

# Me, You, And The Paradox Of Intimacy<sup>1</sup>

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As I've said many times, organizations are built on effective relationships. The foundation of effective relationships is the smooth, interpersonal connections among individuals—me and you.

Some people see the word *me* as a dirty word. The problem is they have blurred its meaning with the negative meanings of other words dealing with self. They have tossed it into a semantic vat of words lacking in positive character. Selfish. Egotistical. Self-centered. Inconsiderate. Egocentric. Narcissistic. In fact, the word *me* is simply a pronoun used by a speaker in referring to himself or herself.



During the latter part of the last century, *me* really gained a negative reputation! In fact, the decade of the 1970's was named by Tom Wolfe as "the Me Decade." And, it didn't end there. The 1980's became the "Greed Decade." Some even began moving "from the Me Decade to the Me Millennium"—to a culture of narcissism. It's no wonder that the word *me* has such a bad reputation!

The fact is, life *is* all about *me*. The more comfortable I am with *me*, the more successful will be my relationship with *you*. Being comfortable with *you* is very important in this 21st century. In this increasingly globalized world, more than ever before in history, *we all are interdependent*.

## The Black and White of Victimhood

It is ironic that the basic emotion that now pressures us to survive in the new global world is the very same basic emotion that prevented us doing so in the past: *fear*. Fear of getting hurt by others. Fear of not getting what we want. Fear that we will lose what we have.

Fear narrows our thinking. Fear requires us to be focused on the object of our fear at the expense of everything else. Our survival demands it. When we are fearful, we see less, we hear less, we discern less, and we know less. Our thinking is constricted. We look for short cuts. We categorize. We look through the easy filters of our prejudices. We see the world in black and white.



When we see the world in black and white, we see more "enemies." The more enemies we see, the more threatened we are. The more we take a "me" and "them" stance in life. And, when we take a "me" and "them" stance in life, we open ourselves up to the helpless feeling of victimhood.

We see our plight—fearful, frustrating, grieving, or whatever plight—being inflicted upon us by the hands of others. We become defensive. We blame others for our misfortunes. As a result, we not only are threatened by others, we take defensive actions against them. In turn, our actions threaten them. What a vicious circle!

<sup>1</sup> From: [http://www.arniedahlke.com/120731\\_Me,\\_You,\\_And\\_The\\_Paradox\\_Of\\_Intimacy.pdf](http://www.arniedahlke.com/120731_Me,_You,_And_The_Paradox_Of_Intimacy.pdf)  
Take a moment to explore Arnie's other Timely Tips at: <http://www.arniedahlke.com/timelytips.htm>

This black and white view of others, this victim thinking, this blaming stance, is what prevents us from reaping the benefits of our interdependence, It prevents us from getting closer, more intimate with others.

How can we achieve a warm and stimulating state of intimacy with others when we are so involved in our own victimhood and so intent on blaming everyone around us for our unhappiness? Is that asking too much?

## The Paradox Of Intimacy

Think about it for a moment.

You and I each are wrapped in layers of information about ourselves, like the layers of a head of lettuce. The outside layers aren't very important to our safety. We can give surface information about ourselves without worrying about being hurt. That's why the "hello's" and "how-are-you's" are usually so easy to share. But, as we peel off the outer layers of ourselves, as we get closer to our sensitive cores, the less safe it is for us to expose ourselves. The further inside we go to reveal ourselves to others, the more we reveal our vulnerabilities, those things about us that we see as weaknesses or deficiencies. Those things that we fear will be used by others to attack us or to criticize us or withdraw much needed affection from us.



So, given this natural state of existence, protecting ourselves in our drive to survive, the process of intimacy is a long one. We take a lot of time getting to know each other. We only peel off one layer of ourselves at a time. We are careful. We are cautious. We only reveal our more inner-selves when we feel safe enough with each other.

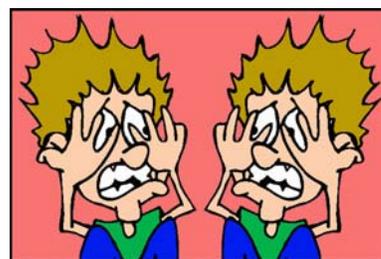
The reason we are so fearful of others is because we do not accept a realistic view of ourselves. We don't feel the incredible power of taking responsibility for our own choices, our own actions. We often do not make the necessary, unemotional decisions that move us in productive directions in our lives.

Powerless, dependent on others to value us, instead of us valuing ourselves, we fear each other.

The key out of this trap of fear is to draw power from ourselves instead of others. We do this by learning all about ourselves. Accepting ourselves for what we have and who we are. Making what we have work best for us.

Then, we are self-owned, self-motivated, and self-directed. Only then will we experience the strong self-esteem that makes it safe to interact with anyone in the world!

Now here is the crux: When you and I each reach that strong state of self-ownership, that personal, self-confident state of safety, we will find it safer, easier, and more enjoyable to get closer to each other. *We can then very quickly peel off our layers and achieve intimacy.*



## **Thus, we have Me, You, And The Paradox Of Intimacy:**

The more I focus on *me*—clearly seeing and accepting who I am—the less I am threatened by *you*.

The easier it then will be for me to achieve interpersonal intimacy with you.

In turn, the more I will be able to appreciate and benefit from my interdependence with others  
—which is so important to the survival of all of us!