

# Balancing The Polarities: How The Darkness Helps Us Evolve

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## Hands-up, who really likes themselves?

It's one of those questions that makes people squirm. If we say 'yes' we might be labeled as arrogant, if we say 'no' people might catch on that we have low self-esteem, so most people will play it safe and say 'sometimes'. That covers all bases, we're not full of ourselves or under confident, we like our good points but not our bad. And herein lies the problem. It's difficult to have lasting self-esteem if we place conditions on attaining it. If we believe [our self-esteem will improve](#) when we're thinner, richer or kinder we're standing on shaky ground, and while we may like ourselves when we reach our goals the feeling often doesn't last for long. The dissatisfaction and critical inner voice returns telling us we need to do or be something different before we can feel good.

For many of us self-esteem is, ironically, related to how other people and society perceives us. We are taught from a young age that in order to have high self-esteem we need a job we love, or one that pays well, a [happy relationship](#), a home of our own, a healthy bank account, fashionable clothes, a fit body that's desirable to others, defined goals that usually involve moving up some kind of progressional ladder and a myriad of other external factors. More people are becoming aware of the importance of looking within to find happiness and self-acceptance, an idea present in many religious and philosophical traditions that are gaining popularity today, but we then encounter a set of mental, emotional and for some, spiritual requirements that also need to be met before we can truly like ourselves.

It's important to understand that we are all made up of different parts that can be equated to different roles we play in our lives; parent, friend, employee, partner. Some of these parts are more archetypal such as the joker, the child, the saboteur or the victim. Like the disparate and seemingly disconnected ingredients of a soup they come together to form our personality. Some parts we like more than others, just as we may like carrots more than we like cabbage, and some parts we leave out of the mix within our [consciousness](#) because we don't like them at all.

## **Balance vs. transcendence**

Reconciling all our parts, with their different motivations, beliefs and emotional baggage can be difficult as they are often at odds with each other. Our parental part may think saving money for the future is a great idea but our teenage part may sabotage that behavior in favor of present moment gratification. We all deal with these polarities within ourselves, but we often don't realize that the aspects of our personalities we judge to be 'bad' often have something important to show us. If we allow ourselves to accept these parts and really feel the associated emotions we often find the hidden gems that spur us on to evolve. Often the more palatable option is to suppress the 'bad' and focus only on the 'good', but if we ignore what we don't like it increases in strength;; we become more angry, more depressed or more deluded. By understanding we are all a complex mix of [conflicting beliefs, thoughts and feelings](#), that make most of us hypocrites some of the time, we can start to feel better about ourselves right now.

That isn't to say that we stop trying to improve ourselves. Accepting the status quo can often hinder our personal growth as we can fall into the transcendence trap that tells us to rise above all that is ugly within ourselves as opposed to balancing the polarities within. Spiritual practices, such as

meditation and yoga, provide a refuge from the constant chatter of our minds and are important if we are to gain peace and clarity, but they can also become a form of escapism that keeps us stuck in denial about who we are. Acknowledgment and acceptance of our polarities not only leads to a more authentic sense of self, but gives us the courage to take positive action on both a personal and global level.

## **As within, so without**

While we may feel discomfort when we look at the darker sides of our personalities, this provides the catalyst we need to make changes. We can see this happening on a global scale as we face an increase in social, economical, political and ecological unrest that is prompting, what some are calling, a [paradigm shift](#). A collective apathy has been present in our culture for many years which has allowed the darker side of humanity to proceed unhindered, and while this is difficult for some to accept, for others it is the wake up call they needed to start taking action towards positive change.

This awakening of humankind is akin to an activation of global self-esteem that helps us speak out against injustice. Our collective gut instinct, that tells us things aren't quite right, has kicked into gear bringing clarity and discernment to what we choose to believe. This level of discernment is one of the most important features of global or personal self-esteem. It allows each of us to navigate through the depths of ourselves and the plethora of revelatory news stories to decide what is truth and what is distraction.

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