



# Definitions in Voice Dialogue

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There are a number of terms used throughout this website that have specific meanings in Voice Dialogue Work. Here is a short list of definitions to make your reading and understanding of the material more clear. They are listed in an order of progression of understanding rather than alphabetically.

**Inner Selves** - These refer to parts of the psyche. As an analogy, just as our physical body has innumerable physical parts that exist to fulfill needed functions for existence, health and wholeness, our psyche has innumerable psychological parts that exist to fulfill psycho-social-spiritual needs for health and wholeness. Interchangeably, we can also use the terms "parts", "voices", "sub-personalities". All of these have archetypal origins.

**Primary Selves** - These are the selection of inner selves that we are most identified with as 'who we are.' They make up our conscious personality. They appear to be mostly determined by our familial and social conditioning.

**Disowned Selves** - These are the inner selves that we long ago learned to repress and deny due to familial and social conditioning. Although disowned, they are every bit as much a part of us and because they are disowned, they operate below the level of our conscious intention. Because we are dis-identified from them, we will perceive them in others, usually judged with positive amplification (we idolize them) or negative amplification (we disdain them). This is called "projection." We also will experience them as characters in our dreams and fantasies and will sense them as bodily sensations. The more potently they are disowned, the more fixed are our primary selves and the more extreme are our projections and somaticized experiences.

**Needs** - There are two systems of looking at needs that I like to use in this work. One is described by Abraham Maslow in his famous pyramid diagram of "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs". It begins with basic physiological needs (air, water, food, shelter) at the bottom, then progresses on to protection from harm, to belonging, to self-respect and at the top of his pyramid - self-fulfillment. Another system is one I've described as the Principles of Nature and Psyche. These needs all exist in opposite pairs, like yin and yang. Examples are Chaos/Order, Boundary /Connection, Movement / Stillness. For a more complete description of these Needs, see The Benefit of People Who Bug You.

**Power Selves** - Half of all our selves can be categorized as "power selves." They function to control either our own behavior or that of others for the main purpose of protecting and fulfilling our Needs. As adults, most of our primary selves are power selves; likewise, some of our disowned selves will be power selves. As adults, most people have disowned vulnerability to a considerable degree.

**Undeveloped Power Selves** - We can have potential power selves that are merely undeveloped. For example, you may have a primary power self who is a Creative, Flexible, Spontaneous Self who takes care of your Need for Novelty/Chaos. At the same time, you paradoxically have a Need for Order. However, if you were never taught how to take care of that Need (through modeling or instruction), your Stable, Dependable, Responsible Self would be undeveloped. There are two common consequences of undeveloped power selves: one is the vulnerable experience of anxiety and fear relative to the Needs that are not being met and two is a dependence on others who do have a well developed power system relative to those Needs.

**Vulnerable Selves** - These are those sensitive parts of us that we primarily feel through our body and our emotions. They directly sense and experience the status of our Needs. An example of a vulnerable self is the part of us who feels our Need for connection to others. When this Need is being met (by our own power selves or by others), this vulnerable self feels anything from easy contentment all the way to joy. If this Need is not being met, this vulnerable self suffers anxiety and loss all the way to anguishing pain. It's through the energetic perception of our vulnerable selves that we feel happiness and hope or sadness and despair. Vulnerability is about being open, sensing and receptive. For many people, it's their vulnerable selves that lead them to their deepest sense of real human being-ness and soulfulness. Each power self is directly related to and motivated by the experiences of a vulnerable self.

**Ego** - This has been traditionally defined in psychology as the “executive function of the psyche and the conscious sense of self.” It is our experience of “I am”. It is the part of the psyche that is experiencing consciously. Typically, most people’s ego personality is the collection of whatever primary selves they are most identified with.

**Awareness** - The witness state, a non-judgmental observing, mindful perception. (Not to be confused with the rational mind). This is a state of consciousness that can normally occur occasionally and spontaneously in life as well as one can practice entering into this state via simple meditation techniques. It is our capacity to perceive without reactions, sensations, valuations (positive or negative) or expressions. It makes no decisions, has no attachments to outcome. From this state, we dispassionately notice and we are presently situated.

**Consciousness Process** - The experience of engaging in with Aware Ego.

**Aware Ego Process** - The process of separating our ego identification from any particular self and temporarily infusing our ego with the Awareness state. From an Aware Ego Process we can make choices that perceive the validity of all parts of ourselves (that we’re observing) and make choices based on that non-judgmental perception. It is as in the Aware Ego Process that we have true free will. It is not a more evolved self; it is essentially an activity, a process.

**Voice Dialogue Work** - a method for introducing a person to the cognitive and sensual/energetic reality of their inner selves in a non-judgmental atmosphere towards the purpose of cultivating an Aware Ego Process. Voice Dialogue is usually conducted between a trained facilitator and the person who is exploring their own inner selves.

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