EPONAQUEST BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Understanding the False Self
Survival Conditioning and Authentic Self

Definitions

The False Self is a set of beliefs and behaviors that a person develops over the course of their life as a way to navigate and survive in the environment in which they live. These beliefs and behaviors may be based on unconscious conditioning through family customs, religious practices, educational methods, as well as more public influences such as the media and internet. Behaviors (for examples see client handout False Self and Enemies of Learning) are often unconsciously developed to support limiting beliefs about what is expected or deemed desirable by the environment. In other words, the False Self arises primarily on the basis of SUBCONSCIOUS conditioning.

The goal of our work is not to eliminate the False Self, but to make it conscious, especially if it keeps the client stuck in limiting patterns. Remember that the behaviors associated with the False Self were useful for survival in the past and could be useful again in the future.

The Authentic Self is the primary essence or soul of every human being. It is the foundation of our personality that we were given at birth, and the core of our inner guidance and intuition. The Authentic Self is the driving force behind our unfolding life path and our desire to learn, grow and connect with others. From our Authentic Self, we are able to choose our behaviors CONSCIOUSLY, and engage a situation or interaction with others in a way that supports our full potential as human beings. (But note: a "nice" or "spiritual" False Self is not the same as the authentic self!)

The concept of the False Self and the Authentic Self are vital elements in the Eponaquest EFL method for several reasons:

- It is helpful for clients to understand that many of their limitations are not who they are, but simply beliefs and behaviors they have acquired to survive.
- Equine Facilitated Learning requires a growing tolerance for vulnerability. The False Self must be made conscious because it has no tolerance for vulnerability.
- The healing of many mental health diagnoses and addictive behaviors can be helped when the person begins to understand that there is not something fundamentally wrong with them, but that they have unconscious beliefs that drive harmful behaviors.
- From their natural behavior, horses are experts in supporting the human learning process around in how we can activate our authentic selves, because they respond positively to the resulting congruence. Congruence occurs when what the person truly feels on the inside matches what they express on the outside.
- It is important for clients to learn the difference between hyper-vigilance due to various types of trauma and hyper-sensitivity related to it (note: by this we do not mean high sensitivity/HSP due to demonstrable neurological causes) as a survival mechanism of the False Self, as opposed to true intuition and/or inner guidance. This difference is the key to developing self-confidence. Hyper-sensitivity due to trauma laden with projection and transference is a cause for confusion and repetition of non-constructive patterns. Inner guidance / the inner compass is the authentic self that points the way to freedom from irrational fears and from old stories.