The Role of Secrets in Self-Development and Exploration

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Abstract: Secrets can play a positive or negative role in personal growth. Secrets greatly enrich people’s lives. Self is greatest secret of human being. This article regards human’s inner world as the secret and describes the formation and development of the self through the perspective of secrets, and how to explore and understand our secrets, and how to integrate and release energy of them in order to promote self-development and self-actualization.

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1. Introduction

The word “secret” comes from the Latin word “secret”, which means “separation and secrecy”. The Chinese dictionary interprets a secret as “something that is not public, hidden, or yet to be discovered, etc.” One’s life is full of secrets, and everyone has all kinds of secret experiences.

Secrets are always connected to some kind of relationship. [1] On the one hand, secrets can reflect the relationship between people, and contain the meaning of “separation”. When I keep secrets from you, secrets will create a sense of separation between us. On the contrary, if I share and expose secrets with you, I can strongly feel the close connection between us and the sense of intimacy and unity. Therefore, in social communication, self disclosure can shorten the distance between each other, and is also one of the important indicators of intimacy [2].

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On the other hand, the secret is the boundary between one’s inner world and one’s external life. The secret separates one’s inner self from one’s external self, and the person who has the secret may think in one way and behave in another. Therefore, when there is a secret in the heart, people may have psychological burden, become cautious and afraid, and fear that the secret will be exposed or that the secret of others will be accidentally exposed, thus resulting in the relationship between them will be destroyed.

2. Secret and One’s Self-Development

Self is the sum of all experiences of a person about himself. It is an individual’s understanding about himself and the world around him, which is the awareness of one’s own existence, also known as self-consciousness [3]. The self of human is initially undifferentiated. Infants can’t distinguish themselves from other things in their world, Infants can’t distinguish themselves from other things in their world, which is having no awareness between subject and object. They don’t realize the existence of themselves as the subject. This ability to experience self-identity is latent and potential [4]. With the growth of infant and the continuous interaction with the surrounding environment and others, the self slowly begins to sprout and develop.

Secrets are a very important part of human inner world. For children, having their own secrets means the birth of their inner world [1], and the secrets for them are always connected with their self-consciousness, which is the impression of themselves left in their hearts. Revealing a secret means exposing themselves. Usually, secrets are related to the desire to pursue independence. Due to the prohibition of adults, children’s curiosity is aroused and they want to try secretly. In order to avoid punishment or protect themselves from criticism, children learn to conceal themselves and keep their secrets to maintain their dignity, which are called the secrets of goodwill or health by us.

In addition, children are taught from an early age which behaviors and emotions are not allowed and accepted, and are disgusting and contemptible. But at the same time, on the other hand, they feel and experience it in their hearts. In order to obtain the recognition of important others, we have to expel the feelings or ideas that are not accepted and recognized from consciousness [5], or hide those thoughts and emotions that are not allowed by society and others, not let others know. And we are even ashamed to have such thoughts and feelings and repress them into the depths of the subconscious mind. Therefore, the self becomes fragmented, and the heart is full of conflicts and struggles. “I” is no longer a unified whole. Such secrets we call dark and negative secrets.
It can be seen that the experience of secrets is also the experience of self and self-identification. Secret plays an important role in the formation and development of self. Different secret experiences point to different levels and fields of self respectively. And the secret may have positive or negative effects on growth and development of self.

3. Crisis of Self-Development

In real life, children are more shaped by their parents and society according to their expectations or predetermined patterns, rather than in accordance with children’s inner spiritual embryo or organic spiritual development, so the real self is often hidden, suppressed, distorted and covered. For example, a person has a feeling of anger towards his family, but it has not been realized, and at the same time, he has a value condition standard of “hating his family is not good” [6]. Then he will refuse the experience of anger, either distort and dissemble it or hide and deny it, so the anger becomes a secret. That is to say, people also lose this part of self. The “self” at this time is no longer a complete self, but a split and broken self.

A person with a healthy personality can express himself freely and speak freely, and at the same time, he can freely keep some secrets and share them with the people he likes. On the one hand, he is not easy to be influenced by various external voices, nor is he easy to be influenced by various emotions and conflicts of his own. On the other hand, he also remains openness and elasticity, and can accept and understand other people’s ideas and opinions.

4. Integration of Secret and Self

To sum up, secret has profound significance and influence on human life. It not only affect our relationship with others, but also affect our self-development and relationship. Healthy secret is helpful to the formation of individual personality and the construction of self-awareness. Dark and morbid secret destroys and affects our physical and mental health and becomes obstacles to self-development and realization.

According to the different ways and characteristics of secret formation, we use different ways to understand and integrate the inner secret, thus promoting the perfection and development of personality.

One is my secret, which refers to the secret that I know but others do not know, and the secret that I am afraid others will know. Most of these secrets are about the things, thoughts and feelings that we feel bad about ourselves, and we think that once others know about them, they will not like ourselves or leave us, or even refuse to associate with us. This part of the secret will become our psychological
burden, resulting in psychological tension and pressure, which requires us to pluck up our courage and take the risk of sharing them with others. We will find that after sharing, most of the reactions of others will be “ah, I also had it”, “I also did it” and “I also thought about it”. Such experience can help us to put down our psychological burden and gain a close relationship. Therefore, when a person has his own secrets and can freely choose to share them with reliable people, his body and mind are relatively healthy, which also means that he has a healthy and energetic self.

The other is the hidden secret, which refers to the secret that I don’t know and others don’t know. It is the hidden content in our subconscious mind, but will affect our behavior, and is even destructive way, such as addiction, uncontrolled impulse, deviant and disordered behavior, etc. This part of the secret can be understood and explored with the help of various psychological methods and techniques (such as mind writing, free painting, projection technology, dream, self analysis, etc.), and can be handled by means of psychological consultation when it is necessary.

5. Conclusion

Self is a world full of secrets. Having secrets means to have self. And the secrets of self are understood, explored and discovered in an acceptable, permissive and safe environment, it is not only the driving force of individual self-development, but also the need of personal self-development. When we constantly discover and integrate the inner secrets, we will have a complete and unified self which is that the external performance is consistent with inner thoughts, and fully realize our potential and talent.

Works Cited