

Seeking Wholeness by Patty de Llosa

If my wish is to be more whole—more wholly myself—I will have to include more of the complexities of my nature. Yet my behind-the-scenes hope has often been to get rid of what I don't like in myself, so I go about my conscious life denying certain disagreeable features or squishing them into more acceptable traits. Yet there are other aspects that I approve of and freely lay claim to.

If you too seek wholeness, you might want to join me as I try to look at the whole picture, warts and all. Ugh! That means we'll have to include the wimpy self we're ashamed of, the angry self we revel in but hide from others, the confused self we're ashamed of, and even the downright crazy self we sometimes are. But it also includes the Other Side: what-we-don't-know-or-suspect in ourselves. By this I mean the forces that come up under us and get us to say or do things we truly didn't mean or want to do.

Sometimes it's hard to believe how much more there is to us than the day-to-day solver of our life's problems. While certain parts of ourselves are at work every day, pushing the darker aspects aside whenever they pop up, there are friends within that we never think to contact. Perhaps because we don't believe they are there or maybe because we seldom bother to look.

Nevertheless, someone sits quietly somewhere inside us and bears witness to all that goes on, without judging. It may take days, months or years after an event for us to realize what the witness has seen, but it's a knowledge we can rest in even if we may flinch from it. The living truth helps us to be more wholly ourselves as it reshapes us into better persons.

Here's one truth I've uncovered. Although I want to be perfect and long to have everybody love me, I am sometimes an angry lady, a guilty lady, a self-pitying lady and a varsity self-attacker. But why attack the person who forgets her keys at home or leaves a low fire burning on in the stove? She's part of the package. Maybe she's had enough of my playing Superwoman and needs a rest. Or maybe she's overwhelmed by my decades of efforts to meet the demands of life on my own perfectionist terms. In any case, she's now trying to catch my attention. She's saying; "This is all just too much...I just can't handle it any more! Hey, can you hear me?"

What to do rather than attack her or any other part of me? For all I know, she may be one of the best parts I've got! I need to open a dialogue with her, little by little (How can I help you to feel safer?), so that maybe she will feel less overwhelmed. Although you and I are now adults, we have all left a confused and perhaps wounded child behind as we grew up, as we adapted to the demands of others, and fought our own fears. That child is still there. She is not a vestige. Jung calls her divine. She represents the possibility of development in all of us. In fact, here's the shocker, perhaps her presence is what's

needed to make us more “whole” than we are! How to welcome her rather than slap her down or call her names. In *TAMING YOUR INNER TYRANT* I speak of her as guiding me out of self-attack and depression to a new perspective on life and love.

Here are some experiments you could try in the name of wholeness:

Be alert to any tendency to trash yourself for doing this or that, for not living up to your elephant-sized expectations.

Open a dialogue with any of these unknown parts of you that suddenly surges up. You could ask it, *Why are you making me miserable?* or *What do you want from me?*

Separate a little time each day to invite a visit from some of your inner friends. It could be over coffee, or in meditation, but don't put rules or limitations on it — just open to the mystery.

Where does the inner artist or inspired poet hide in you? Surely, somewhere other than your daily getting on with it. Maybe you could encourage a visit from one or another at a certain time every day.

Listen to Mary Oliver's advice on how to seek wholeness. Then take her poem with you for a day — write it down on a piece of paper and put it in your pocket to pull out from time to time:

WILD GEESE

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body

love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile, the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain

are moving across the landscapes,

Over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air

are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting —
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.