

"I need you to like me."

A Spiritual Approach to Narcissism, Mirroring and One's Need for Feedback
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When we come into this world, we are part angel and part human. The "angelic" part is our True Self, our Essential Self. The human part is that part of us that develops into our ego-personality.

All of our personal, physical, emotional, psychological, and social problems around our feelings of self-worth – e.g., feeling we are not seen, heard or validated, feeling we are not "enough," feeling we don't have value or worth, feeling small or invisible, feeling sad, angry, frustrated, enraged or hateful because we don't receive positive feedback when we think we should, experiencing little to no self-esteem, etc. - arise as a result of our separation from our True Self, from a lack of alignment or congruence between our body, emotions, and mind, on the one hand, and our soul - our True, Essential Self - on the other.

How does this separation happen? What does this separation look like and feel like as we live our lives at work, at home, at play, and in relationship? Is there a way to once again be re-aligned with our True Self?

This paper is an exploration and explanation of the process of separation, a description of ways we feel and behave as a result of the separation and suggests a process that can lead to realignment with our True Self.

When and How Separation Begins Mirroring and Narcissism

As a newborn and young child (to the age of five) our soul is not capable of self-reflection or self-monitoring. This is an accepted fact in developmental psychology. As a baby and young child, we need to be seen in order to grow and develop. Thus, the only possibility at this stage of life is to be seen from the outside. In psychological terms, this being seen from the outside is referred to as *mirroring* (and *feedback* is a synonym for *mirroring*, in this paper).

As a baby and young child, we need our environment to mirror us so that we can come to know who we are and to grow and develop. In order for our soul to grow in a harmonious and complete way, we need mirroring or reflection that is, in itself, complete and harmonious. We need "pure awareness" to mirror us. We need to be mirrored (seen) with a clear, unadulterated, objective, non-judgmental, and optimal "light" – a light that reflects the qualities of the soul – love, value, openness, compassion, strength, intelligence, joy, satisfaction, peacefulness, etc. We need to be celebrated, admired, understood, and appreciated by others who are empathetic, attuned, and in a deep soul-relationship with themselves. When this happens, we grow, develop and mature naturally, fully and perfectly.

However, when this mirroring comes from others who are not in touch with their own True Nature and Essential Self, then, through their mirroring, we do not grow, develop and mature perfectly and fully.

The physical and emotional bond created between the mother (or primary caregiver) and the baby is necessary for the child's survival and also because the mother or primary caregiver is the first cultivator of the baby's sense of its self.

Mirroring includes how the mother holds and caresses her baby, her tone of voice, her gaze, her fear, anxiety or calmness and the way she reinforces or suppresses her child's spontaneity. When the overall quality of her attention and mirroring is loving, calm, supportive, and respectful, the baby knows that it is safe and all right in itself. As the child grows and develops, more of his or her True Self emerges as the mother continues to mirror, express approval and set necessary boundaries without shaming or threatening the child. In this way the mother's positive mirroring cultivates the child's Essence and helps her child to trust itself, its True Self.

However, when a mother - consciously or unconsciously - is frequently impatient, rushed, distracted, or resentful of her child, the mirroring and bonding process is more tentative and the child feels unsafe. When she speaks coldly or harshly, when her touch is insensitive or uncertain, or when her own psychology prevents her from responding appropriately to her child's needs, cries or unique personality, the child interprets this as meaning he is "bad" or "wrong," lacking or insufficient, in some way, shape or form - even if the parental neglect is unintentional.

Rarely does it happen that a child's mirroring by other(s) comes from this place of "light." In normal situations, the mirroring seldom reflects the True Nature of the one doing the mirroring, and, as a result, the True Nature of the one being mirrored is also un-reflected. And so this inadequacy of effective mirroring is the basic cause of *narcissism* - a state where the child is separated from it's True Self, it's True Nature, where the child begins to separate from the "angelic" part of its self.

So, there are two general reasons that mirroring is ineffective:

1. mirroring is just not available or is available very inconsistently, or
2. when mirroring is available, it is not reflecting our True Nature, but is focused on some superficial aspect of who we are.

In a sense, as children, we are *betrayed* - not purposefully, not intentionally - but because those upon whom we were reliant for mirroring just didn't know how, or were not capable of reflecting our True Nature back to us. This betrayal will greatly affect how we subsequently grow and develop.

In reasonably healthy situations, the child does receive clear and positive mirroring, but directed only at *certain parts* of the child. Most parents are selective about what they choose to see and value in their child. Parents (and their parents, and their parents before them, and their parents before them, etc.) mirror as a function of their own personal history, their personal values, and their own narcissistic characteristics, not from the core of their Essential or True Self. For example, parents' mirroring might focus solely on their child's physical manifestations, or their mental capacities, or their emotional nature, etc. but seldom on their child's Essential qualities or True Nature.

There are times, but they are infrequent, when parents do mirror the real features of the qualities of their child's Essential nature. When the child is fortunate, one or both of the parents see these Essential manifestations of their child's soul and both appreciate and celebrate them. In these instances, parents are proud of their child and openly and lovingly admire their precious qualities and capacities. For example, the child might be liked and admired for beauty, or sweetness, or intelligence, or capacity, not from the parents' ego-based pride or hubris or superficiality, but from the parents own deeper True Self. When this type of mirroring occurs, a part of the child is nourished by this "loving light."

Parents' appreciation, recognition, support, and encouragement enable their child to actually experience their soul qualities and positively integrate these qualities into their (the child's) identity. For example, we experience this mirroring love and support when the child accomplishes certain tasks and the parent (from a deeper, heart-felt, Essential Self perspective) is seeing and appreciating them. The child is excited and the parent is sharing that excitement, and there is a joyful gleam in the mother or father's eyes. In this instance, the child perceives it - that the parent is actually *seeing* what she is doing and admiring her for it. This mirroring behavior supports the child to reflect on their experience of their self and what they are doing. The child now sees and knows this part of her self, which paves the way for its integration into the child's sense of who she is. Mirroring, then, not only helps the child see elements of their soul, but also confirms and establishes them as *real* and as their "Self." The parents' recognition confirms it and makes it real.

However, if the parent doesn't see this Essential aspect of their child, the child will doubt its value, or even its reality. In reality, this is the case with the vast majority of parents.

Without the appropriate mirroring, it is difficult for the child to be her (True) self, even if she is at a stage of development at which she can see her self. The child is the self, but lacks (self-) *awareness* of what she is being because this awareness is not reflected through mirroring. At this time, the child needs the external mirror to reflect this state, to be able to know himself, for his beingness to be confirmed and supported, and to feel that who he truly is, is loved, cherished, and wanted. Otherwise, he will feel unsupported, isolated,

and alone. Inappropriate and inconsistent mirroring prevent the child from experiencing this state of feeling wanted.

Typically, this need for the parents to recognize their child's True Self, to be seen and confirmed is not adequately met. Instead, and unfortunately, most parents focus on, and respond to, the more superficial aspects of the child. These aspects wind up composing the "self-representation" (who I think I am; who I take myself to be), i.e., the child's identity, and thus create one's "normal" identity (the ego-personality as opposed to supporting one's Essential identity).

As the child grows and develops, the child begins to experience a need for mirroring, and in the process their "normal identity" (not one's Essential Self) is shored up by mirroring. For example, the parent will mirror the child's exceptional baseball skills, dancing skills, painting skills, computer skills, sense of humor, reading or writing skills, etc., but not the Essence (the essential qualities) of who their child is, above and beyond the "superficial skills." The parent is seldom heard to mirror the equivalent of: "I love you just because you are you, just because you are love, or light, or peace, etc."

Because these deeper aspects of one's soul were not seen by the parents, the child's development is incomplete. The child feels that he wants to be seen, and to be seen with admiring eyes, and to be seen for who and what he truly is (i.e., for that which is essential not superficial). The child's True Self, her Essential Self is a specific dimension of herself that needs mirroring and most often it is this dimension of the True Self that is overlooked in the mirroring process. As the child grows, he begins to separate from his True Self, i.e., she becomes narcissistic.

In time, the more the individual experiences this narcissistic state of separation from their True Self (often unconsciously), the greater their need to have their false self, their ego identity (the "who I think I am" or "who I take myself to be") identity seen and supported. The more narcissistic (separated from their True Self) the individual happens to be, the more intensely and desperately he will experience this need for his ego identity to be seen.

When the child loses touch with her Essential Self, and the ego "takes over," the child and the adult will often experience an inflated sense of self-importance, lack of empathy for others and begins to elevate their self above others in order to counter their deeper sense of worthlessness and low self-esteem (as the result of a lack of the mirroring of their True and Essential Self). In other words, without the solid foundation of feeling whole, grounded, safe and secure within one's self which accompanies one's awareness of their True Nature, the ego-personality, now separated from the True Self, is fragile, brittle.

In this case, the individual often (consciously or unconsciously) assumes a position of superiority to mask feelings of guilt and inferiority that result because the child has separated from their True Self - a True Self that when experienced fosters a state of strength, inner peace, and self-love that feels "whole" and "complete" in and of itself. The True Self has no feeling of lack, insufficiency or deficiency unlike the ego-personality.

As the child grows and separates from his True Self, he more and more wants and/or needs to be seen and appreciated and to have attention from not only his parents, but also his relatives, friends, teachers, and later on, his bosses, colleagues, co-workers, spouse, children, partner, neighbors, etc.

Everyone has this need for recognition in their important relationships. As the child is experiencing an unhealthy separation from his True Self, he may begin to experience an intense need to be seen, recognized, understood, related to, admired, and appreciated. He wants to be seen as special and unique in some way, shape or form. He wants others to become attuned and empathic to him, to have others give him special attention and love. He can also become quite sensitive when he doesn't receive this type of external mirroring. This dynamic can continue into adulthood and throughout the life of the individual.

This sensitivity to the intense need for mirroring can take the form of "grandiosity" - i.e., an inflated sense of the self, an outward acting out, bragging, demanding to be seen, acknowledged and approved, and other overt tendencies to show off one's capacities and accomplishments (i.e., "Look at me!" in its various manifestations).

The narcissist's sense of inflation protects against their inner sense of humiliation, guilt, and shame and their associated lack of self worth and self-respect (which results when we are separated from our True and Essential Self - when the ego-personality takes over). The inflation and grandiosity helps the individual maintain the repression of all their inner negativity and feelings of anger, fear, frustration and longing (to know their True Self). The inflated narcissist lives from the mantra of "I am too good for them. They are below me, and I am above all relational longing." They often repress their longing for deep, soul/heart-felt relationships, their anger and frustration and instead choose to condemn, disapprove of and judge others.

Or, narcissism may take the form of more passive behavior - an inner sensitivity, not verbalized, to the presence or absence of mirroring, or as the propensity to focus on the real or perceived "imperfections" of those who are not providing mirroring.

Whether grandiose or passive, the narcissistic needs to be seen, related to, understood, valued, and admired as precious, special, and unique, with empathy and attunement and these needs are manifested in many of his relationships in the world – at work, at home, at play.

Although the need for mirroring is normal and universal, most individuals will not acknowledge it. (From the often phony or fake "I'm fine just as I am, thank you very much!" to the "I don't need no f*ckin' support from anyone!") Narcissists frequently defend against awareness of this need, so that even when they are acting it out they are unaware of the meaning of their behavior and might even vehemently deny they are seeking mirroring.

Or, when one feels that another may actually be seeing their True Self, their Essence, the narcissist might deny it – because admitting it brings up the hurt, anger, and depression that comes when they admit this part of their self was not seen early on by parents and primary caregivers. That is, on a deeper level, to be truly seen for who one really is will bring to consciousness the inherent aloneness that one experienced in childhood when the parents did not acknowledge or mirror their True Self, their Essence.

From a narcissistic perspective, as long as an individual feels that others are empathically aware of him and mirroring him in an admiring or special way, he feels he (his "normal" egoic identity) is being supported and validated. He may feel happy, secure, successful, etc. He continues to bask in others' positive light whether real or imagined. However, his sense of himself and self-esteem are very fragile, brittle and precarious as is reflected by his extreme sensitivity to any lapse or imperfection in others' empathic mirroring. As soon as they stop mirroring, he becomes, mildly or acutely, upset in some way, shape or form.

So, absent mirroring of our True Self, our Essential Self, we grew up learning to pretend, to be like our parents and others who gave us mirroring or feedback, to join them in their world, the world of lies, the world of the shell, the conventional world.

We became what they wanted us to be, what they paid attention to in us, what they preferred in us, what made them relate to us. Through this process of accommodation - (consciously and unconsciously "giving in" and "giving up" to please another to get their love, appreciation, admiration, or acknowledgement, etc.), doing and being what we needed to do and be to please them and have them love us, we abandoned and rejected what they could not see, the part of us they did not relate to – including our True Nature, our Essential Self. Since our Essence was the element they recognized or understood least, our Essence was the central element we, ourselves, disowned, abandoned and betrayed. We ended up abandoning and hiding our most precious nature. We hid it finally even from ourselves; most of us eventually forgot it altogether.

The one major take-away from our childhood, less-than-optimal mirroring experience, is that now, as an adult, we **have an impaired** connection with our Essence, our True Self, and **thus lack an** inner sense of safety, security, esteem, value and worth, and will now consistently look outside of ourself for validation, acceptance, approval, love, worth, value, etc., and for our sense of being a "somebody."

*Remember, our need for mirroring is a completely natural phenomenon **which is influenced by** how we were raised. It is not "bad" or "wrong" in and of itself.*

However, when our need for mirroring becomes unhealthy, overbearing, needy, all-pervasive, all-consuming, etc., in an effort to have others give us our sense of value and worth, we will experience mental, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual pain and suffering and behave in ways that are (often unconsciously) self-limiting, self-destructive and self-sabotaging. When the mirroring is not received to the inordinate degree we want, we will often experience feelings of worthlessness, sadness, depression, frustration, anger, hate and self-hate and can spiral down into a state of helplessness, hopelessness and utter despair. So, there are normal and abnormal, healthy and unhealthy, needs for mirroring. Every individual is different.

The Incomplete Adult (the child - in an adult body, wearing adult clothes) - A spiritual understanding of narcissism and our need for mirroring (and feedback)

Engaging in a conscious exploration of emotional and spiritual growth and development is the process of enlightenment, i.e., a deep self-awareness that supports one to investigate the underlying dynamics of the painful aspects of the early "betrayal", of separating from one's True Self and ultimately the restoration of unobstructed being.

When we are genuinely interested in the truth, the whole truth, we realize with a greater sorrow that this betrayal from the outside (i.e., our lack of mirroring from others) is less terrible than another betrayal - we come to understand that we have betrayed ourselves, we have separated from our True Self, our Essential Self very early on.

The spiritual journey helps us realize that when, as a child, our environment betrayed us and abandoned us with varying degrees of insensitivity, we felt alone and abandoned, with no one relating to us, to our True Self. To be True and Real (being our Essential Self, the self that others ignored or did not mirror) meant being isolated from our environment - like living in another universe, a universe not seen by our parents, not acknowledged by them, even not known by them.

As a child, we could not tolerate such isolation and abandonment (and we did not possess the capacity to do or say anything about it). It was too much, the being and feeling alone. In those very moments, we needed to relate and be related to; we needed contact, warmth, human relationship, to feel held, to feel seen. In the beginning we were capable of being our True Nature, but, since those around us were unable to see and appreciate our True Nature, our Essential Self, our interpretation of their behavior was inevitably to take on the belief that to be *seen and recognized* means to behave in ways that our primary caregivers, and others, wanted us to behave, even if it went against the grain of our Essence, our True and Real Self. We separated.

So, to repeat, we learned to pretend, to be like them, to join them in their world, the world of lies, the world of the shell, the conventional world. We became what they wanted us to be, what they paid attention to in us, what they preferred in us, what made them relate to us. Through this process of *accommodation*, we abandoned and rejected what they could not see, the parts of us they did not relate to. Since our Essence was the element they recognized or understood least, our Essence was the central element we disowned. We ended up abandoning and hiding our most precious nature. We hid it finally even from ourselves; most of us eventually forget it altogether. The spiritual journey helps us see that we betrayed ourselves, just as the people in our environment betrayed us. For our survival, we chose their company and approval over Essence.

The Spiritual Journey Within

In the process of spiritual development, we recognize that this betrayal is the deepest one, at the very roots of our disconnection from our Essential nature, and the basis of our unhappiness and discontent (i.e., others are not making us unhappy, etc., we are doing it to ourselves). Some of us even view life as necessary suffering – experiencing great sorrow, regret, and even at times shame, guilt, and self-hatred that can underlie our experience of separating, of "forgetting" our True Self.

As an adult living in the world – the world at work, the world at home, the world at play and the world of relationship – the adult is likely to experience the following issues:

- The continued narcissistic need to be seen, admired, appreciated, idolized, and even to be regarded as special and unique.
- The need for one's specialness and uniqueness to be openly honored, applauded.
- The need to be seen for who one really is, beneath one's "appearance" and "packaging."

This latter need reflects the spiritual dimension – one that points to the spiritually maturing adult's longing to integrate his True Nature, his reality, his very beingness.

On the spiritual journey, and in doing the "inner work" the journey requires, the individual's soul can begin to feed on the "light." It does not matter where this light comes from. The Self develops by becoming fully aware of the various dimensions of one's experience, but it does not matter how this awareness develops. It does not matter whether the source of this Light is inside or outside, as long as the self comes to see and recognize itself. Whether we see ourselves directly or through someone pointing out the truth of the Self to us, the result is the same: to quicken the soul's evolution, to move towards experiencing our True Nature, our Essential Self.

On the spiritual journey, when the individual feels she is not admired or treated in a special way by a particular person in her life, she will experience the sense of a loss of mirroring of her sense of self. Initially, her first feeling is usually a sense of hurt, insult, betrayal, or loss. She is very sensitive at this point. The slightest indication of not being, or feeling, seen could evoke reactivities such as: anger, defensiveness, resistance, deep pain, intolerable anguish, endless tears, grief, hopelessness, despair, self-pity, self-loathing or self-hate. When the spiritually maturing adult engages in a spiritual journey with curiosity, rather than being reactive, judgmental or self-critical, the journey often reveals an emotional wound that is deep and profound. It may be difficult to tolerate at first, and she will tend to fight it off, to react to it and out of it in order to maintain the "status quo," - to feel physically, mentally, emotionally or psychologically safe and secure. However, the presence of empathy and understanding, and especially the presence of kindness and compassion, make it possible for her to tolerate the hurt, the betrayal, and thus feel it more directly and fully.

Deep emotional hurt, anger, rage, envy, fear and a loss of self-esteem are some of the ways he reacts to slight inaccuracies of feedback from those around him – at work, at home, at play and, of course, in relationship. The individual feels a deep disappointment, maybe begins to devalue those who are not providing the desired mirroring, and feels a loss of support. The individual's normal ego identity ("who I think I am", "who I take myself to be", not the mature adult's True Nature or Essential Self") feels threatened. She may begin to feel empty, helpless and meaningless. She feels unseen, not understood, not approved of, not valued, not paid attention to in the way she wants and needs.

The Emotionally and Spiritually Mature (the True adult, in an adult body, wearing adult clothes).

Recently, a coaching client remarked: "I seem to need compliments on my work even at this stage of adulthood and when I know explicitly my work is

very good. This is getting better recently, but I still love to get feedback from my boss and others for work accomplished. Not as dependent as before, but the pattern is there. And a pattern from childhood for sure, where good results at school were expected and then also honored by gifts and positive feedback and general pride about me. I would have been loved anyhow, I know that, but somehow I seem to have made a connection between success and being loved...."

This client's remarks point to the childhood thought patterns, and resulting feelings and behaviors, we create related to the presence or absence of mirroring/feedback. This is an individual who seeks feedback and mirroring at work, and sees the childhood pattern of her need for external validation showing up in her adult life. While she is not pathological or "unhealthy" in her experience, she feels the "pull" of the childhood pattern and belief that "I can be successful only if someone tells me I am successful." driving her thoughts, feelings and behavior.

Whether or not this individual's belief related to mirroring/feedback is healthy and appropriate or not depends on two factors:

1. the degree, intensity, quality and frequency of her expectations of such mirroring/feedback from the people in her life, and
2. the degree, intensity, quality and frequency of her emotional, mental, physical, and psychological reactivity when such mirroring is absent.

This is how the early childhood pattern of receiving inappropriate mirroring (because it is based on the "superficial," not on the Essential qualities of the child) creates an internal belief that one must seek acceptance, approval and love "from the outside" in order to feel happy, successful, etc., and if the "external" is lacking, then one may not be able to experience a healthy sense of well be-ing, to experience their True Self.

Another example:

Sue - a single 40-something professional woman - has been doing spiritual coaching for over a year. Her work is now focusing on her narcissistic tendencies as she explores her problematic relations to men. Sue tends to become involved with men whom she can idealize, which supports her feeling of specialness and a larger-than-life sense of her self. She usually ends up in a failed relationship, feeling devalued and hurt. But, she still wants to hang on to the man. Too, when she is with a man who is not markedly narcissistic, she tends to devalue him. In exploring her pattern of choosing narcissistic men, she begins to recognize her need to be with "brilliant and spiritually successful men" to feel she has an adequate mirroring for her own sense of brilliance and reality. They give her a sense of self, as her True sense of Self is lacking, having separated from it in early childhood as the result of the lack of appropriate mirroring.

In exploring "root causes" underneath her recent failed relationships, she now sees that her anger and upset are the exact same feelings she experienced as a child, and is reminded of her relationship with her father, whom she saw as a brilliant and successful man, and who saw her as special.

As she inquires into how she's living her life, she's aware of how often she experiences anger when other adult males whom she regards as intelligent and successful do not return the "mirroring" favor. She sees them as "mean." As Sue continues her spiritual inquiry and unfolding, she sees how she reacts when others, especially bright and successful men, don't treat her as "special" – in essence that these men don't "love" her in a way that makes them enjoy her. Sue admits she wants these men to treat her as special, just as her father did – mirror her the way her father did. When they don't, Sue feels hurt, unseen, not important and sad, very sad. She feels she has no value, no worth. Finally, Sue recognizes she needs their mirroring in order to be able to have a sense of herself. That is, she is unable to contact her True Self, her Essential Self that she abandoned, which would allow her to feel whole and complete within herself even if she does not receive the "external mirroring" that she both needs and expects.

Later, as Sue "does the work," she begins to discover a sense of her True and Real Self – the True and Real Self that was not mirrored by anyone in her childhood environment, the True and Real Self she betrayed.

As Sue explores various events, circumstances and people in her adult life, she begins to see what she had never seen – she gains insight into "what I don't know I don't know about my self." Experiencing a great deal of hurt, anger, and emptiness in relation to her father, to men in general, and in relation to her mother – now understanding how her mother could not provide the mirroring of her brilliance, her aliveness, and her juiciness, and how her mother did not relate to her with joy and excitement - she saw how she was "transferring" her feelings, her reactivity towards her mother on to other adults (in the demands and expectations she puts on them) who do not mirror her. She also saw the "root cause" of her neediness to be with brilliant and spiritual men, even though they were in their own right, narcissistic – like her father. His making her feel special became problematic for Sue, as an adult in the way her adult male relationships were always conflictual and painful.

The Spiritual Answer to Mirroring and Feedback

Our need for mirroring and feedback is essential for the health of our psyches and for our sense of well be-ing. Our need for mirroring and feedback is normal.

However, our need for mirroring and feedback must be seen in context. When we desire mirroring and feedback, and do not receive it, or receive it

but not to the extent we need or want to receive it, it's important to be conscious and aware of our reactivity.

Our first reaction, generally, is that of not feeling seen, or seen inadequately. When someone says or does something that we feel is not 100% attuned to "me," or reflects and gives feedback that we feel is not 100% accurate, or expresses an attitude that we choose to interpret as not completely approving, or behaves in any way that we judge as not being empathic, or withholds feedback or mirroring, we may react with many of the beliefs, emotions and feelings described above.

As we take a spiritual approach in our work with mirroring and narcissism, we begin to understand its genesis in our lives. Feeling the emotions associated with the initial hurt around inappropriate or unavailable mirroring, we can begin to not only allow our experience of the hurt, but we see how we betrayed our self in the process.

So, now moving through life as an emotionally and spiritually mature adult, we can begin to see that the "who I take myself to be" and the "who I think I am" ego-identities, self-images and self-concepts are not my True and Real Self, my Essential Self - just personas we took on as children to accommodate others in order to garner their love, appreciation acknowledgement, acceptance and approval and to feel safe and secure.

In essence, we became false because the people in our early environment not only did not see and support our True Self, but wanted us to be something else. They conditioned us to fit their idea of what we are or what we should be. The feeling of betrayal that accompanies our realization of this development, during our spiritual work, is one of the ways we experience what is known as the "narcissistic wound."

As spiritually mature adults – at work, at home, at play and in relationship - we may experience the *betrayal* whenever we feel not seen or appreciated for who and what we are and *not be reactive*. Rather, the spiritual work teaches us how to become the witness, watcher and observer of our experience.

As we become aware and conscious of this betrayal in our everyday life, we first see it as betrayal by the other, i.e., boss, co-worker, spouse, partner, lover, colleague, teammate, clergy member, teacher, etc.- the person upon whom we transfer our feelings that we feel about our parents or primary caregivers. We may feel the hurt, anger, disappointment or rage. We may feel deflated, let down, sad, depressed, treated unjustly, abandoned, and left alone with this terrible pain.

However, what's happening in real time, as a learned spiritual practice, is that while we allow the mental, emotional, physical and psychological upset

caused by the absence of mirroring, or the betrayal in some way, shape or form, we choose not to act out on it in thought, word or deed.

In the spiritual experience, and practice of, staying with and moving through (not over or around) the feelings and emotions associated with the "betrayal," sensing our bodies, using the breath, and being curious, not judgmental, as our experience unfolds, we learn how to move into a state of "presence," a state where we are oriented to the "now" — our present moment. Ultimately, this orientation brings freedom from, and an understanding of, our past.

With focus, awareness, and consistent practice, being in the moment allows us to experience a wonderful universe of realization, insight, wonder, and profundity. Many perceptions arise and one experiences a sense of "I am," a sense of one's True and Real Self, one's Essential Self in such a way that, in the moment, and in the next moment, and in the next, etc., one can be love, can be stillness, can be harmony, can be one's True Self, one's Essence. No need to react. Just to "be."

In this immediate experience, while there is not a complete cessation of the need for mirroring, we can transcend the need for mirroring as we begin to experience ourselves clearly and completely. Our continuing curiosity about our experience - in this case, our curiosity about our need for mirroring/feedback - brings us to a place of right knowing, right understanding and right action, where we access the wisdom of our True Self, our Wisdom Self. These insights often lead to a greater understanding and context within which we can extricate ourselves from the ego-induced pain and suffering and move to a place of self-love and compassion which lead to a sense of well-be-ing, inner peace, harmony and balance.

For most who experience the spiritual journey, their realization is that, up to now, they lacked the complete capacity to see and recognize their True and Real Self, their Essential Self. Here, in this place of presence, in the deeper wellspring of the now, we can begin to resolve our (unhealthy) need for mirroring/feedback, and can be with, and see and experience, our Essential Self objectively, clearly, and completely - without any need for external support. Here, we need no shoring up from the outside. We are "successful" as a function of who "I am." Whether the outside mirroring/feedback is there or not, it's OK.

As we continue the spiritual work and explore the narcissistic sector of our personality, and the nature of our early childhood mirroring, our understanding achieves increasing clarity and precision. Here, we become the truly emotionally and spiritually mature adult in the adult body wearing adult clothes, no longer acting out as the little child.

In this place, we no longer have an unhealthy need to be seen with admiration, kindness, appreciation, love, precision, clarity, joy, excitement, and so

on. We can recognize and know our own Essential qualities. Our needs melt away as we begin to experience ourselves directly as these qualities, reflecting the presence of our True and Essential Self. We are truly self-aware.

In this place, in the presence of the moment, we experience joy, happiness, love, sweetness, loving kindness, sensitivity, value, worth, appreciation, esteem, strength, excitement, aliveness, fulfillment, - all because we are experiencing our True Self, our Essence.

From this psycho-emotional-spiritual perspective, only the realization of this dimension of our True and Real Self will completely resolve the (unhealthy) need for mirroring, where we can stand on our own – with a sense of lightness, freedom, self-love, strength and courage. Whether feedback or mirroring is available from others "out there" is no longer a requirement. If it's there, that's fine. If not, that's fine, too. "I am!"

I know my existence whether mirroring is there or not. That's the possibility for the emotionally and spiritually mature adult. An ever-growing capacity to meet life with mindful awareness moment-to-moment from the "inside out" not the "outside in."

If you want support in exploring and working with issues around narcissism, mirroring, self-esteem, self-value and self-worth, go to http://www.spiritheart.net/Coaching_Spirit.php for more information on SpiritHeart's coaching process for Spiritual Development.

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Note: This paper is intended to provide information. It is not intended to diagnose or prescribe, which can only be carried out by a trained licensed and/or certified counselor, therapist or psychotherapist.