

Soul Loss and Soul Retrieval

A particular form of soul loss happens in relationships built on codependency, in which one person bases his or her worth in another person rather than in self. "To rescue another person or to collude in abusive patterns is to give away one's soul in an attempt to hold onto the relationship" (Soul Retrieval, Ingerman, p.112). This is a false love that can create soul loss on both sides. True love augments the soul and is most present when the soul is whole.

Soul loss creates a fragmentation of one's wholeness. Consequently, a person continually tries to fill the voids caused by the fragmentation. Attempts at "fulfillment" may include overt behaviors associated with drugs, alcohol, sex, faulty relationships, or more subtle behaviors of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Listen carefully to conversations. There is a definite exchange of energy occurring at all times. Questions about what you do for a living, how much money you make, what education you have, and where you live often establish a hierarchy of energy. There will be a winner and a loser in these conversations if the intention of the questions is to establish position. When positive energy flows, people recognize and pursue their interdependence. Interdependent behavior is evident in mutually supportive relationships in which individuals retain their personal power and self-worth. In such relationships, a person is not striving for worthiness from such external criteria as wealth or beauty, but rather from a powerful inner sense of worthiness. This worthiness creates wholeness.

It is important to understand that interdependence is not the same as dependence. In fact, soul loss is often the result of dependence. This is why children are so susceptible to theft of a soul part. However, many adults are also highly dependent on others and subject to resultant soul loss. The journey to restoration of the soul part requires the individual to first move from dependence to independence.

This movement from dependence to independence is accomplished by regaining one's individual power. Many confuse this transition with being selfish. They have been taught for so long to give away their personal power to meet the needs of others that this transition can feel jolting. However, the acquisition of independence allows one to participate in the universe in a positive and personally powerful way. Once one's independence is established, the individual is able to move from independence to interdependence, becoming a part of the wholeness of life without the loss of individual energy.

This movement from dependence to independence to interdependence is part of the larger universal shift to identifying with the web of life. The recognition that we are all part of one another enhances every individual's personal power. We are capable of ending our personal fragmentation and the unnatural fragmentation we have created in the universe. We can have wholeness of person and wholeness of life.

DEPENDENCE --> INDEPENDENCE --> INTERDEPENDENCE

In highly interdependent societies, where the interdependence is recognized and appreciated, soul retrieval is a daily and accepted activity. The care of the soul is the first priority in health, both for the individual and for the society. In shamanic cultures, a soul retrieval is performed within three days after any major event in a person's life. Traumatic or other dramatic changes, such as childbirth, marriage, death of a loved one, an accident, a broken relationship, an argument, to name a few, were addressed immediately by performing a soul retrieval. It was assumed that anyone going through such an event would have a high probability of soul loss, and in order to instill proper healing, the soul was attended to first.

Unfortunately, in our culture, years and years of fragmentation and soul loss can accumulate for an individual, which creates the potential for a soul to become critically fragmented. We can see the results of this by looking at the mental, emotional, and spiritual health of our society. We have a society that is depressed and self-medicating with illegal drugs, alcohol, and over-the-counter or prescribed medications. Our youths have difficulty finding purpose and meaning in their lives. Relationships and families fall apart with ever-increasing frequency. The culture is not grounded in taking care of the soul.

We are plagued in our culture with people hurting-physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. The issues that doctors and psychologists deal with on a daily basis are what a shaman would see as warning signs of soul loss. Warning signs of soul loss can include:

- Anything chronic-fatigue, depression, misfortune, faulty relationships, emotional problems, suicidal tendencies.
- The inability to release some emotional trauma from the past-such as a death, divorce, or other loss.
- Addictions of any kind-alcohol, drugs, food
- Not feeling connected to the body or reality
- Operations or difficulty in recovering from surgery
- Repetitive sicknesses-colds, flu, and so forth
- Major illnesses
- No sense of direction
- Shame or feelings of guilt
- Feelings of unworthiness

- Not feeling one's personal power

Our culture suffers dramatically from these symptoms. It is rare to come across someone who responds and lives life from wholeness instead of from the woundedness of his or her past. If a person has voids from soul loss, these voids act like magnets trying to fill up with any energy to become whole. If you are exposed to anger, fear, greed, anxiety, unhappiness and hatred repeatedly, those are the qualities your own soul will absorb. Extracting negative energies, bringing back the lost soul energy, and then teaching a person how to stay whole will not only heal the individual and restore personal power; it will begin to restore wholeness in our society as well.

The positive shift many of us work to instill, in Western culture, is toward a restoration of wholeness and an understanding of our oneness. This work addresses the fact that we are energy, as is everything, and that all energies influence one another. We must learn to maintain and care for our own divine energy-our soul. In such a climate of responsibility and openness, shamanism would find a welcome home.

All of us have experienced trauma in some form just from experiencing life. Because of this, I believe that most people would benefit from an initial soul retrieval. I have witnessed amazing results in healing using this technique, and have also experienced it firsthand. Soul retrieval changed me, not only as a person but also as a professional therapist.

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