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The more you both allow and become aware of the ego, the more its grip over your life and your decisions loosens, and the more your soul and ego can work in unison to really bring forth your gifts and your purpose.

Hello, and welcome. Before we dive into today's episode, I want to take a moment to ask a quick favor. So if you have time to leave a review, and if you've enjoyed listening to this podcast, I would so appreciate it, leave a review on iTunes. And if you do so, before April 15th, you'll be automatically entered into a giveaway to win an inner balance sensor from HeartMath Institute, check the show notes for more about what the sensor is and what it does. And also for more giveaway details.

Alright, let's get to the show. Today we're talking all about the ego, what it is, what it isn't how it helps us how it hinders us. This is a fascinating topic to me. And I hope it is for you to understanding the ego and bringing awareness to what it is and how it shows up in our everyday life is one of the most powerful agents for spiritual growth and change. It really is a foundational concept to spiritual understanding, at least from my perspective, there tend to be two different camps when it comes to the ego and what to do about it.

So there's one camp that takes a more extreme approach of feeling that the ego is something to be eliminated, dissolved or let go of completely. The other camp takes the approach that the ego is more something to be soften, to be tamed and to be aware of, so that we can use it for our own growth, evolution. And to bring our purpose out into the world. I am definitely of that latter camp in which the ego is something to be softened, and that we can do this through awareness. With that in mind, let's get started.

A quick disclaimer is that depending on where you're at, in your journey, this topic could either seem completely overwhelming and complicated, or it could be entirely basic. Hopefully, it's somewhere right in between for you. But do know that it's completely normal to feel overwhelmed with this topic when you're first getting acquainted with it. And if you're on the other side, and you're feeling like you know everything there is to know about the ego, I encourage you to stick with it a little bit and just see if there's something new for you here. Because what I found is that no matter how much I examined the ego and study it I see it popping up in different ways every single day of life. And so I think there's always something more to learn to be aware of, and to contemplate when it comes to ego awareness.

So what is the ego? To clarify, we're talking about the ego in a

spiritual sense, because I think a lot of us when we hear ego, especially if you have a background in psychology, the thing we tend to think of is this sort of stereotypical egomaniac, someone who's a bit of a narcissist, and maybe just very self involved, or whatever it might be. The thing is, though, from a spiritual perspective, it's a bit different. It isn't that extreme for one. And then the other important notion is that every one of us has an ego.

So no matter how spiritually evolved you are, you have an ego. In fact, a spiritual ego is still an ego, it's just taken a different form. The ego is very tricky in that sense. For the sake of this conversation, just do your best to release that more psychologically oriented notion of the ego, if that is what's coming to mind for you and if you're unfamiliar with a spiritual ego.

So number one fact, each and every one of us has an ego. In fact, the ego is in the driver's seat of our mind most of the time. This is especially true if we're not aware that it exists. So the less aware we are of the ego, the more prominent it is, in terms of how it comes forth in our life.

I'm going to take a moment to run through a handful of ego nicknames and characteristics because I think in doing so depending on your frame of reference, certain ones might illuminate something a bit brighter than others.

So here are some nicknames or characteristics of the ego. So it's also called the illusory self, the mind the personality, the limited self, it's fear based, unconscious, separate, problem oriented, locked into identities, the brain asleep, the shrunken self because it shrinks to fit into this three dimensional body, the lower self, the ego loves to feel special and different, and it's often reactive.

I feel like I just hated on the ego so bad right after saying that it's an important aspect of who we are. But bear with me, because I'm going to break that apart a bit. This is just sort of a way to give you a reference point for the aspect of self that we're talking about.

Because there are two aspects of self for each of us. And so there is this ego aspect. And it has those characteristics that I mentioned, not true of everyone, not everyone's ego carries all of those characteristics, but just as a general sort of understanding and sense. And then the other aspect of self that we have is the higher self or soul. So ego is fear based, and the soul is love based. Both of these are important. So spirituality is both light and dark, right, we can't see shadows without light, and we can't see light without dark. So these two aspects of self are equally important. Even if our mind which is the ego is trying to make the ego out to be evil, it's very tricky like that, let me tell you,

I'll be addressing the soul or higher self in the next episode. So be sure to tune in there, if you would like to learn more about this other aspect of self, because for the purpose of this conversation, we're just going to focus on the ego, because there is plenty to cover there.

So again, there is no need to demonize the ego. In fact, the act of demonizing anything, the ego itself included is something that only the ego would do. Again, it's a very sneaky little thing. So your soul or higher self is always neutral, in terms of its judgments. The soul embraces both light and dark as being parts of the whole, whereas the ego wants to separate and push one or the other out.

There's a quote by Eckhart Tolle, that goes something along the lines of the ego isn't wrong, it's just unconscious. And that is, at its most fundamental level, the easiest way to think about the ego again, I know I sort of mentioned characteristics that could be perceived as negative to help identify it, but that's just to really get you thinking, and to fuel this conversation and offer some helpful reference points.

The ego tends to make a lot of errors and its perceptions. But the most fundamental one is this. It's the illusion of self. So the ego believes that, you know, it says I am my thoughts, I am my body, I am insert identity here, it's Identity Oriented, the true self, or the soul merely says I am. So that is the perspective of pure awareness or pure consciousness.

I'm going to go into some more characteristics of the ego and ways that these characteristics play out to give us a better understanding of what exactly it is because the tricky thing about trying to understand the ego is that we're trying to understand it, and its errors and perceptions through the lens of it.

The ego is overly identified with self. And it defines itself through separation, meaning that it builds its entire identity on its perceived separation from others. Without being able to identify the other, the ego loses sight of who it is, and that is terrifying to the ego.

Its existence is rooted in identification with things and forms, especially thought forms. So this is the thinking mind.

The ego also loves to complain. And the act of complaining actually serves to strengthen the ego.

It also loves to attach to victim identities. And I want to be really careful here because this is not to downplay or to take away from the experience of victimization in any regard. This is more talking about how the ego then manipulates that experience of being victimized to

create an identity around it and how that can have faults of its own.

The ego is reactive as compared to proactive or preventative, which is more along the mindset of the soul or higher self.

The ego manifests at both the individual level and the collective level. So cultures, countries, political parties, etc, actually form collective egos. And this is because of the identities and sense of separation that those boundaries foster. This is not to say that these groups are in any way bad or that associating with groups is bad.

Whenever you feel superior or inferior to someone else, that is the ego at work. So again, it is not just feeling superior to someone which I think is the more typical and psychologically rooted understanding of the ego. It's also when we feel inferior that the ego is at play.

Another characteristic of the ego is that it loves its problems. It is obsessed with its problems. So this is because problems are actually part of the egos identity and thus it seeks no end to them. So it really builds its identity around these specific problems. And then if you were to put an end to the problem, it would somehow lose its sense of self within that end or within that resolution. And so it wants to keep problems going. If you've ever found yourself in a cycle of telling the same problematic story over and over again, or venting about your problems to the point where you feel like you can not check out of that loop, even though you want to that is the ego at play. Again, this is because problems fuel the egos identity, and the ego has a constant need to define itself. So it fears not knowing who it is, without these distinctive boundaries of the definitions that it puts on itself. Problems are part of the way it defines itself.

The ego loves to do and is very action oriented. And it doesn't care so much for being if that makes sense. So it's very about like the busy body behaviors of getting things done, which again, are very important things we don't want to be all in being because we're living here on this earth and have important things that we want to bring into the world. But we also don't want to get too far lost in doing, and completely neglect the experience of being. So it really is finding that balance there.

The egos fears include failure, judgment, change, uncertainty, growth, expansion, evolution, and even unity. These are just a few of its fears, it has a whole lot of them. But that last one, Unity might be particularly surprising. And the reason that the ego fears unity is because it requires separation from others in order to understand who it is itself. And so the boundaries and the division, allow the ego to see itself and hold and maintain its identity. So without those boundaries in a totally unified world, the ego would no longer see itself and it would cease to exist, right. So this is sort of an odd

thing to grasp. But when you start to think about it, it makes a lot of sense in terms of the way the ego plays out, and the motivations behind the thoughts that run through our head a lot.

Now let's get into how the ego hinders us. So one of the biggest ways is this because all forms and things are fleeting. And the ego's identity is very reliant on forms or things there is this persistent sense of insecurity within the ego, even if it appears outwardly confident. And so the ego is exceptionally insecure, and its insecurity ends up playing out and a lot of grasping and clinging type behaviors. And so we cling to forms or things in order to find happiness to find gratification satisfaction. It's in this insecurity that we find ourselves acting in ways that are incongruent with the desires of the higher self.

Another very problematic function of the ego is that to preserve its existence, it will attach itself to an identity to the point of complete closed mindedness. So it doesn't care what it identifies with as long as it has an identity.

I'm first going to run through some examples of various identities. Again, these are just totally random examples that I just jotted down really quick. There's really no meaning or method to what I've listed here, but then afterwards, I'll talk about why any sort of identity clinging can be problematic for us.

So here are some examples. So I am a psychologist, I am a teacher. And again, these are not personal to me. I'm just listing out some things that the ego might say so I am a psychologist, I am a teacher. I am a businesswoman. I am a Democrat, I am a Republican, I am intelligent, I am spiritual, I am religious. I am shy, I am outgoing. I am funny. I am someone who practices yoga, I am someone who volunteers. I am someone who meditates. I am a bodybuilder, I am a truth speaker, I am a victim, I am an advocate, I am a mother, I am a father, I am a Christian, I am intelligent, I am anxious, I am rich, I am poor, etc.

In clinging to these identities, we tend to stifle our growth in our evolution because we're so attached to these labels. And we're also in attaching to these labels defining us versus them. And that is problematic for an entirely different reason. And one that I'll actually get into a few episodes down the line.

The ego also keeps us playing small and safe. It's very fear, avoidant. Anything that feels risky to our identity or the identity that the ego has associated itself with is off the table essentially. So even if it's something that we really want to do if you go back to the episode on fear, so perhaps our soul is calling us towards our purpose, our work our calling, whatever it might be, the ego will often come in and get in the way and try and stop that. Because, again, it fears change evolution and also fears, rejection, putting

ourselves out there, it fears that in our growth, it will no longer be able to identify itself.

So you can really see how all of these things can be exceptionally problematic. But how does it help us?

One of the ways that ego benefits us is because it is that more action oriented energy of the two aspects of self, the higher self tends to be more in the being state because it's very neutral. And it's all seeing, it's all encompassing. And so it really respects any decision we make, the ego tends to be more action oriented, it's not content with just being and so it wants to bring whatever it is that's going on in the mind, or whatever those desires are out into the world to be shared with others, it's when we get too far caught in the egos, ramblings and traps, that we stop ourselves or it stops us from doing that, because it goes so far with the identity of itself, that it wants us to just stay the same. So it's really finding that balance through awareness of how the ego plays out and manifests in our lives every day.

Again, it allows us to take action, especially when we've softened it a bit. So we've said, Okay, this over here, this attachment to identities, this telling me that I need to stay safe, that's not actually very helpful. And that's really not bringing me joy, but you know, what your action oriented approach is actually very beneficial. And so I can take that energy and use that to bring my soul's calling into the world.

Another wonderful thing about the ego is that with awareness of it, we can leverage the mind or the egos maniacal ramblings. It's analytical thinking, style, etc, by holding up a mirror to it. And so we can really use the way the ego thinks and the way it perceives to reflect back at itself in that very analytical way. And so we can start to get a better sense of what aspects of the ego self are helping us and what aspects of it are hindering us. And it's through the lens of the ego that we're able to do this. Hopefully that makes sense. I know it's a little convoluted and confusing. So in other words, by becoming aware that the ego exists, and bringing its awareness to the ways in which it navigates our experiences, were then able to use its strengths to awaken us from its slumber.

Another way to put this is that with awareness of itself, the ego begins to see itself. And it's with that awareness and seeing itself that it allows itself to soften and start to bend and become more malleable and supportive of our lives and the things that we want to do and the relationships we want to have and the connections we want to make and the feelings we want to feel.

Through this process, the ego can begin to work in unison with a soul to carry out our mission, our purpose, our passions, the ego can carry

out the desired actions as it's guided by the internal reflections and perceptions of the soul. This is that sweet spot. This is like this is what The Soul Horizon is all about. It's this space right here, where we're aware of who we really are. And we're taking those outward intentional actions through the guise of the personality, the mind the ego, but a softened version of it. And a reflective version to the antidote to a hardened and rigid ego is awareness and allowing, through awareness and allowing, the ego begins to soften. And it's this interesting practice where we then start to notice when the ego is flaring up in a way that's starting to feel a little prohibitive to the soul's calling or desires or to our inherent values.

For example, let's take judgment. Judgment is one of the ways the ego often shows up in a day to day basis, especially when we're interacting with other people. And let's say for instance, you're feeling this experience of judgment. You're judging someone and it feels out of line with who you know, you really are. And yet the mind tricks you into believing that that judgment is somehow a part of you. And then with this ego awareness, we actually take a step back almost a step out of ourselves, and we see the thoughts and reflect on them rather than believing that we are the thoughts and from there, we can say I see this thought floating pie, or I'm watching this happen, and I am not part of it. But I'm the observer of what's going on right now.

It's in this process of recognizing the ego and becoming aware of it in our day to day habits, actions, behaviors, thoughts, that we began to integrate it in a way that's actually very beneficial. So we are sort of integrating the ego into the higher self intermingling the desires of the higher self, the intentions of the higher self and the values of the higher self which is who we really are with the power and tenacity that the ego has. And it's this melding that really brings us to a beautiful place.

Through this melding, the ego really starts to reach its own higher vibrational purpose. It's no longer just yanking us around for its own ride, we're actually stepping outside of it, observing the way it interacts with its surroundings, with its perceptions, and then saying, okay, that's for me, I'll take that. And then you know what, that's not really serving me, it's not serving my highest good. And I'm going to go ahead and just put that off to the side, or at the very least, just notice, and take note that it is the ego at play, and know that it's not the real me, there's no reason to shame or blame the ego, that actually won't soften it. If anything, it'll just flare it up more, because the ego does love its own suffering, too. If it gets too far into that zone. Instead, we can use heart centered, compassionate awareness to bring about a sort of natural maturing of the ego.

All of this brings about a very important question and maybe one that

you're asking yourself right now, and that's who are you if you're not your thoughts, your identities, your name, your personality, your body, and so on. Who are you if you are not these forms, whether thought form or physical form, you are the conscious awareness that resides behind each of these decorative human, three dimensional layers, all of those things are just decorative three dimensional aspects of you, the true you is the observer and the awareness that sees it all. Through the process of awakening, and bringing awareness to the ego, those two aspects of self, so the ego and pure consciousness or soul start to separate. And we're able to see the differences between both of them and the way that each of them play out in our lives every day. As we do this, we start to separate from the thoughts themselves. And we began to recognize that the thoughts are separate, and we are the awareness behind them.

Moral of the ego story is allow your ego to be and gently observe it and bring awareness to it, it go up patterns are strengthened by internal opposition. So the more we fight back rigidly against the ego, or punish ourselves, or judge its ramblings, or or judgments of others, those things actually strengthen it. So you want to be careful not to be harsh with your evaluations of how the ego is playing out in your life. As you recognize the ego. Simply take note of it, just observe it, release judgment within your observations and try and take a neutral stance to it by simply saying, oh, there's a bit of ego right there. That must be my ego at play. A simple neutral statement is really all you need to bring awareness to it. And that in turn softens it because it's being called out and noticed. This is the sort of counterintuitive phenomenon, but radical acceptance that you have an ego actually loosens the egos grip. Don't argue against the ego, just allow it to be and simply notice it.

If you're able, take these ideas and understandings about the ego with you as we move forward. Because again, this awareness of the ego is one of the most powerful agents for spiritual growth and a lot of the conversations from here on out well reference back to the ego and it really helps to have an understanding of what it is because it is such an intricate and complicated thing. The more you both allow and become aware of the ego the more its grip over your life and your decisions loosens and the more your soul and ego can work in unison to really bring forth your gifts and your purpose.

In the next episode, we're talking about the higher self or soul if you want to learn more about the egos counterpart, be sure to tune in. If you've enjoyed what you've heard today. Remember to subscribe to the soul horizon on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, wherever you enjoy listening, read and learn more at AshleyMelillo.com Or follow along on Instagram. Thanks for being here. Sweet soul