

NEWSLETTER

Archetypes in Everyday Life: *Roles, Scripts and Archetypes*

All the world's a stage.

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts;

His acts being seven ages.....

(Shakespeare from As You Like It)

Perhaps you've heard these lines many times before but have you ever thought about them in terms of your own life? What roles do you play in your life? Are you the author of the script, or are you reading from an adaptation of someone else's drama? Have you outgrown your role? Are you playing a part that once fit well but is ill-suited to your present age and stage?

Because the drama of our lives unfolds over time the nature and demands of each role change as time passes. Discord and unhappiness arise when we are unaware of or resist a change in role and story line. To adapt to the changes in stages of development (Shakespeare's seven ages) we need to call on different levels and combinations of archetypal energies. This situation is most evident in the dynamic relationship between parent and child and the challenging role of the Caregiver.

For example, look at the dilemma faced by a mother whose twenty five year old son shows no signs of leaving home. Her Caregiver wants to continue to take care of her child, nurture him, and even make excuses for him. At the same time she is annoyed and frustrated by his behavior and his attitude of entitlement. Their relationship deteriorates as each blames the other for his or her unhappiness. The lower levels of her Caregiver are activated as she vacillates between feelings of martyrdom and intense anger. However, she is so fearful that she will lose his love (not be a good Caregiver) if she sets her own limits, that she is unaware that she is keeping him in a dependent role in her life rather than forcing him to take a starring role in his own.

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As a long-time student and colleague of Carol Pearson, it has been my mission (and my great joy) to further the application of her work to the fields of psychotherapy and coaching. To that end, I have written two books based on my experience with the hero's journey model and the archetypes: *Finding Your Own True North* and *Depth Coaching: Discovering Archetypes for Empowerment, Growth and Balance* (both available at <http://www.capt.org/>). I will be writing a regular column about the practical application of archetypes in our everyday lives. I will speak to you as if I am asking you to coach yourselves and give you tips on awakening the archetypes in your own lives and in the lives of your coaching clients.

On the other end of the age spectrum is the example of the middle aged woman whose aged father lives in her home. He has not learned that their roles have changed—if not reversed. He tries to run the household as he always did and demands that his daughter account to him for her comings and goings every hour of the day. Her script, written by her family and her cultural conditioning, is the story of the dutiful daughter who must assume the Care-giver role as her father ages. Playing this role in the manner she learned in childhood, however, makes her resentful and unhappy. The love she once had for him fades as his demands grow. Meanwhile, her sense of self is eroding and her journey is on hold.

In either of these cases the solution does not necessarily mean that the 25 year old son or the aged father must leave the home—although that might be a desirable outcome—but whether they stay or leave, the roles of the mother and the daughter must change. The call for each woman is to move to a higher level of archetypal consciousness by combining the Caregiver and the Warrior to create and awaken the Ruler.

The task of the Ruler archetype is to take full responsibility for one's own life. Each woman must learn to stand her own ground and rule her own kingdom. Each must write a new script and enact a new role before she can change the situation and establish a new relationship. She must view this situation in the totality of her life, not only in the parent child relationship. This task requires a combination of the love and patience of the Caregiver with the bravery and limit-setting of the Warrior, for there is little chance that the father or the son will peacefully accept the changes in her script.

Are you aware of the parts you play in life and conscious of the entrances and exits you make?

For each role in your life ask yourself the following questions:

- Who wrote this script?
- Have I outgrown this role?
- Do I want to make changes?
- What archetypes do I need to awaken in order to make the changes I want?
- Am I clear about the nature of my supporting roles and playing them consciously and willingly?

Taking the hero's journey means not only becoming conscious of playing the leading role in the story of your life but also of becoming the author of your own script. Attending to the fluid roles of our archetypal energies and the dynamic nature of the hero's journey can help us play our roles consciously and appropriately (but not painlessly) as we, and those around us, move through the complex stages of human development.