

Our public face - The Persona

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Fri, 26 Jun 2009

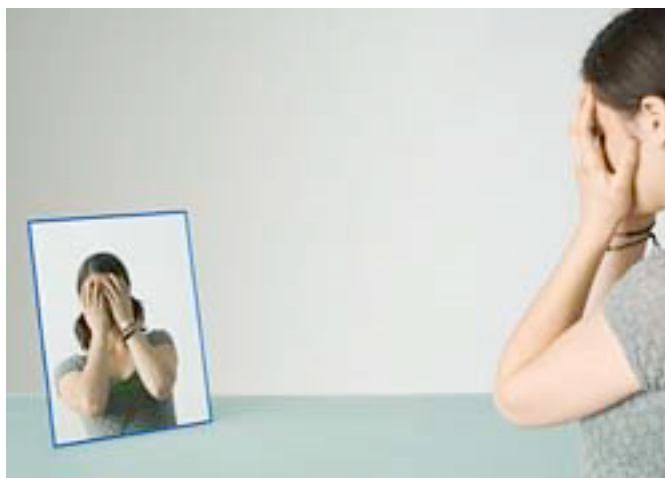
Using the persona in manipulating relationships

Recently a client said to me about her relationships:

"Every guy I've dated has been one or more of the following: a drunk, drug addict, wife-beater, convict, sociopath, liar, cheater, thief, con artist, sad sack....did I leave anyone out?"

This raises an interesting question. Not uncommonly one hears such statements by women - "He was so nice at the beginning. I would have never known. Its only later that he showed who he really was".

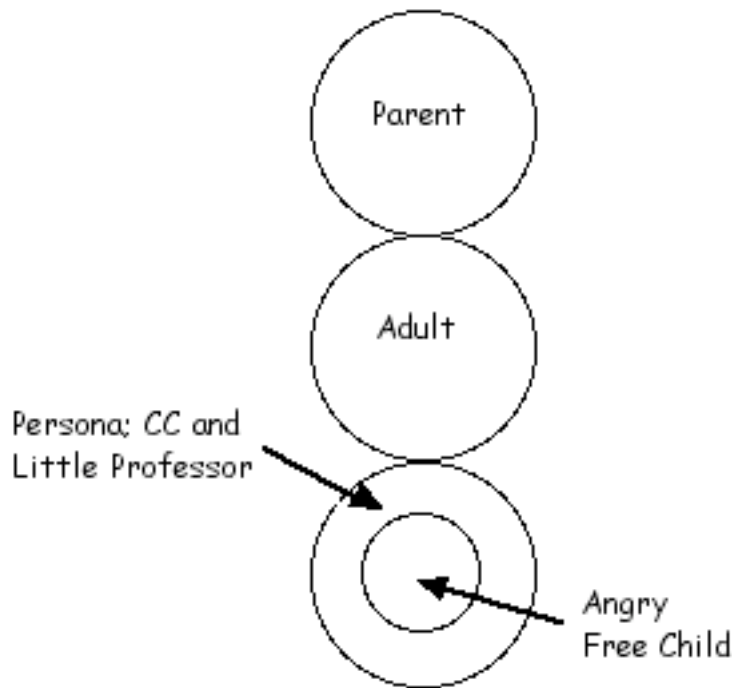
Is this true? Is it possible for a person to maintain their good persona and hide their dark side in an intimate relationship?



Generally speaking I would answer no. If two people have an emotional and physically intimate relationship over a period of say 6 to 12 months, then I would argue that it would be very difficult to keep the persona intact. The woman is wanting to be 'fooled', she is lying to her self as much as the man is lying to her. She is not wanting to see the dark side of the man.

Below is an ego state diagram of the persona. The persona is a combination of Conforming Child ego state (CC) and the Little Professor ego state (Intuition). Its goal is to cover the real feelings and motives of the person which are shown by the Free Child. The CC will "make" the other person like them because they will be pleasing. How manipulative and charming the person is depends on how much

Little Professor (intuition) is operating. The more Little Professor used the better the person will be at assessing others basic needs, wants, fears, motives and so forth. As soon as one knows those then the situation or relationship can be manipulated. He can give you what you want even before you knew you wanted it! It will feel like a good connection is made.



If one is worried about being manipulated in such ways or has a history of being manipulated then there are a number of things one can do. Firstly turn down the audio and turn up the video. Stop listening to the words and take the actions as the true colours. Put yourself (and him) in variety of odd or unusual social situations, thus putting the person outside their comfort zone. That is disarming to the persona because it has no template to operate from. Give yourself time. Observe the person over an extended period of time before you make a conclusion. Sooner or later the persona will drop.

Watch how he relates to others. Sit back and be an observer. This is what the police do. One engages the suspect in conversation/questioning whilst the other one watches on. When two people engage in conversation, the persona can cope with that. It can handle one person and will do all its charming things to get the other person to think the things it wants. But it can't charm two people at once particularly if the other party is not saying anything and thus it has no cues to operate from.

However the most important point is that the biggest liar to you, is yourself. You will see and hear only what you want to see and hear. It is called a life script. We expect life to be consistent to us. So if we expect to be treated

badly then we will only see those things that are consistent with that and all that is inconsistent will be ignored or rationalise away.

I would be a rich man if I had a dollar for every time I have heard a female client say, "I knew he could be angry but I thought I could change that in him". She rationalises it away, falls in love with him and the rest is history.

Above I have described that person who could be called the silver tongue or the manipulative charmer. However we all do it. Be manipulative in relationships. We are constantly changing what we say and do in the hope that we will get the other to respond in the way we want. We are continually trying to manipulate in such ways and we usually are not aware of it. However only a few do it for monetary or some other obvious gain. Most do it because that is how they learned to emotionally survive in childhood.



Behaving correctly

As I mentioned above the person is a combination of two ego states, the Conforming Child and the Little Professor (LP). The amount of Little Professor in the persona can be an indicator of the amount of psychopathology in the person. It is the LP that intuitively and unconsciously checks out the other person's Child ego state motives and so forth.

Often these people have developed a high LP persona because in childhood they had to. That is, it was important that they assess mother's and father's mood quickly. If they didn't then the consequences could be severe. A common example of this is the child who is at home and father arrives home from the pub. She has to assess his mood quickly and continue to assess it or she could get a beating and so forth.



This type of person will tend to have quite a flexible persona. They spend a good deal of energy jumping over into the other person's head and tries to work out what they are thinking and feeling. They assess what the other person wants and feels and then alters their behaviour accordingly to achieve the goal they want. So their persona can change with each person they meet. Usually that goal is to be liked and to be seen as a good person.

The problem in the long run for such an individual is that they start to loose a sense of who they are. They develop a chameleon quality and the persona grows in size. This means the Free Child diminishes in size until eventually the person has

no sense of their own Free Child.

This person finds it hard to answer the question, "Who am I?". One needs good access to their Free Child to do that. The person with a big persona can develop a sense of emptiness in this way as their own Free Child is not getting its emotional needs met. Hence they deteriorate psychologically over time and this can result in things like depression, anxiety, alcohol abuse and so forth.

Most people have a more stable persona that is not so anguished about reading the mood of others. Those who are constantly assessing the emotional lie of the land in others begin to let go of that they usually have a sense of considerable relief. It takes a lot of energy to be reading the mood of others all the time.