

## 26. Ego

Ego is a belief in individual identity and self-importance, and in stories, all created by the intellect.

We are each unique, a function of individual development, with special combinations of DNA, health, environments, upbringing, culture, conditioning, programming, education, experiences, desires, values, food and water inputs, exercise, talents, personality, efforts, thoughts, relationships and other things. That uniqueness is precious, something to cherish, value and appreciate, both in ourselves and others. It enables diverse perceptions, thoughts, abilities, dreams and contributions. Diversity gives strength.

It is true that we should put the oxygen masks on ourselves before helping others. If we're not healthy, whole, energized, capable, feeling good and motivated ourselves, then we are less able to contribute. When our personal batteries are empty, we have no juice to share or use constructively.

That aspect of ego is good for us, and good for society and the world. It's good to strive for personal growth and fulfillment. Our drive for self-preservation is hard-wired. We need to take responsibility for our own state of being, health, happiness, feelings, and for our own thoughts and actions. We need our own dreams and desires to motivate us. We need to feel good about being on our own unique path.

However, ego can get out of control. Ego can grow to a sense of self-righteousness that closes out perceptions and awareness of others. It can constrain identity to the individual, shutting out collective perspectives and needs, in closed-mindedness, ignorance and insensitivity. It can grow to seek attention and reward in unhealthy ways. In extreme forms, it results in sociopathy, a lack of awareness and care for others, and a sense of entitlement, feelings of deserving more than others, because we are better and more important than others. Ego develops a hunger that is never satisfied. It can't get enough, rapacious to the point where it behaves like disease, destroying life it depends on for existence.

Unfortunately, it appears that many top U.S. government leaders and corporate owners and managers are egoistic to the point of sick sociopathy. We only pay attention to and care about our own thing, ignoring impacts on others and needs of others, to points where there is no remorse for harming others, or nature and the living systems that support all of us. There is much harm being done in the U.S. by ego driven sociopaths who simply do not care about the harm we are doing in pursuit of ego fulfillment. The current U.S. President is a sick, spoiled, egotistical sociopath?

There is a common path to ego corruption and inflation. As we get higher in government and business, have more wealth and power, staff, servants and the public behave in increasingly subservient ways, cowering and deferring to wealth and power. The more wealth and power we get, the more others behave as if we are right and deserving of respect and power, even if we are not, and the more we feel we deserve power, because we are better than others. That's the feedback we are getting from others. That raises thoughts and experiences of self-importance, feeds ego, sickens and separates.

As wealth increases, people are increasingly insulated in comfort and luxury, behind gated communities, in fancy houses, hotels, cars and planes, and out of contact with the conditions, thoughts, needs and desires of more common people, so we lose touch with the lives and experiences of normal people.

The higher the class of hotels, resorts, restaurants and other service interactions we are part of, the more we are sucked up to and treated as if we're better than others. Soon enough, we start believing it.

We start thinking things like: “I have wealth and power, because I’m better than others and deserve it. Actually, I deserve even more, ‘cause I’m better than so many of those others who have more than I do. Those who don’t have as much as I do don’t deserve it, because they’re not as good as me. They’re lazy, stupid or incompetent. I’m the best. I deserve the most. I deserve more and more, attention, money, stuff, power and worship, because of my superiority. One day, I will get the most, because I am the best and most important, and I will be envied and appreciated for it.” Careful, Yertle the Turtle!

Actually, generally, no living being is inherently better than any others. We’re just different. Circumstances, good luck, hard work, cleverness and abilities can combine to create advantages for some relative to others, with regard to whatever, but for humanity as a living experiment, creating diverse experiences and perspectives to evolve, we need everyone, and everyone is valuable. We need people to do the simple jobs and people to do the hard jobs. We need people to fill the difficult roles in society as well as the easy ones. We need people to solve the real, difficult problems from the hard places deep down in life as much as we need people to serve as figureheads for what works easily.

When ego so detaches itself from the humanity, nature and living systems we are living parts of, it is a sickness, a disease, like a cancer that consumes more than it needs in its efforts to get bigger, until it finally kills its host, destroying itself. Ego cancers are epidemic in the U.S., eating it up from the inside.

To prevent and cure that, we need to narrow the rewards of privilege, so corruption does not take hold. We need to call out ego inflation illness when we see it, and provide therapies and treatments to bring it under control and prevent it from spreading, and we need preventative practices to keep us healthy and uninfected by ego inflation. Ego inflation is a disease we need to address, like a public health crisis.

We each need to be regularly exposed to lives, experiences and perspectives of diverse social positions. We need to surrender ego in meditation and doing simple, needed tasks together with common people. We need to be aware of the threat of ego escalation, know how to recognize it, and work to prevent it, with love and conscious humility. We all need perspectives and regular experiences of serving others. We need to treat everyone fairly and narrow income and wealth gaps. We need to avoid isolation and insulation, and we need to treat each other as spiritual equals. We need humility. Burp, Mack!