

## Soul Mates or Soul Exchange?

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During my late teens and twenties (the late 60's and early 70's), there was lots of talk in metaphysical circles about soul mates. Authors writing about soul mates hoped to guide people in their search.

Those of us (particularly the Neptune in Libra generation) who took this seriously got a generous dose of disillusionment during the Libra transits of Pluto (in the 70's) and Uranus (in the 80's) as they conjoined our Neptune placements. The “young folks” born during those transits are now going through their own relational growing pains. The concept of soul mates still seems to hold us in thrall.

I am reminded of Carolyn Myss' comment about soul mates: “I think soul mates are more often wound mates.” It seems we are often drawn to those who mirror our wounds and support our woundedness.

She has a point; I have observed in my own life as well as others, that we tend to play out our emotional issues in relationship and expect those close to us to enable us. Yet many of us seek a soul connection, particularly in our most intimate relationships. We want authenticity; we want to share our lives with people with whom we can be our true selves.

But do we have a clue about what being our true self means? When we discover the true self, are we comfortable with it? Is anyone else out there comfortable with it? We want to be accepted and loved for being authentically ourselves.

On the path to finding the true self--the deep self--and people to share it with, we are likely to need healing. The average person has experienced wounding that caused him or her to hide that self from others. To be real was to be rejected. Even in the best of families, with the best of parents, some aspect of us was not acceptable. This is the aspect we hide from others. It is also the aspect of our nature that has sustained wounds. Perhaps we were too boisterous, joyful, angry, or creative for those around us to deal with. It was

uncomfortable and they expressed disapproval or punished us. That part went underground.

When we discover that some of us part has been lost, we need to recover it. In shamanic terms, we may need soul retrieval, a process of bringing back soul energy lost through trauma. A person who experiences trauma (physical, mental, emotional or spiritual) can lose soul energy that cannot return on its own. The shamanic healer undertakes a journey to find the lost soul and bring it back. As the healer journeys, he or she often “sees” the incident that caused the soul loss. The healer must then bring back the healed soul energy to the client.

Soul retrieval is often a powerful healing experience. Afterward we may find it easier to be true to the person we know we are inside and share that essential self with others. Certainly we become more aware of that essential self.

In seeking the true self, we also need to be aware of how we give our souls away in relationships, and how we accept the soul energy of others. This is a common method of bonding in our culture. Sometimes this is soul exchange; sometimes it is soul theft. Manipulation is one form of soul theft, as is intimidation, or any form of abuse. Sometimes, in addition to soul loss, we cause (or suffer) energy intrusion, which then requires shamanic extraction.

One way to win our souls back, or heal intrusions, is to start a campaign of self-healing. This can include therapy or shamanic work, but also involves examining our lives for patterns of abdicating soul power, or having inadequate boundaries, and working to change these patterns. It is our responsibility as we mature to seek healing for these experiences. As we heal, our relationships evolve and heal as well.

Sometimes this process feels endless. Many of us moan over the time it takes. And it's true--we can take a giant step in a single moment, but more often it seems to be two steps forward and one step back. But progress does happen, even when it is slow, and we can learn new ways of relating and living.

It is important to take the time, effort and resources to seek out those who can facilitate our healing and teach us how to support

that healing as we move on in our lives. It is important to maintain our humor, compassion and honesty with ourselves as an essential part of the healing journey. It is a journey, our life's journey. We may as well enjoy the process and be kind to ourselves, or we will lose sight of the beauty in crafting the precious jewel that we are.

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