

# Finding THE INNER YOU

*Reclaiming our authentic self can release us from the control of our ego,*  
writes Carolyn Moody.

**T**he image we have of ourselves is something that we have created over the course of many years. We are often very attached to this image. How often do you hear yourself saying or thinking: “I couldn’t possibly do that,” “it’s just not me,” “I’m too clumsy/stupid/disorganised/useless...” or “it’s just the way I am.”

How we see ourselves, our beliefs about who we are and our place in the world are based on our experiences growing up. As children we are not able to make adult judgements about conditional or unconditional love. We feel when something is wrong, but lack the intellectual capacity to verbalise it, nor do we have the physical size or strength to demand what is right. We have no alternative but to see ourselves through the lens of our conditioning and identify



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with it. As we learn to doubt ourselves and be something that is acceptable to others we move away from our authentic self, which is the heart of who we are. This is the place from which we speak our truth, where we are honest with ourselves and others. We do not apologise for and are not ashamed of who we are. We feel safe enough to be real and authentic in our world.

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We are all made up of an ego mind personality. Ego is the part of the mind that deals with all our basic survival fears. During our formative years, the ego's job is to respond to the immediate, surrounding world and build up a mind map to guide us through, help us adapt, fit in and generally survive until we can make it on our own. Its role is invaluable. Without an ego, the human species would probably never make it past childhood.

### CREATING MASKS OR PERSONAS

Ego remembers and is always working to correct painful early experiences. To cope with our fears the ego creates masks or personas that act like a suit of armour to protect us in an apparently hostile world. As adults, even though the

suit of armour has passed its use-by date, we are so used to its 'protection' that we are not consciously aware of slipping it on.

It requires a huge amount of energy to stay straight-jacketed into personas that do not reflect our true self. It can be draining. We may feel constant background anxiety, never knowing why. The incongruence of living our personas can lead to self sabotage in both our professional and personal lives. It is often at the root of emotional overeating and drinking as we try and 'stuff down' our anxiety in an attempt to feel better.

To let go of our personas we can start by giving ourselves permission to believe that we are enough as we are, with all our perceived weaknesses and imperfections. We can start to love and take care of ourselves because we deserve no less.

*We have all done things of which we feel ashamed*

We can differentiate between who we are and what we do. We learnt to define ourselves through our past actions and mistakes, saying such things as: "I let them down, I am so ashamed" and "I

behaved badly, I can never forgive myself." Or we label ourselves: "I am bad. I am a failure. I am an alcoholic. I am stupid. I am useless..." We have all done things of which we feel ashamed. Our behaviour is not the same as who we really are.

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We can learn mindfulness to understand how our minds work to keep us trapped in early programmed conditioning, the looped thinking, reactions and behaviour that keep us stuck. Our ego can no longer control us when we become aware of what it is doing and we decide to change. We can reclaim our lost authentic self.

Finally, we can practice bringing our attention back to the moment. Most of us live in the past or worry about the future. We can learn to breathe deeply and be totally in the now. Because being in control is all an illusion, it is such a relief to just let go and be who we are. As Oscar Wilde said: "Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."



**Carolyn Moody** is an Optimum Nutritionist and Transformational Coach with 22 years experience helping people develop excellent mental, physical and emotional health. Her next 'Live a conscious life' small group programme starts 29 September.  
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