

An excerpt from *Your Ultimate Life Plan: How to Deeply Transform Your Everyday Experience and Create Changes That Last*, by Dr. Jennifer Howard.

Journeying from Wounded Ego to Sacred Self

What is it in you that brings you to a spiritual teacher in the first place? It's not the spirit in you, since that is already enlightened, and has no need to seek. No, it is the ego in you that brings you to a teacher.

—Ken Wilber

There's a lot of conflicting information and beliefs about the ego, so it's a confusing topic for most people. Is the ego an indispensable element of consciousness, central to healthy functioning and helping you survive as a human being with a separate self, as psychology proposes? Or, is it bent on destroying your life, sabotaging your quest for happiness and enlightenment, and something to eliminate, as some spiritual philosophies believe? In other words, should we take our ego to lunch, or kill it?

So what, exactly, is the ego? How does it develop? How does it help you survive? How does the ego become wounded, and how do you heal it?

Think of the ego as a container holding your individuality, the sum of a lifetime's personal experience, including your unresolved pain, most of which is unconscious. Briefly described, the ego is your sense of "I-ness," containing your thinking, feeling, and sensation, and distinguishing you from others. It's the part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious, and is responsible for testing reality and a sense of personal identity.

It helps you learn how to bring more awareness to your human journey with all its twists and turns. This conscious awareness helps you to heal and make peace with your historical pain. You can then address and heal your wounded human ego. As you continue along your path, your understanding and beliefs about who you are will present themselves for examination.

In your willingness to illuminate every dark corner of your consciousness, you'll meet parts of yourself only glimpsed before. Many spiritual circles believe you should simply let go of all the ego "stuff" without giving it your time or energy. They see the contents of the ego as unimportant to who you really are. They encourage us to bypass or jump over the personal self, believing it irrelevant to our humanity or enlightenment. This idea impedes our ability to change, and interferes with achieving our ultimate transformation. Yes, you're more than your stories, past hurts, and programming, and the more you can welcome and integrate your ego, the more fluid and flexible you'll be in your life and relationships. In time, as you become more cohesive, you'll move closer to wholeness.

As you change and grow, you heal much of your woundings and you're capable of accepting more of your humanity with grace and forgiveness. The healing allows you to sink into a more integrated ego, a personal self that's relaxed, understands its place, and opens to your sacred Self. You begin experiencing yourself as part of a bigger whole. You feel like a wave in a vast ocean. You sense the enormity of the ocean, and at the same time, you enjoy and treasure your personal *waviness*. From this perspective, you can generate gratitude for all the pleasures you've received, as well as all the difficulties.

##

Dr. Jennifer Howard is a licensed psychotherapist, energy healer, and spiritual teacher. She's the author of *Your Ultimate Life Plan: How to Deeply Transform Your Everyday Experience and Create Changes That Last*, Huffington Post blogger and the host of the weekly radio talk show, *A Conscious Life*. Visit her website, www.DrJenniferHoward.com, for meditations, articles, and free gifts.

Reprinted, with permission of the publisher, from ***YOUR ULTIMATE LIFE PLAN: HOW TO DEEPLY TRANSFORM YOUR EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE AND CREATE CHANGES THAT LAST*** © 2013 Dr. Jennifer Howard. Published by New Page Books a division of Career Press, Pompton Plains, NJ. 800-227-3371. All rights reserved.