



## ARTICLE:

# Ego: Love it or Leave it

By Dr. Jennifer Howard

(843 words)

**Y**ou might be thinking, “Why would I love my ego? Isn’t it the cause of life’s problems?”

In many spiritual circles, the ego is viewed as the enemy; it’s something separate from us, and we should either ignore it or get rid of it. The ego’s gotten a bad rap. Yes, being “egotistical” doesn’t usually help us in relationships and can be difficult for others to be around, but ego doesn’t equal egotistical. The ego isn’t really the scary monster it’s made out to be. It’s part of what gives us our individuality, our quirky personality. It provides our sense of “I-ness,” and is what distinguishes us from others. It carries a lifetime of personal experience including our mostly unconscious, unresolved pain, and it also helps us connect to our higher consciousness. It helps us make choices in life. In short, it’s part of what makes us beautiful human beings.

So what do we do with it? How can we be with it?

What if the ego were your friend?

It’s possible to explore and actually befriend your ego. Getting to know this part of you gives you more health and aliveness, helping you transform on your unique human journey. As long as we reject our ego as our enemy, keeping it at arms length—whether out of fear, judgment, or lack of trust—it’s hard to become whole. It splits our psyche into disparate pieces, causing confusion, and ultimately leading us down side-streets instead of directly to our power and True Self. Our job, as humans, is to pursue those historical wounded places within ourselves that keep us stuck. When we do, we can heal and our ego integrates, helping us relax into the larger context, the deepest Grace that is always available to us.

As we begin to heal the ego, it relaxes. When we fight it, it hounds us. For example, if I tell you I hate my sadness, what do you think will keep nipping at my heels? Sadness! Until I face uncomfortable feelings, they will continue to haunt me. This is how we find freedom: by facing everything, including the contents of our ego. We can choose to face ourselves, or we can hide out.

So how do we begin the process of integrating our ego?

**Accept that you can't escape it.** As much as you may want to ignore, avoid, or somehow sneak around your unresolved issues, your historical childhood wounding doesn't usually go away by itself. Of course, we don't always like our more difficult thoughts and feelings, and may feel the urge to run from the contents of our ego. When you know it's inescapable and is your key to real freedom, you'll begin the process of facing and kindly allowing what's there.

**Make a commitment to yourself.** Try saying out loud, "I'm willing to be with what shows up in front of me. I'm willing to face it, even though it doesn't always feel good." You're important, and the rewards are worth every minute you spend on it. As you continue the process of self-discovery, this effort becomes your great joy. You'll grow more compassionate with yourself, others, and the world. Consequently, you'll grow happier.

**Conjure the courage to face whatever's there.** Again, the good news: your ego's not the monster you think it is! After the first two steps, you know you can't escape it anyway, and hiding out won't lead you to what you really want in your life. As you begin unraveling the difficulties, you'll see they don't have as much power as you first imagined, and you're bigger than your difficulties. Feelings can sometimes seem scary at first, and you might find you need support to face a particularly difficult past experience. But you really can move through all your feelings and open to the True Self. Once you've faced your thoughts and feelings, as intimidating as it seems, you'll find a new and joyful level of freedom.

It takes enormous energy to continue living from that false front or mask we've created to show the world, trying to hold everything together while we're avoiding our inner life. It's exhausting! Our lives can become increasingly difficult and our resistance creates disease and loss of vitality. Conversely, when we allow ourselves to grieve, navigate, and work through our unresolved issues, we feel energized and lighter. So, embrace your ego and dig into the work ahead of you. As you begin to recognize and embrace your wholeness—your real, integrated self—you'll know more peace and joy than you've ever experienced before. This journey is worth it, and so are you!

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**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](http://www.DrJenniferHoward.com), for meditations, articles, and free gifts.