

Comparison of Small Self vs. Great Self

Aspect	Small Self	Great Self
Definition and boundaries	As others define me, I am a mind residing somewhere inside a body.	I define myself according to my direct experience, as a loving, compassionate, and cognizant awareness.
Relationship to danger	I am relatively easily harmed physically, psychologically, and emotionally.	While this body can be harmed and this brain may experience disturbance, I am indestructible.
Relationship to the world and others	I am separate from the world and others.	I am inextricably interconnected and interdependent with the world. I feel with others through compassion instead of apart from them.
Value	I am valued according to the way the world evaluates me, according to my speech, appearance, performance, and outcomes.	I am of inherent value that is incorruptible and eternal.
Relationship to the discerning aspect of the mind	I constantly compare myself to others in myriad ways and feel pride and shame as a result.	I see myself and others clearly without projecting or judging. Discernment functions without being contracted into the ego's judgmental voice against self or other.

Strategy for peace,	I focus on solving problems and	I respond spontaneously, appropriately, and skillfully,
----------------------------	---------------------------------	---

happiness, and wellbeing	finding peace and happiness through pleasure and by rearranging the external world, which causes chronic anxiety.	exhibiting confidence and ease instead of anxiety.
Primary motivations	I think, speak, and act primarily as a reaction to my fears and desires. I am obsessed with pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and blame, and fame and shame.	I think, speak, and act out of loving-kindness and compassion, equally applied to all appearances.
Relationship to ambition	I always feel as though I am “not quite there yet” and strive under a sense of incompleteness. I am a human doing instead of a human being.	I do whatever is needed without drama or burden. There is nothing I must do (other than be myself).
Relationship to the process of thinking	I think almost incessantly, which sustains my small-minded perspective.	I think when it’s helpful to do so; otherwise, I rest in and enjoy the blissful and brilliant play of phenomena.

Relationship to the process of feeling and	I project my own positive and negative feelings and emotions onto	Feelings and emotions occur but are neither indulged nor rejected. They are more peripheral and do not
---	---	--

emoting	others and, in so doing, reify and reinforce my (small) self.	command my sense of self.
Relationship to time	Due to incessant, fear-based thinking, I live primarily in the past or future.	I feel content and complete right now within an experience of timelessness. My attention is vividly present through nonjudgmental mindfulness, and the present feels boundless and complete in itself.
Relationship to reality	I am a victim of a reality that's happening to me.	I bask in the fearlessness and joy of the dance of all phenomena.