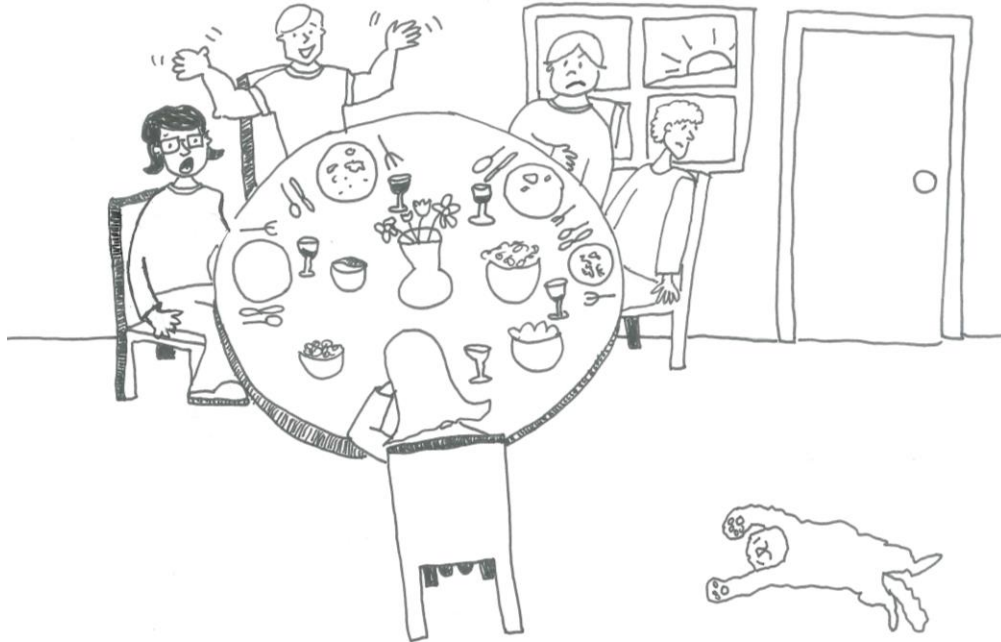# Chapter 1: Who I Thought Was "Me" is "Not-Me"

Character Structures That Hide Your True Self

Rachel is giving a dinner party for four friends. She's spent several days preparing an elaborate meal and setting the table, using her best china, silk napkins, and a pleasing flower arrangement. She's pleased with the outcome of all her hard work, but exhausted at the same time. She wonders if she'll be able to enjoy her company fully. Once her guests arrive, she puts on a happy face, pretending she's well rested and has it all together.

During dinner, Millie, one of Rachel's guests, feels miserable. Her tummy is already churning from the dairy-rich meal. She's seated with her back to the window and can't enjoy the view. And to make things worse, she's

sitting right next to Percy, who's showing off in his usual manner—waving his arms, speaking louder than necessary so everyone will pay attention, and telling one of his outlandish tales, this time about how he defeated everyone in a local race. Millie can't stand how he needs to win or prove he's right.

While Millie glares at Percy, he's thinking about how he can get everyone to go for a hike or play a game after dessert. Meanwhile, Sid—spaced out and bored with the conversation—wonders how soon he can leave. He's seated himself near the door so his exit won't disrupt anyone. He'd rather be home watching an action-packed video or playing Candy Crush. Across from Sid, engaged in conversation with Rachel, Olivia appreciates that someone's giving her a nice meal, but feels the need to keep talking. Right now, she's discussing the latest problem in her relationship. Rachel can't get a word in edgewise and feels more and more drained as the evening wears on.

Neither the host nor her guests realize how much their thoughts and behaviors result from predictable patterns most likely arising from their childhood and other societal influences. Each of the five participants in the story represents one of the five patterns or character structures. All of them think their personality is who they are. They are very much mistaken about this, but because they are all acting from these habitual patterns, rather than sharing from their hearts—their authentic selves—they find this dinner party less than satisfying. In fact, this is probably how they find most of their lives: unsatisfying.

As a child, you developed personality patterns as a way to protect yourself and help you survive. You may have been insufficiently nurtured, unwanted, overly controlled, betrayed, or squashed. Everyone experiences these early wounds to some extent. No parenting or childhood environment is perfect. Certain situations, however, may have been more threatening, prolonged, or intense than others, thus creating one or more character structures that now dominate your life. Your individual temperament and subsequent life experiences may have also influenced the severity of each structure. These protective defense barriers were needed at one time, but they no longer serve you. Even though they enabled you to develop certain gifts, they now play a major role in preventing you from knowing and living as your authentic self.

How did these barriers form? In reacting to harmful experiences as a child, you unconsciously disrupted the flow of the vital energy moving through you. Think about what you do when frightened. You breathe in and hold your breath while tensing up, thus blocking the flow of vital energy. When this disruption becomes habitual, energy blocks form. These blocks affect your brain patterns, your personality, and even the shape of your body. Just as an amoeba changes shape when poked, so also did you adapt to these wounds, and this distorted shape will stay fixed until your energy blocks are released.

These energy blocks are formed by age five or six, but they don't take physical form until puberty. Often a trained person can know the type of wound an adult has, and the approximate age at which it occurred, simply by looking at their body. . . .

Although you may not be aware of it, most of the behaviors stemming from these character structures annoy other people—things like needing to control others or win an

argument. Learning about the character structures and understanding the motivations behind them can help you to change for the better. Doing this work helps you realize who you are not. Such awareness sends you on a journey to discover who you truly are.