

WORKING WITH COMPLEXES

OBJECTIVE

As neurotic Complexes affect our behavior and relatedness to ourselves and others negatively, it helps to work with Complexes and make conscious these unconscious beliefs and behavior patterns. Neurotic Complexes are very difficult to see, and the only starting point is the pattern that it presents. These Complexes also present themselves in dreams and we will explore this in the video on Dream Work.

There are a number of ways to work with Complexes.

THE FOUR SQUARE PROCESS

Lesley Temple uses a wonderful consciousness exercise which is called the Polarity exercise. This exercise is excellent in identifying all unconscious belief systems and memories that is associated with the Complex. If you realize that you have a victim complex, for example, then you can use this exercise to identify what the belief system is behind it and what the Complex is trying to achieve through this behavior. The exercise is simple and works as follows. Take your journal and open up two empty pages. Draw a line down the spine of the journal and then across the middle over both pages so that you have four squares, two on the left and two on the right. Now write on the top of the top left square: Desire to ...; write on the top right: Fear of...; write on the bottom left: Desire not to...; write on the bottom right: Fear of not.... Then fill in the issue e.g. Victim would be as follows: Desire to be a victim; Fear of being a victim; Desire not to be a victim; Fear of not being a victim.

Answer the following questions for each square:

1. How do I feel about this?
2. Where is the feeling in the body?
3. Have I experienced this?
4. Any memories?
5. Why do I desire or fear this?
6. What is the motivation behind this?

Capture all thoughts, memories, ideas and belief systems that come up for you in each square.

PERSONIFYING THE COMPLEX

One of the main problems with Complexes is that we experience the thought patterns, feelings and beliefs as our own. Jung suggested personification as a way of working with Complexes. This is similar to the idea of identifying “parts” in yourself which is used in various therapeutic systems. Each “part” is a Complex. Consider the following questions regarding your Complex. This is an imaginative exercise and requires you to draw on your inner imagery.

1. How old is this Complex?

2. What is the gender of this Complex?
3. Where is this Complex?
4. What does it look like?
5. What is it wearing?
6. How does it feel?
7. Name the Complex.

Once personified, journal this Complex's feelings and thoughts. You can enter into an active imagination dialogue with this Complex and ask it questions. You can draw/create a representation of the Complex and/or the feeling tone of this Complex.

WORKING WITH COMPLEXES

When you work with Complexes, you will begin to understand what it is trying to do when it is triggered. You will start recognizing the triggers. Most of these Complexes have the goal of protecting you or making you feel safe. Whilst the approach of the Complex worked when you were a child, as an adult it is no longer constructive in its expression. If your Complex is triggered because you feel unsafe, then it is helpful to become aware of the triggers so that you are able to engage with the Complex when you can feel it is about to be triggered. You are now the adult, so you are able to make your Complexes feel safe and adjust your behavior so that it is not an unconscious reaction, but rather a conscious approach in order to relate and engage the world more appropriately.

Of course, this is a generalization, Complex work is multi layered and these are only guidelines. The important thing to note is that Jung did not believe that we can get rid of Complexes but can only integrate them into consciousness and find an appropriate expression for them.

Video for week 20:

https://player.vimeo.com/external/355865569.hd.mp4?s=2656414277469f53216e56851e4f9e819abc92a&profile_id=174

Books:

[Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the psychology of C.G. Jung by Jolande Jacobi](#)

[The Middle Passage: From Misery to Meaning in Midlife by James Hollis](#)

Topic for next week: Projection