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Foreword by Hal and Sidra Stone

On the journey of self-discovery, let us stop looking for what is wrong with us. Let us discover, instead, who we are and how we work! Let us separate from our judgments as we explore the amazing system of selves within us, and learn to live our lives with ever-increasing honesty, choice, and freedom.

Karin Brugman, Judith Budde and Berry Collewijn are a great team! They have written a practical, delightfully easy to understand, and very valuable book on self-development that opens up a new world to explore and a new way to deal with the challenges present every day in life and at work.

Karin, Judith and Berry show us so clearly, wherever we go and whatever we do in our lives, we take our selves with us! Whether we are alone or with others, these selves will determine what we think and how we act. The more we know about these selves, the more real choice we can have in the way we live our lives and the more effective we can be.

Our work, Voice Dialogue and the Psychology of Selves, has been about the exploration and understanding of these selves and - by separating from them - evolving a completely new way of being in the world, a new "I" that we call the Aware Ego process. And, despite the depth of change possible, the respect for the primary selves keeps it safe and it does not necessarily involve great disruption or loss.

This work began on a personal level - in our own relationship. Since this we are both psychotherapists, it was quite natural that once we saw the value of this for

us, we moved on to using it in our work with others. Because of the power and effectiveness of this work, it has been a very natural development for others to move it out into the world of business. In one form or another, it has become quite popular in the fields of coaching and organizational development.

In contrast to other methods of working with people or approaches to self-development, ours began in a partnering setting of love and mutual respect - including the disagreements and conflicts that come with this territory. It did not begin in a clinical setting where there would be an emphasis on pathology, nor did it evolve in a business setting where the emphasis would be upon improvement. We were not looking for "what was wrong and needed correction", but for what "was". This gives our work an accepting and particularly non-judgmental approach to people. It provides an easy, yet profound - and often amusing - way of working.

Although Voice Dialogue plays a major part in their individual work with clients, Karin, Judith en Berry utilize other complementary modalities as indicated. And, in working with larger groups, they creatively combine Voice Dialogue with drama techniques.

Hal & Sidra Stone

Albion, California

Introduction

In this book, we will allow the various selves residing within you to speak (up). We will invite you to look at yourself in a different light, to consider yourself as a person composed of not one, but of a collection of selves. 'Do I actually have that?' you might be wondering. Indeed you do, and not just you: every human being is built up of a collection of selves. These selves show themselves frequently in our daily use of language, in expressions such as: 'I really wasn't myself last night' or 'Something in me says this isn't going to work'. Take a look at pop songs, for instance, like the song 'Bitch' from Meredith Brooks: *I'm a bitch, I'm a lover, I'm a child, I'm a mother, I'm a sinner, I'm a saint.*

You too have different sides, parts or subpersonalities which all see the world with different sets of eyes. They each have their own habits, feelings and thoughts.

The main question then becomes who to listen to amidst this cacophony of voices. This is a fun way of looking at yourself and it offers a number of advantages. For one thing, this approach will help shed some light on why some people immediately attract you and others do not. It will also help you to understand why you sometimes do things even when you do not want to.

The notion that you consist of a number of subpersonalities is not new. Many contemporary psychological models draw on the concept of subpersonalities or parts. This book is based on the ideas of the American psychologists Hal and Sidra Stone and their Voice Dialogue method. What appeals to us the most in their approach is the non-judgmental way of looking at yourself. They are not focused on establishing a diagnosis or examining what is wrong with you. Voice Dialogue is

aimed at discovering who you are in all your diversity. You come to discover who within you is in charge and why *they* are. You learn to tap into underutilized talents and free yourself from worn out habits and counterproductive behavior. Voice Dialogue can also prove to be very useful in your relationships. It can help you to gain insight into deadlocked patterns and how to break out of them.

Since its development in 1972, Voice Dialogue has proven to be an extremely effective method. Today, it is used in many countries throughout the world. Through this book, we wish to share our enthusiasm for this lighthearted, adventurous and profound method of working. This book was written for anyone who wants to get to know him- or herself better and for anyone who wants to become acquainted with Voice Dialogue.

Build-up

In *chapter 1*, we invite you to take a look at yourself and others from the perspective of subpersonalities.

You will become acquainted with the Psychology of Selves. We provide an answer to questions such as: where do your different selves come from? Which selves do you have? How can you track down the different selves? You learn that some selves strongly affect your life while others have less of an impact.

Why is it that, despite your best efforts to change, you always seem to come up empty-handed? Who within you is sabotaging your desire to get more exercise, to quit smoking or to stand up for yourself more often? And why is that?

In the last paragraph of this chapter, you will learn how you can manage your different selves so that it is you who leads your life and not them.

In *chapter 2*, we will introduce you to some of the most common subpersonalities. You will learn why they are there and what talents they possess. You will get to know the Pleaser, who caters to everyone's wishes. You will meet the Pusher, who chases you around all day to squeeze in that extra bit of work. You will become acquainted with the Rational Mind, the Inner Child, and a number of other subpersonalities. We will also discuss some archetypal subpersonalities. You will no doubt recognize these subpersonalities in your everyday life – if not in yourself, then definitely in others.

Chapter 3 describes how subpersonalities influence our relationships. Why is it that some people drive you up the wall while others lift your spirit?

Patterns emerge in every relationship. In Voice Dialogue, we call these bonding patterns.

In this chapter, we explain how you end up in these patterns and how you can break out of them.

By recognizing which subpersonalities are at work, within yourself and others, your understanding of relationship and conflict will grow.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the Voice Dialogue method. You will read how a Voice Dialogue facilitator literally engages in a conversation with the various selves of the client. How does a session work? How does it progress? What position does the facilitator assume? To what types of situation does the method lend itself?

You will get an overall idea of how the method works. Naturally, a lot more can be said about the methodology of Voice Dialogue. However, this book was not intended to serve as a manual for Voice Dialogue facilitators. If you are interested in having a session, or if you are interested in becoming a Voice Dialogue facilitator, you can find a list of addresses at the back of the book.

In closing

We wanted to write an easily accessible and readable book on Voice Dialogue and the Psychology of Selves. To this end, we used a lot of examples of daily routines from both work and private life that everyone can recognize. Some examples were borrowed from the many people that we met in our training groups and in our coaching practice. However, to protect their privacy, we have made them unrecognizable by changing names and details.

Further on in the book, we describe some of the more common subpersonalities such as the Pleaser, the Pusher and the Critic. However, ultimately, the names you give to your subpersonalities depends entirely on what suits you best. Although subpersonalities can be both male and female, for purposes of readability, we have described all of them in the 'he'-form.

Needless to say, we had to limit ourselves while writing this book. A lot more can be said about the energetic aspects of the subpersonalities, about archetypes, dreams and bonding patterns. However, because we wanted to introduce a broader audience to the idea of subpersonalities, ease of reading won out against comprehensiveness. However, if you want to read more, you can find some suggestions in our reading list.

We hope that both you and your selves enjoy this book!

Karin Brugman

Judith Budde

Berry Collewyn

1 The Psychology of Selves

*The voyage of discovery is not in seeking
new landscapes but in having new eyes.*

Marcel Proust

1.1 Every person is made up of many selves

Imagine you walk into a bookstore and head straight for the psychology and non-fiction section. You grab [*Ik ken mijn ikken*] from the shelf and start leafing through the pages. 'Nice book, seems interesting. I'm going to buy it,' you think. But, just as you are heading for the cash register, a different thought pops up and says: 'Great! Not another one of those self-help books. You have mountains of these lying around at home and you haven't even opened them. Why don't you head home first and read one before you even consider buying a new book? Plus, do you really think these books actually help?'

Everyday, every one of us has quite a number of these inner dialogues. Sometimes, we literally end up thinking: on the one hand, I really want this, but on the other hand, I am thinking that. We want two things at the same time that are in direct conflict with one another. Everybody runs into this now and again – it is completely normal. But how do you finally make up your mind?

Something tells us the chances of your doing the following are pretty slim: you find a chair in the store and have a seat. You take a moment to listen to what both sides have to say. First, you ask one side: 'Gee, why do you want that book so much?'

After hearing what his motives are, you turn to the other side, eager to find out what his objections are towards buying this book. You acknowledge both of their concerns, you show that you understand their feelings, and then you make a decision – much like a mother or father who listens to the various needs of two children and then makes a decision.

No, usually, you do not make decisions in such a conscious way. Most of the time, the decision making process happens unconsciously and at light speed, and it is not you that has the final say, but one of either sides that makes the choice, independently and fully automatically. Before you know it, you are standing in line at the cash register, ready to buy the book. Or, the book has already returned to the shelf as you have decided not to go through with it. And all of this happened without the involvement of any conscious thought processes.

When it comes to buying a book, this is not such a big deal. But what about decisions that have a bigger impact on your life?

WHAT ARE SUBPERSONALITIES?

You probably think it is *you* who is leading your life and that you have the freedom of choice. However, in reality, your life is being led by those selves inside you who have the most say. We call these selves your *subpersonalities*. They determine, for a large part, your behavior and how other people see you. What we call our character or our personality is, in fact, a collection of subpersonalities.

Suppose we compared your personality to a bus packed with selves¹. Your various selves are the passengers and you are the driver, nicely seated behind the wheel. The thing is, your selves do not all want to go in the same direction, and they each have their own ideas as to how the bus should be driven. For instance, your Perfectionist wants you to drive excellently, your Pleaser wants everyone to be comfortable, and your Pusher wants you to reach your destination as soon as possible. If, every now and again, each of these passengers were to express their wishes to you, the driver, the situation would still be manageable. The problem is that they regularly push you aside and grab the wheel themselves. As a result, your freedom of choice is inhibited. It can happen that, all of a sudden, your Pusher is sitting in your driver's seat. All he knows is how to rev things up and put the pedal to the metal. This is his purpose in your life.

ALL THESE VOICES IN MY HEAD? AM I CRAZY OR WHAT?

Sometimes, the idea of subpersonalities can evoke associations with certain mental disorders. However, this is not what we wish to convey here. The fact that we each have multiple selves within us is a perfectly normal and healthy phenomenon. It is part of our personality.

INFLUENTIAL AND LESS INFLUENTIAL SUBPERSONALITIES

Not all of your subpersonalities are equally influential when it comes to your daily activities. Some subpersonalities are seated more towards the front of your bus

¹ The 'bus packed with selves' metaphore was borrowed from the work of the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli.

and are more prominent. We call these your *primary selves* or *primary subpersonalities*. They are the first selves to take over the wheel. They do it so often that you do not even notice anymore. You have come to believe that they *are* the driver.

Li's parents used to have a Chinese restaurant. Ever since she was a girl, she has been used to helping out. It never once crossed her mind to sit around after school and watch TV, or to go outside and play with her friends while her parents and her brother were all busy working in the restaurant. Now that she is an adult, she is as hard working as ever. In Li's eyes, that is perfectly normal. What is even more is that, because of this, she is now one of the key members of the hospital's executive staff. People take her seriously and she is highly respected.

Li has a Pusher and he plays quite an important role in her life. He is a primary subpersonality. Whether Li is at the office or organizing a party, she is devoted to everything she does and always gives 110 percent. Lazying about is not in her dictionary. 'That's just the way I am,' Li thinks.

Her other subpersonalities are less noticeable. They are seated in the last few rows of Li's bus, and sometimes even in the trunk. They are there alright, but she hardly ever sees or hears them. And, as soon as they start to speak up, they are immediately silenced. We call these your disowned subpersonalities.

Li has a really good friend who works part-time and has a lot of free time. Every once in a while, Li wonders what it would be like to trade places with her, if only for a day. But, no sooner does this thought cross her mind than it is quickly toned down. Li needs to make every second of her day count!

Li can no longer hear the other passengers on her bus, like the Dreamer and the Pleasure Seeker. Through the course of time, they have become less and less noticeable. Li is hardly aware that she even has these other sides. They barely have any effect on the way she drives, even though they could provide just as meaningful a contribution to the journey as any of the other selves. 'Then why don't they?' you might be wondering. 'And how did these passengers even end up on this bus?'

WHERE DO SUBPERSONALITIES COME FROM?

Where did all the passengers come from, and when did they get on the bus? Or, in other words, where did your subpersonalities come from? Everyone develops subpersonalities in order to survive, and this process starts early on in life.

When young parents first glance at their newborn child, they often double-check to see if 'everything came with the package'. And although the baby is still very small, he arrived with everything intact – with tiny fingers, ears and feet. He has everything he needs to grow into an adult human being. You came into the world in exactly the same way: as a little child, fragile, open and dependent on others. We call this side the child within you, or your *Inner Child*. As a baby, you coincide with

this Inner Child – you *are* it. Later on in life, when you have matured into an adult, you still carry this Inner Child in you. This is the reason why, even when you are all grown up, you can suddenly start to feel very small: during a presentation, right before a job interview, during that first date or when catastrophe strikes. As a baby, you carried everything you needed for you to grow into the person you have become: both physically as well as in terms of your personality. The Inner Child possesses your ‘psychological fingerprint’. Just like a normal fingerprint, it is similar to that of other people and yet it is unique for everyone. As a baby, you possessed all the things that made you unmistakably you. This is who you truly are – your essence.

This is what makes people recognizable to one another. When Miles Davis played the trumpet, you could tell just by the first few notes that it was him in the same way you can tell the difference between a Van Gogh and the work of another painter.

Early on, you carry all possibilities within you. Whether or not this potential is fulfilled all depends on your development. Some aspects of yourself are appreciated and stimulated by your surroundings. Other sides meet with disapproval or are simply not noticed. As a baby and as a child, you are extremely sensitive to the reactions of your environment. You are dependent. You are in need of something that will enable you to hold your own and that will keep you from constantly getting hurt.

You will not get far with just your Inner Child. You cannot go through life being dependent. It would not be a good idea to give a presentation as an Inner Child or to go to a job interview. People tend to think more positively of you when you

exude strength. Imagine that, during your high school years, you only had your Inner Child at your disposal. That would have made for quite an interesting period. This is why you are generally better off when your Inner Child remains out of sight. In this manner, all children develop ways to avoid pain. At a very young age you begin to discover how to influence your surroundings. Even as a baby you notice which behaviors bring positive results: someone smiles at you, gives you food, care or attention.

How does this process unfold? As a baby, even though you are not yet fully aware, you do have an abundance of experiences. Babies are very well attuned to their environment. Imagine a baby notices that his mother becomes anxious and restless whenever he starts to cry. The mother does not know how to respond and the baby does not like this. On the other hand, when the baby starts to make noises and smiles, he notices that his mother becomes excited and starts to relax. She starts to play with him. In turn, the baby feels safe and comfortable. As a result, he learns that smiling helps to make his mother happy and that crying leads to less pleasant reactions. This interaction can lead to the development of a Pleaser. This is a subpersonality that perfectly senses what other people like. The Pleaser notices that when he does what other people like, when he *pleases*, other people become happy. The Pleaser can then become the automatic response for dealing with other people.

SOME SELVES BECOME PRIMARY

And so you enter into the world using those sides of you which have proven most effective in getting you what you need. These are your *primary selves*. Along the way, you develop quite the elaborate collection.

They are your personal bodyguards. They stand, as a fortified wall, between your Inner Child and the outside world. Your primary selves are of the utmost importance to your survival. All of them have been put in place to prevent you from harm, and they will remain there to protect you until long after your transition from childhood to adulthood. They have taken it as their responsibility to keep a constant eye on anything that might endanger your Inner Child. As soon as they spot something that could threaten what they find to be important, they interfere: you will not get the job done in time, the group atmosphere is losing its amicable energy, mistakes are being made. In their eyes, any of these situations could put your Inner Child in harm's way.

Every time Li has a chance to catch her breath, her Pusher grabs the wheel. If she were to allow herself more than ten minutes for a coffee break and chat with a colleague, she would end up feeling guilty. She has yet to finish what she set out to do that day, and besides, she was just gaining so much momentum. Later on in the day, the Pusher sees to it that, on her way home, she continues to mull over everything on her to-do list. After all, there is tons to be done at home: clothes to iron, dinner to cook, people to call, newspapers to read, finances to manage, and so on. The Pusher makes sure that Li never sits still, because Li taught him early on in life that idling

about is not appreciated. The minute Li completes one task, her Pusher has already added a few more things to her to-do list.

It is different for everyone which subpersonalities become primary. In Li's case, she has developed a Pusher and an Ambitious Self. Someone else might come to develop a Dreamer or a Pleasure Seeker as their lead character. Your primary subpersonalities are shaped by the norms and values of your family system, the place where you live, your religion, your culture and by your various life experiences. Anything that is essentially human can become primary, even selves like the Rebel, the Victim, the Average Joe, the Trickster, the Killer and the Liar.

It is different for each subpersonality what they consider to be dangerous. The Pleaser, for example, is convinced that the Inner Child becomes threatened when he does not cater to everyone's needs. The others might not find the Child likeable. This is why he keeps close tabs on everyone else's needs. The Perfectionist wants to shield the Child from all criticism and sees inadequacies as probable risks. For the Pusher, the actual danger lies in doing nothing. Relaxing is a dangerous thing to do, as you will most likely end up being a loser. And so it is that every bodyguard ends up protecting something different. Another thing is that they prefer to get the job done before the unsuspecting Inner Child has even had a chance to detect any possible danger.

EXERCISE 1 WHO ARE YOUR PRIMARY SELVES?

Perhaps you already know which of your selves are prominent in your life. If not, then the following questions might help you get an idea.

- What are your “fully automated” behaviors, things you do without thinking, things you look back on and say: ‘Before I knew it, ... (I had straightened everything out, I had already said yes, etc...)?’.
- How do you generally respond to stress and strain?
- How do the people who know you describe you (‘You’re a real...’)?

What do your primary selves take care of?

Take a minute to look at one or two selves that often show up in your life.

- When did they start to take part in your life?
- Did they enter your life at a specific moment in time? Why did they show up?
- What do you benefit from their being there?
- What do they generally try to protect you from?

SOME SELVES BECOME DISOWNED

If you were to walk around as your Inner Child during your entire stay here on the planet Earth, there is a big chance that you would end up becoming a constant victim. People would use and abuse you, and most events would leave you shattered. So, essentially, it is a good thing that you developed your primary selves. As your bodyguards, they are constantly at your side, helping you to navigate the

jungle that is everyday life. And, more often than not, it appears to you that you *are* them.

However, there is a flipside to this whole process: you have become partially separated from your original psychological fingerprint. After all, what happened to the other selves? Why is it that some sides end up at the back of the bus or even banished to the trunk?

As we mentioned earlier, you learn at an early stage in life which behavior leads to unpleasant, painful emotions. Say you have been acting up and your mother comes down on you pretty hard. As you are very dependent on her, it is very upsetting when your mother rejects you. So, you quickly learn that you had better mind your manners. This is not a very conscious process because, as a child, not much thought goes into it. But even so, you feel the rejection quite distinctly. And so you suppress those sides which cause you to feel the pain and sorrow. These selves become repressed or *disowned*. It is as if they are no longer a part of your personality. This is a necessary, unconscious and natural process that we all go through.

In her earlier stages, Li also had a Pleasure Seeker inside her. This subpersonality wanted to play with the other children and had no interest whatsoever in working after school. However, if Li had listened to him, it would have felt to her as if she was abandoning her entire family. She had once seen how her brother got lectured when he had lost track of time. He had gone to play basketball with a friend while he was needed in the kitchen. If her Pleasure Seeker had been left without any restrictions, this would have inevitably led to criticism, great conflict and would have caused her parents much sorrow. She would have ended up feeling rotten. Another thing was

that she and her brother always got a big hug at the end of the day when they had done a good job helping out. She also knew that her parents had migrated to Europe to give her and her brother a better life than they had had for themselves. Thank god her Pusher showed up. He loved nothing more than to roll up his sleeves and get to work, always bearing in mind what was next on the list of things to do. He felt no need whatsoever to stop and catch his breath. As long as he was behind the wheel, Li felt no need to relax and no sense of loss or pain for not having relaxed. What is even more is that she grew more and more annoyed with people who cut corners to get things done.

Did Li's Pleasure Seeker disappear? Was he thrown off her bus? No, he was not.

The fact that some passengers hardly ever take a seat behind the wheel does not mean that they are no longer on the bus. You are simply no longer aware that they exist. The passengers on the bus do not like the fact that the driver acts as if they do not exist and only drives according to the other passengers' wishes. What would *you* do if you were constantly being ignored? It is easy to imagine that the Pleasure Seeker would try to find one or more ways to draw some attention to himself, say, when the driver is not looking. What if it was the Pleasure Seeker who had Li daydreaming about winning a huge amount of cash and doing whatever she wanted. Could the fact that Li has migraine headaches every weekend be related to the fact that her Pleasure Seeker is not getting enough quality time?

For every primary self that crawls behind the wheel of our bus, an opposite self must be banished to the trunk. Someone who has a primary, Ambitious Self will push aside the part of them that wants to Lazy about. Still, this does not mean that

that part *is* gone. On the contrary, your disowned selves follow you everywhere, like your shadow. A self usually ends up in the trunk because, at the moment when he once surfaced, he was punished and hurt. This punishment could have involved actual physical or verbal abuse. But, it could just as well have been a casual remark, a disappointed glance or a raised eyebrow from someone in your surroundings.

When the leadership training session started off with a goofy name game, Marcel totally shut down. This is exactly what happens to him at work too. People see him as a serious, reliable and stable guy. Occasionally, though, Marcel would just like to let loose. He thinks that, as the manager, he would probably get more done from the people working for him, and that it would be easier to stop by someone's desk for the occasional chat. Marcel's parents were serious and pious people who did a lot for their church. Being good to your fellow man and taking responsibility were high up on their list. Whenever his brother barged into the house, or when he would imitate a wacky voice from someone on TV, his father always demanded that he 'behave in a civilized manner'. 'Life is not all fun and games,' his mother would add with a stern look on her face. No wonder Marcel disowned his Loose Self. This is how he shielded himself from his parents' disapproval. This is also why he stalls every time a situation calls for a more loose approach.

You do not only disown the sides that you condemn, like aggression, egotism or arrogance. Sometimes, the qualities you wished you possessed are also banished, like creativity, the ability to improvise or the ability to stand up and take decisive action. In Marcel's case, he wishes he could loosen up and be a bit more cheerful

now and then. And his Loose Side does show up on occasion. Sometimes, when he has had a few beers, he has been known to be spontaneous and make a few jokes. Marcel is not the only one who uses alcohol as a means to let down his guard. When people are under the influence of alcohol, their bodyguards become less vigilant. This creates room for the disowned selves to manoeuvre about. For some people, alcohol is their only way to come into contact with these sides.

Not being in touch with your disowned sides is like walking through life on one leg when you have two at your disposal. Sure, you will probably get by. After all, you are used to it. Still, the fact remains that you make do with less than is available to you. However practical it might have been at one time to disown certain sides, it can and usually does come back to weigh you down. What would it be like if you could learn how to use that other leg? Or, in other words, what would it be like if you could learn how to utilize the qualities of the disowned selves?

EXERCISE 2 WHO ARE YOUR DISOWNED SELVES?

The following questions can help you find out who your disowned selves are.

- What annoys you in other people? What do you despise or condemn? What qualities are you glad that you do not have? These are all sides of yourself that you have disowned.
- What qualities do you wish you had? These qualities can also be ones that you have disowned.
- What kind of people do you easily end up in conflict with?

- What do you sometimes daydream about, and which selves play a role in these dreams? Daydreams and fantasies tend to create room for the selves that spend more time behind the scenes.

- Psychosomatic complaints can sometimes be an indication of a disowned self: hyperventilation, headaches, stomach ulcers and so on.

What would it be like if you could summon some of the talents of your disowned subpersonalities in certain situations? When would that come in handy?

SOME SELVES ARE UNDEVELOPED

There are also passengers on the bus that have not been disowned, but that are still not used that often.

These are your *undeveloped selves*. These are sides of which you are unaware that you have them for the simple reason that they have never been called upon.

When Tom turned 65, he decided to sign up for a painting class. A few months later, painting had become his number 1 hobby and he was making the most beautiful works of art. He never knew he had it in him simply because he had never tried.

The difference between these and your disowned selves is that your bodyguards do not see your undeveloped sides as a threat. When you start to make use of these sides, it does not necessarily coincide with feelings of fear or disapproval.

COUNTLESS SELVES

There are an innumerable amount of subpersonalities. Each of the possibilities which you possess is like a subpersonality ready to be awakened within you. It differs from person to person which subpersonalities are given a more leading role and which ones are kept behind the scenes. This all depends on the culture you grew up in, the norms and values within your family and also on the nature of each individual, on his or her psychological fingerprint. Take a look at brothers and sisters who grow up together with an authoritarian father. One child develops a Pleaser to deal with the father's dominance while the other brings a Rebel to the dinner table. Both the Pleaser and the Rebel come into existence in order to protect the child, but they each do it in an entirely different way.

ALL SUBPERSONALITIES HAVE THEIR OWN ENERGY

Each subpersonality has his own effect on your mood. You can start to feel bright and cheerful, but you can also start to feel a lump in your throat. This all depends on who inside you is calling the shots. The effects each subpersonality has on you can also be seen on the outside. When your Responsible Self is in charge, you tend to look more serious and your voice goes down a bit. The world becomes a dark and serious place. When you are in a playful mood, your face brightens up and all of a sudden you can seem a few years younger.

Imagine that subpersonalities were real people of flesh and blood, people that you could run into any time at work or when you go to the supermarket. A Pusher

would look a lot different from, say, a Pleaser or a Rational Mind. If you were to actually meet one of them, they would each provoke a different reaction from you. The Pusher is always in high gear, so if you want to have a talk with him, you had better get on with it. The Pleaser would smile and put you at ease while the Rational Mind would leave a more distant impression. Subpersonalities, voices, selves, parts: in this book, these are all names we use for the partial aspects of your personality. We also call them *energies*. When we refer to them in this way, it becomes more apparent that they each broadcast their own energy and that we can describe one as being more warm and open and another as being more cool or withdrawn. You can tell all these things by a subpersonality's posture, movement and facial expression as well as by the tone of his voice. We can observe all these elements in our daily use of language, in expressions such as 'If looks could kill', 'He's very withdrawn' and 'What an intriguing individual'. It is precisely these aspects that influence our communication without our even noticing it. Essentially, a lot of our communication is 'energetic'. By that we mean that you react more strongly to *who* in the other person is saying something than to *what* is being said.

Kathy is attending a workshop in Personal Effectiveness. At work, it was pointed out to her that she sometimes scares people off, albeit unconsciously. People rarely come and sit with her during their lunchbreak. She clearly sends out the message that she prefers to be alone and that she does not appreciate it when her colleagues seek out her company. This could spell trouble for Kathy, because that is precisely what she needs: more human contact. Apparently she does something that drives people away, even though she has no idea what that might be.

There is a bodyguard in Kathy who sees to it that people stay at a distance. Before Kathy even notices it, he has already averted any possible danger by preventing her from coming into contact with other people. That way, they cannot end up rejecting her.

Kathy never really was a girl's girl. She never liked girly clothes or talking about girly things. People thought she was a little bit odd. She had always felt different from other people and that this was the reason she was laughed at. Constantly feeling that you are not welcome would be unbearable for anyone, and this is why a primary self showed up and told her: 'We don't need those other people. Look at them, how they sit around, giggling on about meaningless things. Do you really want to belong there? They're so stupid!' And so she developed a Self-Sufficient Side which helped her to deal with things on her own. This side does not need anybody, he does not care about what other people think of her and he avoids contact with others. Problem solved. Now that Kathy is an adult, her Self-Sufficient Self sees to it that Kathy brings along a book and her iPod when she goes to get the children from school. That way, she does not have to chat with the other mothers in the schoolyard. She can just be herself.

Kathy's Self-Sufficient Self has developed quite an effective solution so Kathy does not have to deal with rejection: he sees to it that people stay away from her. And he has become exceedingly good at this.

This is a pretty useful talent to have up your sleeve when, say, you are walking down a dark alley or you do not want to be asked to help out with something. Of course, when this subpersonality is constantly in charge, you do end up being excluded from any and all contact with other people. The energy of her Self-Sufficient Side is enough to keep others at a distance. Sadly, though, Kathy has no other behavioral alternatives at her disposal. Every time Kathy goes to places where there are other people, this subpersonality is 'triggered': meetings, receptions, the schoolyard, and so on. Whenever a primary self takes over, you can no longer make conscious choices. When you are on autopilot, you react to 'triggers' from your environment. The same way in which the dogs in Pavlov's experiment began to drool at the sounding of a bell even though there was no food on the way, so does Kathy's Self-Sufficient Self take over the wheel when other people show up, and this without her having thought about it at all.

SUMMARY

- The Psychology of Selves is built on the idea that your personality is split up into different parts. Other names for these parts are: subpersonalities, sides, voices, selves or energies.

- The primary selves are the sides with which you first meet the world. They are who you think you are, your identity. They came to help you survive the context in which you grew up. Their main goal is to protect you from harm. You could look at them as your personal bodyguards.

- Repressed or disowned selves are the subpersonalities which have been banished to your subconscious: your trunk. This happened because they were punished when they

once surfaced, or at least that is how they experienced it. They are still there but you are no longer aware of their presence.

- Undeveloped selves are sides of which you are unaware that you have them, simply because they have never been used.

- We see subpersonalities as people of flesh and blood. They each have their own thoughts, wishes, feelings and memories. They each have their own energy.

- It is more important who within you is speaking than what you are saying!

1.2 The limitations of your primary and disowned selves

What would you do if you ended up on a moving bus and the driver was incapable of operating the vehicle? You would probably do the same as the primary selves: grab the wheel yourself! As long as the driver is incapable of controlling the wheel, the primary selves will take over. You might think it is you who shapes your life, while in fact it is your primary selves who are responsible for your accomplishments in the areas of your career, your relationships and your overall sense of well-being. The question remains open whether or not this is such a bad thing. After all, your bus is still moving and you might actually like where it has brought you so far. Whether or not you are pleased with the results, you must face one fact, though: the system of our primary and disowned selves has a number of limitations.

PRIMARY SELVES LIMIT YOUR FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Max is a real Pleasure Seeker. He often goes sailing with his friends, and he recently enrolled in a class in wine tasting. His job involves a lot of travelling and he often stays in exclusive hotels where he has elaborate lunches and lavish dinners. When he goes in for a routine check-up, the doctor tells him his blood pressure is too high. He needs to watch his diet more closely, get more exercise and lose some weight. Max is quick to fall in line and starts working out at the gym, showing a lot of commitment.

Every time he goes to the gym, he must force himself to go. Still, every time he comes home from the gym, he feels exhilarated. What an amazing and powerful feeling. He has not felt this good in years and is really pleased with the progress he is making.

Two weeks later at a party, Max goes overboard on the wine and tapas. 'Ah, we all die eventually,' his Pleasure Seeker tells him. 'Besides, a while ago, one of your younger coworkers passed away and he had been leading a really healthy life.' The Pleasure Seeker grabs another portion of patatas bravas and thinks: 'Then you'd better enjoy it while it lasts.' A week goes by and Max has not been to the gym. Pretty soon, things are not going well at all. Deep down, Max feels disappointed and gloomy. He was feeling so much better and there he went and let himself go again!

Max tries his best to change, but it would seem that he is no match for his Pleasure Seeker. Although you have countless ways of dealing with a situation, you usually respond with the same set of standard reactions – even when the outcome is negative. Other options do not occur to you or are simply too hard to get yourself started on. Your bodyguards are standing between you and your freedom of choice.

If your Modest Self has the upper hand in your life, there is a good chance your superiors might ask you to make more of an effort to stand out. However, your Modest Self will not approve of this idea. He came into your life to shield you from too much visibility. No matter what they might ask of you at work, he prefers to stay behind the wheel to ensure your safety – with all the negative effects on your normal functioning as a result. This is how those selves, which at one point served you quite well, can end up jeopardizing your efforts when you are an adult.

REPRESSING DISOWNED SIDES IS ENERGY CONSUMING

You might not always notice it, but it takes quite an amount of energy to keep your disowned sides at bay. For instance, the Modest Self must constantly see to it that the Attention Seeker stays in the trunk.

The stronger you coincide with a particular bodyguard, the deeper the counterpart has been tucked away in your subconscious. You banish your selves with the same amount of force you use to empower your primary selves. The stronger the Modest Self is present in your life, the more power you will need to subdue the Attention Seeker.

DISOWNED SELVES WREAK HAVOC

Try as they might, your bodyguards are not always successful in containing their counterparts. The repressed selves will not be held back forever. They sometimes manage to draw attention to themselves, and they always do this in their own way. When they feel the air is beginning to run thin, they start shouting they want out or

they start banging on the trunk. They demand to be recognized, and they often do this in such a way that it can have quite a disruptive influence on your 'normal' life. Take a look at Lester Burnham in the movie 'American Beauty' and how he undergoes a complete personality transformation during his midlife crisis. He breaks loose from his suburban life, quits his job at the magazine where he has been working for fourteen years, and does something that every one of us has probably dreamt of doing on more than one occasion: he stops caring about all the preconceived notions as to how he is supposed to behave and only does what he feels like doing. All the selves that were locked in his trunk for so many years break free – those who saw the movie know at what cost. Repressing subpersonalities is a lot like holding a ball under water: it takes a great deal of effort. Look away for just one minute and it can force its way right back up. The intensity with which this happens all depends on how deep you were holding it down to begin with. Your Pusher might get paralyzed by a burn-out, meaning you will have to start listening to the side that wants to sit on the couch or lie in bed. Or your Reasonable Self could suddenly become blinded by an enormous fit of rage from your Emotional Side. Then, after the storm subsides, your Reasonable Self is tormented by great feelings of shame. You cannot unleash like that. That is just not done.

YOU CANNOT DEAL WITH CONFLICTING EMOTIONS

As humans, we often end up in situations where there is an insurmountable entanglement of conflicting emotions. Or, how we like to put it: there are different subpersonalities speaking simultaneously and they each want to react differently to the same situation. We usually ignore the subpersonalities who are shouting

their opinion from the depths of the trunk. It is not just profound events that can shake you up, like the loss of someone dear to you, quitting your job or becoming very ill. Even small, everyday matters can throw you off balance and evoke strong emotions, even for the shortest length of time. A customer reacts angrily towards you, an acquaintance forgets to invite you to a party, your partner shows no interest in your story, a telemarketeer comes on too strong, the car in the other lane cuts you off.

While passing her desk, Laura's boss drops off another pile of paperwork, instructing her that these have to be sent out to the clients before noon tomorrow. The first thing that comes to Laura's mind is 'jerk'. If he were a friend of hers, she would have thrown it out in the open, but this is her boss. She feels helpless and wants to start crying, but then again, that would not be very professional of her. Extremely annoyed, she types on, wondering why she did not sound off straight away.

One of Robert's best friends just got promoted. Robert is happy for him: his friend worked really hard to get there. Robert, on the other hand, is stuck in a rut. He has been working in the same department for fifteen years. On top of that, his company is planning to reorganize some of its activities, and there is a good chance that his position might become obsolete. Deep down, he is really jealous of his friend, but he is ashamed to admit it. True friends grant each other their successes, right?

All these reactions take place in the blink of an eye. You might disapprove of some of the reactions of these subpersonalities: Robert's Jealous Side, for example, or the self in Laura that would love nothing more than to let her boss have it.

Laura quickly pushes that subpersonality aside, so quickly that she does not even notice it. However, when she comes home later on, she is extremely irritated to find her partner zapping away on the couch. She explodes in his face because, after all, he could have gotten dinner started or have done at least something to clean up around the place! The angry side, that had to contain itself at work, can finally unload. Laura's partner has no idea where she is coming from with all this anger.

What about Robert? Without noticing it, Robert sees to it that his Jealous Side is silenced – he thinks jealousy is pitiful. He reasserts to his friend how happy he is for him, and how he really thinks his friend deserves the promotion. As a result, his friend starts to think that Robert is exaggerating a bit and that, for some inexplicable reason, Robert is being somewhat insincere.

SO WHAT?

'Gosh', a client sighs to her coach, 'if I had to stop and think about every moment of every day every in which I had the slightest sense of feeling hurt? My life would become unbearable, wouldn't it?' She is right. If you took a moment to recollect, you would probably end up with quite a list of how many such moments pass by every day. If you then had to stop and pay attention to each and every one of those moments, your life would become unbearable. The sides of us which are rational and sober by nature consider these types of experiences to be quite trivial and they usually just shrug their shoulders at them. Naturally, you can leave those moments

for what they are: just another moment. But you can also use them to gain insight into yourself and your sensitivities, and to learn who the selves are that you have banned from your life. This way, you can learn to drive your bus yourself, using all the talents of all your selves. If you have already read this far, we assume that you have already taken this step.

Only when Robert learns to not only listen to the voice of his Loyal Self – who thinks that you should grant your friends their successes – will he be able to experience jealousy when his friend has been promoted. He must learn that his Jealous Side is envious because he thinks that Robert also deserves a promotion, maybe even more than his friend does. His Jealous Side thinks it is unbearable and unfair that now, after so many years of being loyal to the company, there is a chance that Robert will lose his job. This side feels underappreciated, sad and is struggling with a sense of failure.

If Robert were to allow more room for this side, not only would he be able to experience the joy he feels for his friend, but he would also be able to experience the pain he feels for his own situation. This way, he would not have to re-emphasize his happiness. He might even find it in himself to tell his friend that he feels a bit jealous. Then his friend would see both his sincere joy as well as his disappointment. In the next few paragraphs, we are going to tell you how you can separate from your bodyguards and what consequences this can have. At first, your bodyguards will resist this because they do not trust the fact that you know how to deal with unpleasant emotions.

SUMMARY

- *When a subpersonality takes over, your freedom of choice and your behavioral options are limited. A Pleaser only knows how to please, a Pusher only knows how to push, and so on.*
- *Disowning selves is like holding a ball under water: it takes up a lot of energy.*
- *Sometimes, a disowned self can take over. It is as if your record flips over and starts playing on the other side.*
- *The subpersonalities that helped you survive your childhood can come to hold you back severely in your adult life.*
- *You become ineffective when all of your different subpersonalities start talking at the same time in reaction to something that just happened. Some subpersonalities you ignore. Others, you simply cannot hear.*

1.3 How do your selves react when you want to change?

How are the primary selves going to react when you decide to make some changes? After all, they are the ones who brought about everything that you have achieved. The least you could do is show some gratitude for all that they have done. In their own way, they protected you from pain for so long. They are not that intent on relinquishing their control, even if their way of doing things is no longer needed. This will make it difficult to introduce changes, no matter how convinced you are that you could use a change in your career, your relationship or your physical health. This is not because you do not want to change, but because your primary selves will start to feel apprehensive. They have been at your side your entire life.

How do you think they will react when you tell them you will not be needing them as much, that you would like to see things differently and that they are becoming something of a nuisance? There are a few possibilities:

1. the primary selves rebel
2. the disowned selves take control
3. the primary selves show their tenacity!
4. the primary selves begin to see that change is necessary

THE PRIMARY SELVES REBEL

Your primary selves will not give up their position without a fight. They will do everything within their power to sabotage any changes and to prove that you cannot function without them! Why argue with them? If you have been in service of someone else's well-being throughout your entire existence, you would not want to be laid off either. It would be a completely natural reaction to fight this until the bitter end. Aside from that, your primary selves are also concerned with what will happen the minute you stop listening to them. They are frightened what consequences change will bring. After all, they have not been protecting you for no reason! When your primary selves feel they are not being given due credit for their efforts, there is a risk that they will stay behind the wheel anyway, regardless of your perception that they are no longer there.

With his bald head and massive stature, Jack is a pretty imposing guy. He is taking part in a personal growth training course that will last a few days. He wants to learn

how to show his sensitive side more often. He thinks this could really help him in his relationship with his wife. His coursemates compliment him when he risks showing his emotions.

But what does his Tough Self think about all of this? He is pretty ticked off. He is not into the idea of Jack taking part in all this nonsense. It is thanks to him that Jack was able to build a lucrative construction company – and you can bet this had nothing to do with him being able to show his emotions. On top of that, Jack has three older brothers who love to joke around. It is because of his Tough Self that they take him seriously and he would never hear the end of it if they found out what he was up to.

Throughout the entire course, Jack just cannot shake the feeling of being really uncomfortable. He keeps asking himself what he is doing there. This place is for softies! On the last day, Jack takes off. He sends the trainer an e-mail saying he was too busy and that he had to attend to some business.