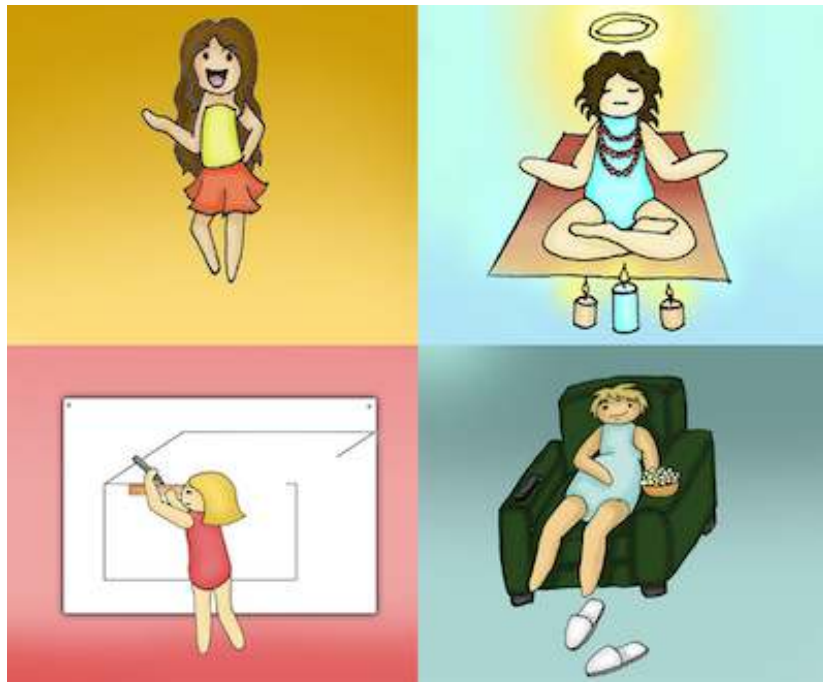


Which
Inner Selves
are **Running**
Your Life?



**How Voice Dialogue
Frees You to Become
Who You Want to Be**

Astra Niedra

Welcome

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elcome to this introduction to Voice Dialogue, a simple yet profound process that involves becoming aware of the various selves that make up you.



When you realise your psyche is made up of a number of selves, and that those selves determine your thoughts, feelings and behaviours, you start to truly understand yourself - and the other people in your life.

As your self-awareness grows, you gain the ability to decide who sits in the driver's seat of your psychological car. This process both enriches and frees you.

The first part of this ebook is an example of how this works in an everyday situation. The second part is an outline of 20 common selves.

And then I've included a simple exercise for you to discover some of your own inner selves.

I'm a Voice Dialogue teacher from Australia, and I've been doing this work for over 25 years. I've studied with Voice Dialogue's founders Drs Hal and Sidra Stone, both in the USA and in Australia, and I've been on staff as a facilitator at their workshops in Australia. Both Hal and Sidra highly recommend my work.

I hope you enjoy this ebook,

Astra

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Imagine This Scene:

You're out shopping one day and you notice an outfit in a window display. You feel drawn to it so you step inside the store to take a closer look. The sales assistant suggests you try it on.

You hadn't intended to buy something, but decide it can't hurt to see how it looks.

The outfit fits perfectly, the fabric's beautiful, and the assistant tells you it looks amazing on you.

You don't normally wear things quite like this but love how you feel different and freer than you normally do. You're more confident and energised.

You start to feel that this is really you. That you have to have this outfit.

You look at the price tag and realise you can't afford it, but you know you can put it on your credit card. So, making many justifications about doing that, you do.

When you arrive home you're still excited about your purchase and later that night you fall sleep feeling revitalised.

But the next morning you wake feeling slightly uneasy...

It's Monday, so you get ready for work, and as you choose some regular work clothes from your wardrobe you notice yesterday's purchase.

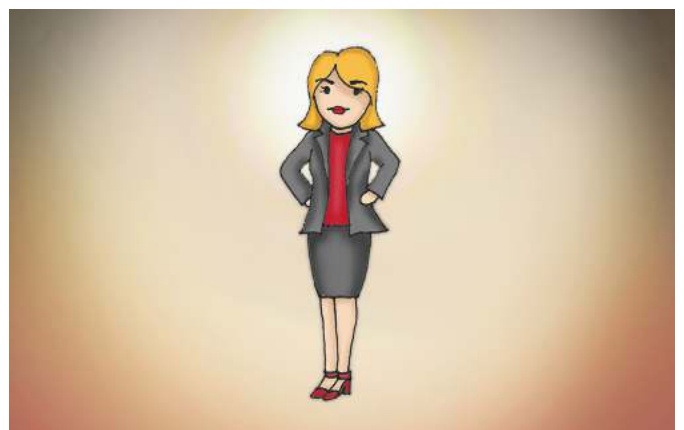
You hold it up against you, taking a look in the mirror. You think "What have I done!?"

The new outfit doesn't look anywhere near as good as it did yesterday.

It's definitely not suitable for work and you realise you'll probably never actually wear it out. You don't have anywhere to go in it.

It's just not you. And you don't even have the right shoes for it...

Then you remember the price. Ouch!



How Your Personality Works:

Most of us have had this type of experience, where we buy something on a whim, and later beat ourselves up about it or just try to forget it.

We might occasionally take the item out but usually end up not doing much with it.

You might have done this with an appliance, imagining yourself making or baking or preserving on all those 'free' weekends.

Or maybe you've bought a garden or power tool, or sporting equipment you thought you'd need but rarely use.

We put this down to being a bad decision or an impulse buy we hadn't thought through.

But we now know that the reason for such impulse decisions is that our sense of identity is not quite as simple as we have assumed it to be.

We're Not One - We're Many

When you say 'I' or 'me' you're referring to a different part of your personality at different times.

Each of us has a number of sub-personalities or selves, which are discrete units of the psyche that together make up our personality.

Different selves assume our identity throughout the day, each one taking care of particular aspects of our lives.

For example, when you're at work your organised and efficient self might be dominant, but when you're having a coffee or drink with friends a more carefree and social self might emerge.

Or when you pick up your children from school a nurturing or responsible parental self would be present, but when you're on holidays your fun-loving or lazy self comes out.



Some of us operate from only one or two selves *all* the time.

You might find, for example, that you're always organised and efficient and planning for the future, even when you're trying to relax, so that you never really get to rest and play.

Or you might always operate from a care-taking self, feeling you have to look after others and so you find it impossible to ensure your own needs and desires are met.

Others flip from self to self, one minute wanting to go in one direction and the next minute feeling certain of a different option.

Primary and Disowned Selves

We all have our favourite selves, which are those parts of ourselves we use most of the time and by which other people recognise us. These are called our *primary selves*.

But we also have other parts of our personality that we hide or suppress. These are our *disowned selves*, often referred to as our 'shadow'.

All the selves within us have their own feelings, thoughts, opinions and needs – and they don't usually agree.

That's why you might feel conflicted about your job, for instance.

The part of you who likes order and predictability probably loves it that you work nine-to-five and do the same thing every day, for the same organisation and with the same people. This feels safe and comfortable for that part of you.

In contrast, the part of you who craves adventure, excitement and change feels frustrated in that same job.

The experience you get from this is that most of the time you might be content in your job (if your order-loving self is your primary self) but at other times you feel you hate it and you fantasise about a more adventurous lifestyle – it depends on which self's thoughts and feelings are dominant in you at the time.



Voice Dialogue

This way of thinking about the personality was developed in the early 1970s by two husband and wife psychologists from the United States, Drs Hal and Sidra Stone.

Their work has influenced the development of other schools of thought and other personal growth teachers.

The Stones' theory is called the Psychology of Selves and of the Aware Ego, and is also known simply as *Voice Dialogue*.

Voice Dialogue is actually the technique they developed to dialogue with your selves.

How Voice Dialogue Works:

V

oice Dialogue involves one person interviewing the selves in another person, with the aim of discovering, exploring and validating who they are, without trying to change them in any way.

This explorative and validating interview process grows your awareness of who you are and how you've been operating.

It connects you to *more* of who you are, thus enabling new perceptions, feelings, insights and choices.

If, for example, you were a cautious person and wanted to gain some choice around being cautious versus being adventurous, you could have a facilitator dialogue with these opposite selves in you.

You would first have them interview your primary self – the cautious self in this case.

The Voice Dialogue process allows your cautious self to share how it works in you.

To do this the facilitator would ask you to move away from where you're sitting, either just to one side or to another part of the room – wherever you felt you wanted to be.

From this new place your cautious self would speak, and would be able to do so without interference from other parts of you.

Afterwards the facilitator would ask you to move back to your original spot. You would notice that you feel different to when you started the session, that you were no longer completely identified with your cautious self. Then the facilitator would ask you to move to somewhere else, to allow your adventurous self to have a voice.

When the second conversation is over, you'd move back to your original spot.

In your original spot you would now feel different again.

You'd have a sense of having more 'breathing space', greater awareness of yourself, and the ability to tap into both your cautious self *and* your adventurous self.

You probably would have started the process feeling as if you *were* the cautious self. But now you feel there's more room for other possibilities.

This new space in consciousness, where you stand between opposites, is what the Stones have named the *Aware Ego*.



The Aware Ego

The Aware Ego emerges when you're able to unhook from the parts of yourself that you previously identified with as yourself.

It is having an awareness of your selves as distinct from you but still a part of who you are.

An Aware Ego isn't the same as *awareness* or 'the witness' which you can experience in meditation. Nor is it about 'letting go' of the ego (your ego is really your primary self).

Instead it's about embracing *all* aspects - the totality - of who you are.

By unhooking from your primary self, who has specific rules and ideas about how you ought to be in the world, and who has been running your life, you are now able to listen to and accept opposites and open up a whole new set of possibilities for yourself.

Making Genuine Choices

For a practical example of how this might work for you, think back to the example of shopping for clothes.

Can you see how the different parts of you might like different types of clothing?

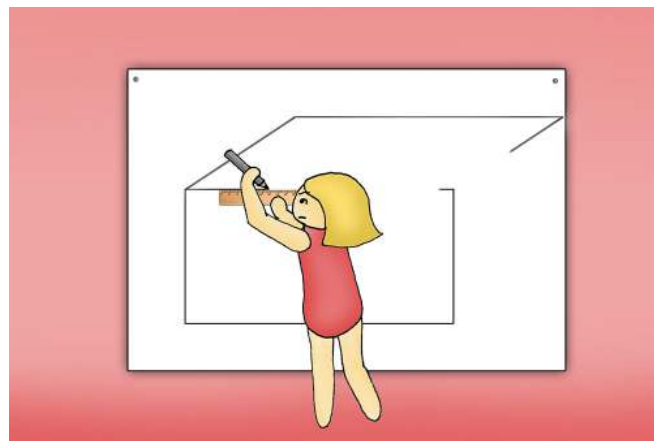
Often when you do something that's either exciting or relaxing (or even frightening) - such as shopping - you let go a little of your primary self.

This leaves an opening for other parts of you to emerge.

So if you usually wear low-key and conservative clothes, when your disowned self has an opportunity to come out and sees something it likes and wants to have, you feel attraction to the item.

If you give in to what the attraction is, you're giving in to the disowned self.

But the day after your shopping expedition, when you're getting dressed for work, your primary self is back. And it's the one getting dressed, because your primary self is who you are most of the time.



So your primary self sees what you've bought and thinks 'I can't wear this!'.

(And if you've spent a lot of money, your Inner Critic will have something to say about it too.)

But if you begin the process of becoming aware of your different selves and experience their individual perspectives, then you can begin to make conscious decisions.

So when shopping, you'd feel the excitement of your adventurous self when it sees something it wants to buy, but at the same time you would hear your conservative self tell you that you really need something to wear to work.

It then becomes *your* responsibility to make the choice. What you decide will take into consideration the views of both selves.

You might decide to buy one outfit for each part or buy only the extravagant clothes while being aware you're disappointing the more conservative part of yourself, or vice versa.

With this approach there's no right or wrong decision.

It's a bit like having to choose where to take two children for an outing when each wants to go to a different place.

Whichever way you choose, you'll have to accept the feelings of *both* children.

When you do that, you also are able to find creative solutions you wouldn't think of if you automatically went with the wishes of one child without considering the wishes and feelings of the one who is missing out on their preferred outing.

And in a way, our inner selves are like children. They all want acceptance and validation, they want to be included in our lives.

For the health of our psyche, it helps if **we** take charge and choose *how* we'll use the selves in our lives.



Summary of the Benefits of Decision-Making with an Aware Ego:

- You get access to more information about what you're deciding on because different selves see different things. So **you'll make better choices, which will save you money, heartache, hassle and time.**
- **The power of your Inner Critic will diminish.** The Inner Critic kicks in if you go against the rules of your primary self. If you've *consciously* gone against the rules, ie you've taken into account *both* sides, then the critic has little that it can say against you. And if it does say something, its sting won't hurt. Learn how this works in my post about The Inner Critic on my website.
- Something magical happens when you're able to sit between opposite selves: **you connect to a deeper knowing, a stronger sense of who you are and what's right for you**, and you gain access to ideas, feelings and energies you don't otherwise have available to you.

Meet Some Selves:

There are many selves in each of us, even though we usually identify with only a few.

There are responsible selves and irresponsible selves, adult selves and child selves, rational selves and creative selves, spiritual selves and instinctual selves.

Over the next few pages are descriptions of some selves you might be familiar with, either in yourself or in the people you know.

I've presented them in pairs of opposites. You might like to consider which of these selves you identify with the most, and which ones you might have disowned or are not conscious of. You'll probably find that you relate more with one from each pair.

RULE MAKER

The rule maker is the part of us that sets our personal rules. These are usually based on the rules of our family and culture. This self is part of our protector/controller system that tries to ensure we fit in with family and cultural expectations so that we can survive and be accepted by the communities we want to belong in.

REBEL

The rebel breaks the rules! This self does the opposite of what is expected from our family and culture. Rebels find their own way of doing things and often rock the boat. The rebel likes to think of itself as having no rules but it does have one golden rule - to break all the rules.

PLEASER

The pleaser is a great personality for others to have around because it makes other people feel good. It is considerate, kind and helpful. It tries to anticipate other people's needs but it can feel overbearing. If you have a prominent pleaser it's likely you don't get your own needs met and possibly you don't even know what you want.

SELFISH

The selfish self considers only itself. It makes sure its needs are met — it always comes first. It doesn't care about other people's wishes and has no qualms about stepping over others in pursuit of its own interests. The selfish self rarely becomes tired or sick, and it can set strong boundaries.

PUSHER

This is the force that propels you to action. The pusher is constantly on the go and is always thinking about what needs doing next. Nothing is ever finished — there is always more to do. It can help with getting things done but unchecked leaves you stressed, tense and unable to relax. If you have a strong pusher you probably are unable to enjoy your achievements because you never stop long enough to do so.

BEING

The being self is still. It exists in the moment, in the now. There is nothing to do and nowhere to go. This is a restful, expansive place where you can recharge your batteries. Time seems to stand still and you feel relaxed and alert when you are in touch with your being energy. Being energy is a nice balance to the pusher.

CAUTIOUS

The cautious self likes to stand back and observe a situation before it takes action. It needs to understand how something works before it participates. And it wants to make sure a situation is safe. It wants you to research and plan. It can be seen by others as timid and shy but really it just likes to be sure.

SPONTANEOUS

The spontaneous self jumps in and participates and then thinks about what it has done later, if at all. It engages with people instantly and takes action quickly. It does not plan or consider consequences and instead adapts to circumstances as they change. It's an 'enjoy the moment' self.

PERSONAL

If you have a strong personal energy then you connect with people warmly and intimately. You like being in close contact with people and you share your feelings and thoughts easily. People feel like you are present with them. This can feel good but it also leaves you with no boundaries and can drain your energy and time.

IMPERSONAL

If you have a strong impersonal self then you are cool and a bit distant. You connect with people but in a more businesslike way. You can discuss ideas and share thoughts but not feelings. Impersonality gives you objectivity and allows you to maintain your own space. A great self to use in business and when you don't want to take on other people's 'stuff'.

INNER CRITIC/JUDGE

We all have an inner critic and unfortunately most of us become victim to this self. The critic points out our weaknesses, flaws, mistakes, and generally anything less than perfect about us. Yet perfection, even by the critic's own admission, is something we can never achieve. Together with the perfectionist and pusher, the critic keeps us trying harder and harder. Directed outwards, this self becomes the judge. It does to others what the critic does internally to ourselves.

INNER TEACHER

The inner teacher is insightful, wise and supportive, and it is on our side. It sees the lessons we can learn from our lives and reveals these to us. It can guide us as we navigate our way through life. Having this self available to you makes you understanding and accepting of yourself and others. You might be seen by others as a wise being who is full of acceptance and good advice. This is a lovely counterbalance to the inner critic.

PERFECTIONIST

This self likes to ensure everything is perfect. Perfectionists look over everything they do countless times and always find improvements. This self can make you stand in front of the mirror for hours doing your makeup and can cause you to get stuck on one task at work, redoing and revising until everything is just right. Perfectionists find it difficult to finish things.

SLOB

The slob does not have any standards. Everything is fine as it is. Mistakes are not a problem, mess is not noticed. Appearance and even personal hygiene are not important. You would not want this self performing surgery but it is easy-going and relaxed compared to the perfectionist.

SPIRITUAL

The spiritual self is concerned with matters of spirit. It may have experienced extraordinary spiritual energies, or it may have a strong desire for spiritual experience and so does practices to achieve them. This self may express itself in a more traditional religious way, following rules of an organised religion. Either way, its focus is on a god or an ultimate energy of some kind, and it often doesn't value highly everyday matters of life on earth.

FEELING

The feeling self feels. It picks up what other people feel, it is affected by events and people, and it expresses emotions easily. The feeling self is more connected to the body than the mind — feelings are often felt throughout your body. The thoughts of the feeling self are mainly about feelings and they can be muddled by the feelings that accompany them.

OUTGOING

The outgoing self is focused outside itself. It interacts with others easily and talks out its ideas with others rather than spending time looking inward. It is friendly and very comfortable with other people and not so comfortable being on its own. So this can be a problem if you have work to do that involves isolation or if there's not much going on in your area socially. If you have an outgoing primary self, you appear confident and sure of yourself.

EARTHLY

The earthly self is interested in the here and now. It is concerned with the material world, but is not necessarily materialistic, and usually identifies with being an atheist. Philosophically it is more of an empiricist, valuing direct experience through the physical senses. The earthly self is also concerned with very earthly things like the environment, sustaining life, the practicalities of life such as food, shelter and family life.

MIND

If you are identified with the mind, you think. The mind analyses, works out solutions, thinks abstractly. The mind is impersonal and objective. It is not concerned with the experience of feelings and relating to others, but it can *analyse* feelings and relationships. We all have a mind but some of us are more mental than others — in more ways than one!

SHY

The shy self is not confident with other people, especially not in groups. It is quiet and soft and often sweet. This self is introverted and energetically it feels as if it is hiding, or would like to hide if it felt exposed or at the centre of attention. It is often perceived in a more negative way than the outgoing self but its strengths include sweetness, sensitivity and being able to work on its own and in isolation - especially valuable in our current world climate.

Exercise: Discover Your Primary and Disowned Selves

1. Think about what you **judge** and are critical of in other people.
2. Then think about the things you **overvalue and are in awe of** in other people.

You can write these down on the next Worksheet page if you like.

The qualities you judge and overvalue are your disowned selves. And the opposite of those qualities are your primary selves.

For example:

If you judge

- messiness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is tidy
- loudness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self prefers quiet
- wildness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is sensible
- selfishness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is considerate
- flirtatiousness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is more reserved
- irresponsibility – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is responsible
- laziness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is a doer
- emotionality – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self values rationality

If you overvalue

- sportiness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self considers itself not so skilled at sport
- intellectual ability – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is probably more of a feeling person or sporty
- glamorousness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is probably more practical
- artistic ability – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is probably more rational
- serenity – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is probably highly strung
- rebelliousness – then it's disowned in you, and your primary self is probably more careful and conservative

Please Note: If you judge an extreme quality, such as violence, it doesn't mean you need to become violent in order to become more whole. It might mean, however, that you've disowned the ability to be strong, physical, impersonal, selfish, mean, angry – all of which are used in violence. Those characteristics have their place: they give you the ability to handle people who may be aggressive toward you, to protect yourself and your loved ones if the need ever arose, and they allow you to express anger.

They generally give you the ability to assert yourself, say 'no' and to set strong boundaries. (It's interesting that many mothers realise they can access a tiger-like ferocity for the first time after their first child is born; and they realise they would do whatever it took to protect their baby.)

But when people are violent for no reason (or exhibit any extreme behaviour, of any kind), it usually means they have an imbalance of some kind in themselves, which can occur for a variety of reasons.

Voice Dialogue certainly can be helpful in the treatment of extreme behaviours, but when used in the kind of self-help way described in this ebook, it is assumed the reader has a large degree of self-control. The information here is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional help.

Back to the Exercise:

If you haven't yet done the exercise, look over the descriptions of the 20 selves and the page with the examples. You'll soon get an idea of which selves are primary in you and which selves you have probably disowned.

Worksheet:

WHAT DO YOU JUDGE IN OTHER PEOPLE?

WHAT DO YOU OVERVALUE IN OTHER PEOPLE?

WHAT ARE SOME OPPOSITE QUALITIES TO THOSE YOU'VE LISTED?



Voice Dialogue in Daily Life

Astra Niedra

Thank You For Reading

If you'd like to learn more about the various selves and how you can use Voice Dialogue in everyday life, check out the free content on my website.

And my ebooks - listed below - give you even more information about this work, in a simple and straightforward way.

If you purchase my ebooks it helps me keep the content on my website freely available to all. Thank you!

I wish you all the very best on your journey of self-discovery,

Astra



Contact Information

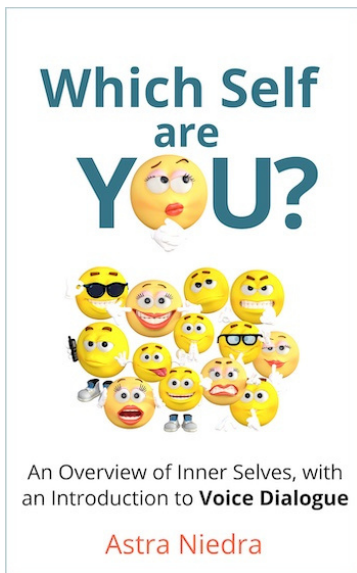
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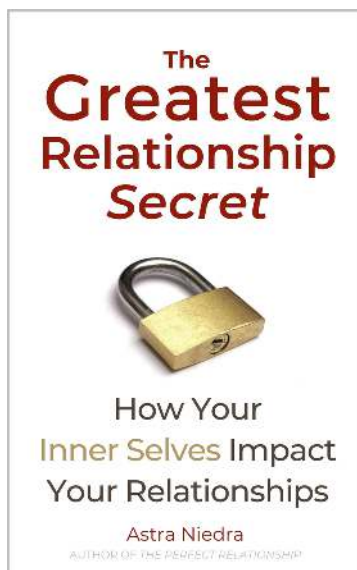


Which Self Are You?

Which Self Are You? covers 44 selves - including the Pleaser, Responsible Parent, Achiever, Seeker, Procrastinator, Adventurer, Princess, Creative, Rebel, and many more - and it gives you a comprehensive summary of The Psychology of Selves.

"A wonderful experience to read. The descriptions are detailed, interesting, and succinct.... It was not only informational and illuminating, but a lot of fun." B3

[More info](#)



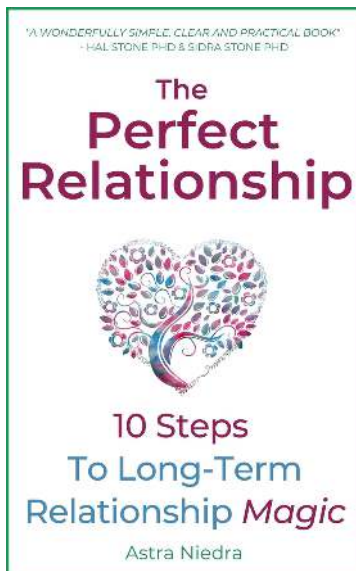
The Greatest Relationship Secret

Get detailed examples of how our selves bond with the selves in our partner and how that causes all kinds of common relationship issues.

This ebook also reveals why when you set goals and make plans, the results are so variable, and what to do about that to create the life experiences you want.

"Eye opener" LR

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The Perfect Relationship

There are 10 basic steps for experiencing a relationship that's satisfying, love-filled and passionate. This ebook gives you these steps. It provides you with a roadmap for creating a relationship full of love, joy, passion, wonder, respect, healing and transformation.

"A wonderfully simple, clear and practical book on relationship that will be of great help to anyone who reads it. It puts into perspective what a good relationship is about and shows the difference between living with another person and seriously partnering with another person."

Drs Hal and Sidra Stone

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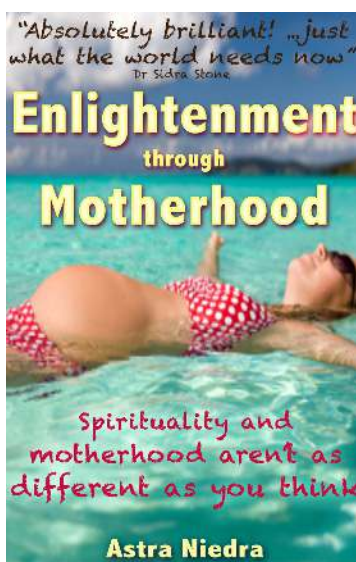
The Simplest Relationship Remedy

The 3 techniques in this 'remedy' are the easiest way to kick-start a healing process in a relationship. They'll revitalise your connection with your partner almost instantly. I explain how to do them step-by-step, including how to handle your partner's responses. The bonus: you don't even need to tell your partner you're doing anything. So why not give them a try?

"This is a wonderful, easy-to-read and follow book that goes very fast. It basically teaches you skills of communication and psychology that are relationship 'musts'. I highly recommend this book!"

Maggie Westbrook, Marriage Counsellor

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Enlightenment Through Motherhood

This book takes you on a journey to the idyllic paradise of Australia's Far North where you'll discover that the chores and responsibilities of motherhood - and also childbirth - are identical to the practices promoted in spiritual traditions for the attainment of enlightenment. You'll be inspired, you'll be entertained, and your spirits will be lifted, all the while grounding you in the unshakeable truth that there is far more to being a mother and raising children than conventional wisdom would have us believe.

"Absolutely brilliant!" Dr Sidra Stone

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