Medicine Horse Way

Understanding the
False Self and Authentic Self

Client Hand-out

The False Self:

- **Is based on individual social conditioning**. It is a collection of beliefs and behaviours, all of which can be useful at times, but that can also take on an identity of its own that we come to believe is all of who we are. It includes**:** the habits, customs and beliefs of our family, school, community, religion and national culture, as well as identifications such as the degrees that we've earned or our business title.

- **Makes judgements and assumptions.** Judgements and assumptions keep us from being open to possibilities. These become our opinions about things. We don't have access to all the information available to us when we operate from our false limited selves. Opinions are not knowledge, wisdom, or even truth.

- **Takes everything personally.** The false self automatically takes things personally: "Everything is my fault, my responsibility." "I have to solve this." And as a defense, will blame: "You did this to me", seeing the self as a victim of others.

- **Seeks approval from outside the self.** Children quickly learn what they must do to get approval and what happens when they don't. Our own guidance about what is best for us is pushed aside in order for us to survive in the world we inhabit.

- **Repeatedly uses the words should, what if, always, never, I know, and I can't.** Without inner guidance to rely on, we develop fixed patterns based on what success has felt like before. This leads to beliefs like: "I should do it this way, I will always do it this way, I will never try another way, I know this is the only way, and I can't do it any other way"

- **Often runs critical, controlling, mental tape loops creating internal slavery. It tells stories over and over with no resolution.** The false self will repeat conversations, replay incidents and create imagined mental disaster stories, with the self either as victim or as the hero. Usually there is no point, no resolution and no progress. It is a circular pattern which maintains beliefs and behaviours. You will know you are operating from the false self when there appears to be no solution to your problem.

- **Needs the security of established habits, activities and beliefs.** The false self becomes insecure and feels vulnerable outside the comfort zone. It is unable and unwilling to learn anything new.

- **May have a secret identity, called "terminal specialness."** This leads to behaviour that puts others down in order to feel superior and is based on feeling inferior or inadequate. In adulthood, the terminally special self is unable to enter satisfying relationships because no one else is really good enough. It will repeatedly choose partners and friends who do not have as much education,

income, social status and spiritual knowledge in order to feed the secret self belief that it is better.

- **Often sees itself a victim and needs a "bad guy" to focus on.** This may be an authority figure such as a boss at work or the government. It can focus on unsatisfying relationships with others without taking responsibility for its part. It holds that someone else is responsible for the situation, which keeps the false self re-energized, and in place.

- **Can also have an overly optimistic viewpoint**, kind of a "Pollyanna" attitude. It will say, "There is no fear, only love," this is called spiritual bypassing and it ignores the value of fear as nature's warning system. It also attempts to repress or dissociate from all uncomfortable emotions.

- **Any belief or perception that prevents an authentic, yet compassionate, response in the moment is an element of the False Self.**

The Authentic Self:

- **Recognises everything as information, including body sensations, emotion and intuition. Examples:** The sky is cloudy today. My friend did not call me back. I am hungry. This is the choice I will make for myself today.

- **Is willing to take chances and be versatile:** The authentic self thrives outside a limited comfort zone and tries new things.

- **Is willing to activate the imagination.** I wonder what my life would be like if I didn't work a 9 – 5 job, lived in another country, or experimented with this new activity.

- **Lives in the moment with curiosity about what is actually happening now and what is possible in this moment?** So much of what we think about is the past or the future. The authentic self thinks about and experiences "the now", what brings joy or what inspires right now?

- **Is willing to activate and trust inner wisdom.** Since I am not yet sure, I will sit quietly with my decisions and allow more information to come to me.

- **Is open to the creative process and venturing into the unknown.** The authentic self understands that there is no finish line. Life will continue to unfold even when the current goal is achieved.

- **The Authentic Self is you being fully present to all of life's possibilities and listening to your own inner guidance in this moment.**

Developed by
Linda Kohanov
And Carol Roush