René Meijer, she manages the conference and education center 'het Balkon' in Vasse in the Netherlands. In this renovated monastery, they bring together knowledge of intervention sciences to create courses for trainers, coaches, advisors and therapists. Judith teaches courses in Voice Dialogue and drama techniques. In 2006, the book she wrote together with Lex Mulder, 'Drama in bedrijf. Werken met dramatechnieken in training en coaching' (lit. *Drama in company/scene. Working with drama techniques in training and coaching*), was published by Thema.

**Berry Collewijn** has been established as an independent senior trainer, coach and educator since 1995. She operates from 'B.E.E.R.' in Amsterdam where she works for various companies and institutions. With her life partner Lex Mulder, she creates trainings for professional coaches, trainers, and consultants in Amsterdam and on Ibiza. They teach how to use

Voice Dialogue and also how to combine it with drama techniques in order to work with it in groups. Lex developed Voicedrama, a combination of Voice Dialogue and psychodrama techniques, in the early '90s. On request they can give international training in different places in the world in various languages (Dutch, English and Italian).

Berry is also active in guiding and facilitating behaviour modification training programs for executives as well as courses in personal effectiveness. She uses a lot of experiential learning in those courses, along with Voice Dialogue and various drama techniques.

Born and raised in Amsterdam, she earned her degree as a director at the Amsterdam school of theatre during the '70s. She worked as an Italian guide for a few years after which she earned a reputation in business. She started up a franchise with five establishments in the Netherlands and managed the whole operation. In 1993, she went to see Jerien Koolbergen for some management coaching. This was her first experience with Voice Dialogue. It was a revelation for Berry how penetrative and effective the method was and how well it worked, both personally and professionally. She was immediately hooked. She took a three year course in Voice Dialogue with Robert Stamboliev and attended some training sessions with Hal and Sidra Stone in California. She was one of Hal and Sidra's co-trainers during an international congress in the Netherlands. Next to training and education, Berry also provides individual coaching as well as couples' coaching.

She created with a group of actors the 'Theatre of selves' (Theater van de ikken). This combination of theatre and Voice Dialogue offers a playful introduction in various aspects of Voice dialogue and the Psychology of selves.