

Redefining Personality

The koan *Who Are You* has been used by spiritual masters since the beginning of time. Koan is a riddle used in Zen to deal with the inadequacy of logical reasoning. It gives the aspirant an opportunity to look more deeply within themselves in order to promote self-discovery. In psychological terms, we look to the various *parts* of us, or *Selves* that make up what we call our personality, so we can see who's running the show and change the director as that becomes necessary. Please consider if you will a *psychological* car in which all the parts that make up our personality are sitting in the back seat. If we are in a business meeting for example, we will shift the Thinker from the back seat to the driver's seat. When we go home and are having a deep and meaningful conversation with our partner we engage the Intimate, feeling part and allow the Thinker to return to the back seat of the car with all the other parts.

We have many parts such as the Thinker, Feeler, Power self and Vulnerable self. We also tend to look at these parts or *sub-personalities* in the context of opposites. The Thinker is opposite to the Feeler and the Power self is the opposite of the Vulnerable self. It could be said, at the level of mind we are not our roles or even our behaviour but rather a collection of all these parts within. Interestingly, the parts most running the show will determine our ability to adapt to people and our environment. They will affect our happiness. This material is based in the work of Hal Stone PhD and Sidra Stone PhD the creators of the Voice Dialogue Series, also known as the Psychology of Selves. Using this material allows us to focus in new ways on our personality in order to *unhook* from unwanted behaviour.

You and I learned very early in the peace, in fact before we were one year old, that it was more rewarding for us to please our mother with reciprocal smiles and gestures. We felt our mother's love and connection more when we responded with a happy state than when we were cranky. Hence one of the first sub-personalities (Self) usually to be born is the *Pleaser*. We unconsciously attempt to please the people around us in order to get our own needs met.

The *Inner Critic* is often the next to form, as our conditioning continues. The purpose of the critic is to make sure we get it right so nothing bad will happen – we won't have to experience rejection, humiliation, wrath of a parent, etc. Over time we develop many Selves such as the Rule maker, the Analyst, Clown, the Rebel, the Pusher, Carer, the Being part, the Logical part, Perfectionist, the Slob, Victim, the Procrastinator, etc. There may be hundreds of these Selves. As a result of adapting to our parents, others and our environment we tend to overly identify with one or more of these parts from quite an early age.

The purpose of Voice Dialogue work is to discover our sub-personality traits, observe which ones are out of balance, Unhook, and bring them back into balance.

I worked with a man who had an out-of-control Pusher. After some sessions we were able to have him Unhook from that Self, which allowed him to embrace the qualities of the opposite Self. This meant he could now take time out, enjoy doing nothing and unlike before, he could feel good about his accomplishments. When he was owned by his Pusher, whatever he did was never enough. The process allowed him to sit between the opposites in a way that gave him choice as to which sub-personality he would engage. He was no longer *driven* by his Pusher. Voice Dialogue work with a practitioner is useful in balancing the part of us running the show, with the opposite part we have Disowned. We can help our self by observing what we are attached to and what we reject in our self and in others. ☺