

THE EGO - can you survive without it

Whatever you believe the ego to be, and for the most part, it is perceived as a negative and destructive part of ourselves, I would like to share what I have learned about the ego from personal experience as well as experience with my clients over many years.

For the sake of research for this article I read most everything written about the ego from Freud to Osho and came away with the impression that we are to treat the ego as an enemy. It is dangerous, calculating, not real, causes pain, unnecessary, unspiritual, desperate for attention and at the very least, a mental disorder or the source of one of the seven deadly sins known as pride.

If the ego causes so many problems, wouldn't life be better all around if we could permanently remove or as many teachers suggest, destroy the ego? The answer is you can't rid yourself permanently of your ego. Removal of the ego is, in essence, instant Oneness with God and there are very few people who have been able to exist in perfect Oneness on this planet. In our desire to manifest into physical form we create polarity as a counterbalance to that Oneness, the All That Is. We brought the Ego in with us to experience LIFE with all its challenges and pitfalls and it affects almost every single interaction on the planet. Without it there is almost no point in being here. And we feel a certain comfort having the ego to protect us from threats to our physical and emotional well being even if we're not sure what the ego is or what part it plays in our lives. The part of oneself that says "I'm never going to let that happen to me again" is the ego.

Unfortunately, people often aren't aware of how much the ego controls their lives. From relationship issues to government and military decisions the ego can create havoc and does. Its terra firma is fear and negativity. The last thing it wants us to be is vulnerable and if we can't be vulnerable we lose. If you've ever had a confrontation with a loved one and stood your ground, believing you were absolutely sure that you were right and then watched that loved one walk out of your life you know what price you pay for invulnerability.

We all have different perspectives of the ego - for some it is pride, or an inflated sense of self-esteem. For others it is the embodiment of evil. The fact is that we are all affected by it and if we want to access our higher good we have to learn how to control it and how to balance it in our lives. We have to recognize when it is there and not try to hide it. I like to think of the ego as energy, just as money is energy. This energy can be used to create or destroy depending on the intention. If we aspire to be moral, ethical, loving and enlightened beings, and if the behavior effected by the ego is seemingly contrary to these traits, then the ego appears to be inherently bad or evil. At a higher level, though, the ego provides us opportunity to experience all things contrary to love. The problem is that very few people are objective enough, especially while they are going through a difficult experience, to realize this and be thankful for the opportunity that the ego has provided them. Instead, they focus on the negative feelings, emotions and ultimately, the undesired outcome. If we remember the Creator's greatest gift is free will then the degree to which we embrace our ego-driven behavior is the true key to the effect the ego has on our lives.

Some years ago I had the opportunity during a Shamanic journey to meet my Ego (notice the capitalized "E"). I was able to briefly sense its presence as a separate part of myself. At first I

believed all the distractions it brought my way. I found myself asking the teacher if we could have a good long talk and then I wanted to go outside and take in a breath of fresh air; I focused on the other people in the room and noted their taste in clothing! This went on for a while before I finally settled down quietly and had a thought. There was something deep inside that I was trying to avoid. (Don't laugh, healers avoid things, too.) So who was the avoider since, at least part of me spent good money to do this journey and really wanted to know what was hiding inside. Another thought came - that jokester who has been telling me I needed a walk and commenting on everything just might be my ego. Third thought, and this from my Higher Self: Thank the ego for a job well done then ask it to move aside. I did exactly that. In a brief moment my ego released its hold on me and I became vulnerable enough to experience a deeply felt guilt that needed healing.

As the healer-observer in that situation I marveled at the power available to all of us to control the hold that the ego has on us. As the "healee", no longer under the ego's control, I was able to receive blessings and strength to mend a part of myself that caused untold problems in my life.

Since that enlightening moment I have had other practice sessions with my ego and remembered (after a some struggle) that I had the power to ask my ego to take a hike. I repeated the gratitude I felt for it for helping me survive and asked it to move away so that I could gain more insight. Again, in a split second I felt the release and saw myself and my creations more clearly.

Being the kind of person that I am I've had some good laughs with my Ego since our first formal introduction and have come to understand its role better. I have also used my experience to help my clients when resistance is strong. In every single instance, the ego has moved aside when asked.

You can try this exercise on your own. Before going into a situation that you deem difficult, sit quietly for a few moments and relax as best you can. Take some deep breaths and then ask your ego to leave for a while. Sometimes you can actually recognize the ego and its personality. But even if you don't you will notice a change in yourself. The ego won't stay away very long but you always have the power to ask it to leave again. It's as simple as that. The most important thing is to practice. Clients report a variety of reactions to the ego's departure from feeling a novel vulnerability that allows compassion, forgiveness and understanding to a beautiful lightness of being. Those who can see or sense their ego also tell me that it appears very happy to return!

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