

Four Faces of Oneself

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Source: Adapted from Peace and Justice Haggadah

My Angry Self – Violent and oppressive things are happening to me, the people I love and people I don't even know. Why can't we make the people in power hurt the way we are all hurting?

Expressing our anger, releasing our anger, knowing and claiming our anger is an important step in the process of liberation, but hatred and violence can never overcome hatred and violence. Only love and compassion can transform our world.

My Ashamed Self – I'm so ashamed of what people are doing that I have no way of dealing with it!

We acknowledge our feelings of guilt, shame and disappointment in order to not be paralyzed by these strong emotions. We transmute these forces, using the fire of injustice to fuel us in working for change. We also remember and celebrate the amazing, ordinary people around the world who are working to dismantle oppression together everyday.

My Fearful Self – Why should I care about other people when they don't care about me? If I share what I have, there won't be enough and I will end up suffering.

We must challenge the sense of scarcity that we have learned from capitalism and our histories of oppression. If we change the way food, housing, education, and resources are distributed, we could all have enough.

Martin Luther King said: It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality.

My Compassionate Self – How can I struggle for justice with an open heart? How can we live in a way that builds the world we want to live in, without losing hope?

This is the question that we answer with our lives. Compassion is the foundation upon which we can build loving communities, dedicated to the lifelong journey toward liberation. We are all blind and constricted in certain areas, and we are all wise and liberated in others. Compassion allows us to forgive ourselves and each other for our imperfections, and to release the judgments that keep us from fully experiencing love.

Each of us contains the angry one, the ashamed one, the frightened one, the compassionate one. When we can acknowledge all four of them, we are able to stay on the long and winding path toward personal liberation.