



## Tony Finds the Joy of True Connection

*By Mary Disharoon, MA, LMFT*

Tony is in his late 30s, married to Lea, and has a successful business. But he has a problem and it's pretty serious.

In a desperate effort to save his marriage with Lea, he has finally agreed to address his inability to slow down, be present to the moment, feel his feelings and be emotionally intimate with her.

For many years he refused to even talk about this issue and when Lea tried to engage him anyway, he would become extremely defensive. Even on those few occasions when he made an effort to open up, he found himself strangely "blocked" and the words and actions he was searching for would never materialize.

If it had only been up to Tony, he probably would never have sought help to change this. But Lea didn't want to live like this anymore, and his relationship with Lea was the most important thing in his life because he felt like she was the only person who really understood him.

The thought of losing Lea terrified him, but he also felt conflicted and really did not know what to do. So he reluctantly agreed to try Voice Dialogue in the hope that he could better understand why he simply could not express his feelings to her.

Working first with his powerful Primary Self-System, Tony quickly was able to separate out some of his more developed inner selves and hear how they direct his life.

It didn't take long for him to quickly see how dominant his Mind was in all his actions. He realized that he was continually thinking and analyzing and that over time he had become quite rigid and controlling. He refused to let life just come to him and he always seemed to be planning for something in the future.

Needless to say, the strong influence of this self was not very conducive to free flowing relationships or spontaneity. Off in the distance, Tony could sense that there just had to be more to himself than this constant planning. He recalled that there were even a few times that he had greatly enjoyed himself just kicking back and relaxing. But more from that illusive self later...

It wasn't long at all before a very dominant voice took over the sessions. Out came his Inner Critic who constantly was telling him not to reveal himself or others would see that he was not nearly as good as he might appear. This Inner Critic was very concerned that Tony

might say the wrong thing at the wrong time and embarrass himself or cause others to criticize him. Tony had been mercilessly kidded in his youth by both his parents and his siblings and he had vowed not to let that happen to him any more once he became an adult. He didn't want to open himself to others any more than he absolutely had to. If they didn't care for him enough to figure out what he needed, then that was just too bad.

Tony began to understand just how strong this voice was—how it so often led to him getting angry or frustrated with himself. He decided that he was getting too old to keep running his life primarily motivated by an obsessive need to avoid criticism from himself or others.

Another primary self actively at work in Tony was his highly developed Pusher who thought that it was a non-productive waste of time to get caught up in feelings or connection with another. Also at work on a more subtle level was a Macho Man who said real men “keep their own counsel” and all that feelings stuff was for new-age sissies. Even deeper was a painful underlying fear of his Sexuality, with both women and men.

The picture of himself that Tony began to glean from this process was very alarming to him. He saw that his relationships were fragile or non-existent, he was tired of always battling life, he had less and less energy and he was increasingly irritable. Overall, he just wasn't a very happy guy and Tony wanted these unpleasant feelings to change.

It is important to remember that all of this was a process and it was not easy or comfortable for Tony to address it. Nobody enjoys learning that they have been leading a largely unconscious life devoid of true personal connection.

Tony heard from his various Primary Selves and came to deeply appreciate them and how they each have their particular way of helping him. But he started hoping there was more to him than just these parts because he was realizing their limitations when it came to emotionally connecting with another person.

With the assistance of his facilitator he was able to connect with a number of ignored or undeveloped parts of himself called his Disowned Selves.

First, Tony gave his Mind a rest and allowed himself to see the other side of his busy planner. He discovered a wonderful Being energy that was much slower, and he felt calm and comfortable. He felt revitalized as he stayed and experienced this. It was similar to the energy in Lea that had always so attracted him. The energy of this self allowed him to be more present and flexible and to let life come to him. He also experienced a sense of relief and lightness that came from releasing his obsessive need to always be in control. Life became more of a sweet mystery to experience.

Another disowned self he began to get in touch with was his Fearlessness. He noticed that so much of his behavior had been motivated by his fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of discovery, fear of sexuality, fear of criticism and more. The list of fears was long and seemingly endless. But with his Fearlessness available to him, Tony was better able to accept himself and clearly notice how much happier that made him feel. Overtime, fear slowly began to release its tight hold on him. As Tony became more conscious and self-confident,

he even had enough courage to begin to get in touch with his long neglected Aphrodite energy and it was a shockingly liberating experience. He began to see the beauty in every day life, especially in the people close to him. He realized that his judgment and defensiveness had kept him from really seeing others or opening himself to them. He no longer was so fearful of his sexuality and it became much easier to open himself to others. For the first time in his life he truly was able to more consistently experience the joy of true connection with another and it felt great.

These primary selves and their less familiar opposite energies needed to be discovered and listened to so that Tony could awaken an Aware Ego process in relationship to them. This awareness capacity let him access his inner selves without completely becoming them. He could then stay present and be energetically connected with Lea. This Linkage gave Tony a special type of experience of emotional intimacy with Lea.

Tony continues to appreciate how much this work is helping him create more personal intimacy with his wife and friends. It can still feel uncomfortable but he works at holding the energetic tension that the opposite selves create.

For example, his Pusher energy that keeps him constantly on the go usually clashes with his Being energy that likes to hang out in the pleasure of each moment. It takes the strength of an Aware Ego process to stand between these opposite selves and hold their conflicting energies while making decisions that can benefit himself and his relationships.

By becoming more open to what's possible and experiencing the gifts of these formerly disowned selves, as well as awakening his ability to energetically link through an Aware Ego process, Tony already has made incredible progress. His marriage is healthier than it has ever been and he definitely does not feel so fearful or alone.

Tony is very committed and feels very hopeful.

*Thank you to Rob Disharoon for help in writing this article.*