

# The Hero Within

Contributed by Joan Eison

If the mythical vision of a hero is a singular glowing, celebrated feat overcoming perilous odds, then the journey of the hero within is evolutionary, gradual and progressive as is the opening of a flower. Discovering the hero within is to recognize personal definition, the I AM. As we paint our portraits of existence we define ourselves in many ways, such as: secure, loved, sister, father, citizen. These distinctive words do not fragment the self, rather they articulate different arrangements of I AM. A rose is not just a rose; rather, it is a flower, a rose, an essence.

The personality as a whole is called the psyche, from the Latin originally meaning "spirit" or "soul." The psyche functions as a guide embracing all thought, feeling and behavior, both conscious and unconscious. The great Swiss psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, gave us many valuable gifts of thought and one of the most pivotal was the primary idea that a person is a whole to begin with. Therefore, the journey to the hero within is the confirmation of our oneness. Wholeness is our birthright and our journey is to develop and differentiate with the greatest harmony possible guarding against separation and conflicting systems. The most desirable path is one of synthesis.

To discover the hero within is to expand beyond the boundaries of the ego making way for the "individual" self opening up to oneness with the natural and physical worlds. The flowering of individuation results in a renewed sense of wonder and oneness with the cosmos reclaiming celebration, dreaming and magical thinking. This is individuation, which is to know oneself as completely as possible. It is a progression of self-consciousness, expanding consciousness and living consciously. The more conscious we are, the more aware we are of perceptions, memories, thoughts and feelings. We are "in touch," in the physical, the sensory, the extra sensory and the emotional.

If the psyche is the spirit or soul (unconscious), then the ego is the organizer of the conscious mind. Although it occupies only a small portion of the psyche, it plays an important role. Life's journey is a deluge of experiences and stimulation; therefore, it is indeed beneficial that the ego filters much of it before it becomes conscious and overwhelms us. However, it is because of the ego that we feel ourselves to be shaped into the same person today and tomorrow. The ego allows some experiences to become conscious and others to remain unconscious influenced by the make-up of the individual and level of anxiety evoked by the experience. The two-way traffic between conscious and unconscious is constant as evidenced when we store away names and directions until they are needed. And the personal unconscious certainly plays an important role in the manufacture of our dreams and visions. Accessing the hero within is to realize the joyful harmony between individuation and ego.

The heroic journey is more spiral than linear moving through all or some archetypical passages. Characteristics of heroism might include these basic traits:

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Profound respect for the value and dignity for a multitude of aspects of life

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Faith in one's self coupled with a strong sense of personal choice

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Stepping beyond what others think into originality and creativity

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Physical and mental courage

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Making an impact - public or un-public

These characteristics are not equally evident in every heroic life or act. But, they can provide a basis for viewing heroism in its ordinary guise without dragons, swords, or balls of fire. Mythical images, gods and goddesses aside, most mortals who have faced heroic challenges also had ordinary days. And, in the instant of solving and resolving we, nor they, may have recognized the lightening flash that designated a given event as heroic or legendary. Indeed, in the aftermath, a sip of Jessamine tea and a comforting word may have been far more meaningful.

We are whole extraordinary beings, living extraordinary lives. All aspects of the journey are meaningful, though some feel more strenuous than others. There are an infinite number of destinations before us in each hour and each day, accessible to everyone as we adapt and integrate choosing to live more consciously. The path to individuation is traversed one step at a time heroically endowed with the spirit and strength to celebrate oneness.