

## **THE SELF - EXPANDED**

‘The three aspects of consciousness’ is an enormous subject exploring the subtleties of awareness. We’ve previously provided a template (see The Three Aspects of Consciousness 1 and 2) to help conceptualise what is an intricate and somewhat paradoxical matter. The truth, however, is that the three categories (self, other and lovingly detached) each house so much depth and detail of their own which is why this handout aims to delve into the subject of Self a bit further. We thought it was important to illustrate some of the advantages and disadvantages of the position we call ‘self’ by comparing and contrasting. In this way both the virtues and contradictions are better exposed. It is also possible to see that only by stepping away from the self can you best see who you are! The self can either be a prison or the doorway to unlimited awareness and the miraculous.

### **Advantages**

When one is anchored to the self in a healthy way, this is a position that promotes and ensures self-care where one honours one’s own needs. It’s not a selfish drive; it’s a self-respecting one. It’s a position that encourages others to be self-respecting too because it understands that it is in independence that we are best able to find our reason for being. The position of ‘healthy self’ respects all life and understands its own value in the drama of life. A community of independent, self-nurturing, mutually supportive beings, creates an environment in which everything flows beautifully. The position of healthy self recognises it can best understand its reason for being both through introspection as well as by regularly stepping outside of the perimeters of the self. Awareness that is useful to personal growth is made up of both perspectives. The healthy self is a position bursting with creative intelligence and infinite possibility. Here the person has access to their highest potential because the mind readily chooses positivity over negativity as it sees how the mind is weakened by complaint, criticism and fear.

Therefore, there is a natural leaning towards kindness, tolerance and compassion and so there is abundance and growth. As a consequence, the person is not disabled by feelings of inadequacy and fear because they have cultivated an attitude of self-acceptance. The healthy self is such a fluid position that is always expanding and growing. Its intentions and motives are altruistic and benevolent, underpinned by kindness and compassion. Such individuals try to find the beauty in all things, and where life is challenging, they choose victory over victimhood, as they know that their mind-set determines their reality. They don’t live deceived by fear and denial, they keep gravitating to what works!

### **Disadvantages**

When we are negatively anchored to self, we become trapped in our own opinion and are therefore bound to the limitations of our own experience, blind to the fact that in order to see the bigger picture we also have to look outside of our own ‘box’ of consciousness. Sadly, those trapped negatively in self are adamant that there is nothing to be gained from this activity, because what could be richer than their own experience and insight! They live the lie that their worldview is better than anyone else’s, so they struggle to negotiate and to

co-operate as their egocentricity dominates. They are fixed, opinionated and unwavering and as a result they are often selfish and unkind... mostly inadvertently but at times wilfully. This is an unhealthy position, because whatever introspection is present, it is busy consolidating and defending what already exists! There's little room for newness and pure creativity because when we are negatively trapped in self we are also attached to the familiar and so fight to sustain what we know because we actually fear the adventures of an ever expanding and unlimited life.

Such individuals choose to keep things small, believing that by doing so they can control everything and are comforted by the illusion of the power they believe they have. This position does not realise that real power exists in riding on the back of life's unlimited flow, a place where free will meets destiny. It is there that our true meaning and purpose reside. Being trapped in self means never accessing that path. The way to be free of this trap is by learning to let go of what you think you know. Remember, it's far more important to do the right thing than battle to be right. This negative drive within the self defends the wrong things and often misses what needs to change.

## **Summary**

So hopefully it's now clearer why the position of self can be both a precious place of awareness and perpetual growth and yet is also the place where such awareness can be denied. It can either be a place where one steps into the arena of unlimited possibility, or it can be a mirage where one lives 'happily' with one's delusions.

If you are to get the best out of self then you have to practise delving deep into the recesses of the mind and heart, through relaxation, meditation, mindfulness, prayer or whatever introspective activities appeal. However, remember that you also have to take regular adventures into the unknown by transcending your fear and stepping outside of your beliefs and perceptions. The world in all its guises is a teacher offering us all many lessons along the way but only the one whose mind is open and willing is ever able to see what those lessons are and imbibe their meaning.

The healthy self is like a child, brimming with innocence, wonder and humility. The unhealthy self is defensive, limited and arrogant and as a result denies itself life's wonder. Which would you choose? There is actually a choice. Remember this truth... you don't see the world as it is, you see it as you are. So, change the setting on your consciousness to open up to life's adventure and be willing to change where necessary and you'll see the world very differently and as a result you'll see yourself more clearly too!