

Focus: Inner Redirection & Balance

Do You Have Clarity About Your Shadow Sides?

An essential aspect with regard to what kind of life you are creating depends on whether you have clarity and consciousness about your so called bright principles and also your shadow principles. If your purpose is really noble and you wish to lead a fulfilling life, realizing it could become very challenging, if your unconscious shadow side – your weaker self – keeps undermining your life, by e. g. unconsciously fighting against other people and situations, judging, creating so called low drama with fights, justifications, whining and blaming, manipulating, being arrogant, making yourself small, competing or getting revenge.

In their book *The Wise Heart* Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein speak of so called *close enemies*, i. e. forces that are opposed to noble qualities such as love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity and thus to a responsible life. In their book they took a closer look at these 4 bright principles that are essential for a nourishing life and collaboration.

Close enemies are states, which are pretty close to those qualities and therefore easily confused with those, although they contradict the original qualities in their essence.

The close enemy of love

The close enemy of love is adherence. Adherence camouflages as love. I say: „I will love you, if you also love me.“ This is a kind of bargaining love. We basically think: „I will love this person as long as they don't change. I will love this thing, if it is the way I want it.“ However, this is not love, but adherence. There is a big difference between love that accepts, respects and appreciates and adherence, which clings, demands and tries to take possession. If we confuse adherence with love, this actually separates us from the other person. We have the impression we need the other person in order to be happy. Adherence is also the reason why we can offer our love only to certain people and exclude others from it.

True love is a universal, not differentiating feeling (Note for more clarity: it is a bright principle) of care and connectivity. We can even include people in this love, we don't like at all or of which we don't have a good opinion. (...)

The close enemy of compassion

The close enemy of compassion is pity. Instead of feeling the openness of compassion, pity says: “Oh my, how this poor guy is suffering over there!” Pity creates a separation between ourselves and others; it is connected to a feeling of distance and gap of the suffering of others, as if we were different. Compassion experiences instead the suffering of others as mirror of the own pain ... Compassion is the tender willingness of the heart to respond to our own suffering or the suffering of others, without resentment or aversion.



The close enemy of sympathetic joy

Sympathetic joy is the capability of feeling joy about the luck of others. The close enemy of this quality is the competing comparison – the feeling that our experience makes us inferior or superior to another person or puts us on the same level. This force pushes us to judge ourselves in comparison to somebody else. We separate ourselves and evaluate, judge and confirm ourselves referring to the life of another human being. The comparison itself already is – apart from all the conclusions we draw – a source of pain and self-deceit. ... Sympathetic joy includes all who enjoy happiness and brings us into contact with them. Their well-being is our own.

The close enemy of equanimity

The close enemy of equanimity is indifference or numbness. This characteristic can refer to ourselves, our family, our work or the problems in the world. The voice of indifference says: "Who cares? ... What does it matter? Everything is perishable anyway!" This is the voice of the fear of commitment, which has difficulties in keeping up a spiritual practice or relationship or following a continuous work... Indifference can temporarily give us a deceptive feeling of peace. However, this is a non-caring attitude and a withdrawal from the experience; it cuts us off from our life energy. True equanimity is not a withdrawal, but a balanced opening for all aspects of life, an engagement in the wholeness of life, which goes along with a mental concinnity, a wise acceptance of the nature of all things.

The close enemies are methods we use out of fear to separate from life.

*(Source: Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, *The Wise Heart*)*

In other words: Close enemies – which means shadow principles – lead to results that are opposed to a fulfilling, responsible life. Yet, we don't learn anything about so-called shadow principles, although they permanently surround us and most of us grew up with the shadow principles of competition and judging in school at the latest. Since especially these two shadow principles are omnipresent, we think that it is normal to judge, fight and compete. For example, the entire economic system is based on the shadow principle of competition, evaluation and judgment.

Experiment: Cotton on to the close enemies

To cotton on to the close enemies, it is helpful to authentically admit, in which areas of your life these principles are active. Take a piece of white paper and write down the 4 following questions, leaving a little bit of space in between:

1. Where, with whom and in which situations do you adhere and behave adaptive?
2. Where do you close your ears or separate yourself from others who suffer?
3. When and with regard to whom do you feel envy?
4. With regard to which situations and people are you indifferent? Where did you take on an attitude of indifference?

Then sincerely write down your answer below each question and/or list the different aspects. Answering these questions will already give you a key, why your life might not yet be the way you wish for, although you seem to have a noble purpose.

When doing this exercise, it is not about punishing yourself that these shadow principles or close enemies might be active in your life. When you find yourself in self-punishment, take into consideration that this is also a shadow principle. The way you use shadow principles on others, you can also use them on yourself. This exercise is rather about sharpening your consciousness. The more consciousness you have about shadow principles and the painful consequences in your life, the more you will be able to choose a different path and let so called bright principles work in your life. We live in a duality, i. e. we have both sides in us, a bright side and a shadow side. The question is which side runs your life. However, be aware that it is not just about making a decision once. It is rather a moment to moment decision for the rest of your life.

You might have heard the story of the old Cherokee Indian and his grandson.

An old Cherokee chief is teaching his grandson about life:

“A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.

“One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, self-doubt, and ego.

“The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

“This same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old chief simply replied, “The one you feed.”

So it is necessary to cotton on to the weaker self, to the shadow principles, to the close enemies. The energy follows the attention. This is a universal law. Which wolf do you feed?

Best wishes,
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