

The Fundamentals of Ego-Soul Dynamics

Richard Barrett

The Essence of ESD

The essence of the ego-soul dynamic approach (ESD) is that every human being is an energetic soul experiencing life in three-dimensional material awareness. The energy field of the soul is our primary identity. The soul created the psychic entity we call the ego to protect itself from the pain of separation that it experiences when it incarnates into three-dimensional material awareness.

The body is the material manifestation of the soul's energy field. The soul identifies with the energy field. The ego identifies with the body. The ego is unaware that it is the creation of the soul: It is unaware that its will to survive derives from the soul's will to be present in three-dimensional material awareness.

What is Ego-Soul Dynamics

ESD is a holistic approach to human development developed by Richard Barrett in his books, *What My Soul Told Me*, published in 2012 and *A New Psychology of Human Wellbeing*, published in 2016. The ESD approach, which is based on the Barrett model of Stages of Personal Development, leads us into an energetic understanding of reality that combines, science, psychology, and spirituality.

What sets the ESD approach apart from most other developmental models is that it explores mental and physical health from the perspective of the ego-soul evolutionary dynamic.

You will not find this approach in any scientific papers because the soul (sometimes called the higher self, the inner core or just the Self), along with the topic of consciousness, is mostly ignored by the modern academic world.

This was not the case 60 – 80 years ago when the internationally recognised psychotherapists, [Carl Jung](#) and [Roberto Assagioli](#), developed psychological approaches to mental health that included the soul.

We can only appreciate the ESD approach to mental and physical health by acknowledging the limits of our three-dimensional physical perception and embracing our energetic inner life in its fulness, particularly the ego's needs, the soul's desires and how these needs and desires intersect and impact on our thoughts, beliefs, values, emotions, and feelings.

ESD includes and transcends the spiritual approach to life. When your focus is uniquely on "spirituality," you are focused on the journey. When your focus is on "living the life of your soul," you are focused on the journey and the destination. You know where you are going *and* you have the tools to sustain you on the journey.

The Central Question: Who am I?

The key to understanding the ESD approach is the following statement – "*You don't have a soul; you are the soul.*" When you fully come to terms with this idea, it changes everything in your life. It gives you a different perspective on life's challenges and gives your life a sense of meaning and purpose.

You begin to recognize that you are an individuated aspect of the universal energy field, and at the soul level, you are connected to every other living soul. There is no separation in the world of the soul. Throughout history, the belief in the concept of separation has been the source of all human pain and suffering. It is this belief that prevents us from embracing our true reality.

The Gift of Pain

In the ESD approach pain is regarded as a gift, be it physical or mental pain. Pain is sign of energetic imbalance arising from the body or the mind, or both. Pain is a gift because it tells you exactly where you need to focus your attention – what you need to work on to regain your energetic equilibrium. The experience of both physical and mental pain is primarily a psychological experience.

“There is no coming to consciousness without pain. People will do anything, no matter how absurd, to avoid facing their Soul.” Carl Jung

If you have “physical” pain in your knee, when you go to hospital, you ask them to look at your leg, not at your arm. Emotional pain is similar. When you go to an ESD practitioner, you ask them to examine your painful feelings. When we follow our painful feelings to their source, we uncover the energetic disequilibrium in our ego-soul dynamic.

In the ESD approach we recognize that emotional pain arises from a conflict between the motivations (needs) of the ego and the motivations (desires) of the soul. As we resolve these conflicts we become whole - we heal the separation we have created in our life.

“The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are. Where wisdom reigns, there is no conflict between thinking and feeling.” Carl Jung

There is no pain (energetic disequilibrium) when you are living the life of your soul because your soul has no needs.

Everything that is necessary for your soul to live its life unfolds in front of you from the fourth dimension of conscious, the home of the soul.

What prevents this from happening are the preoccupations and fears of the ego concerning what it regards as its three-dimensional unmet needs.

"We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we disidentify ourselves from."

Roberto Assagioli

The Soul's Journey into Three-Dimensional Awareness

Our journey into three-dimensional awareness begins when the soul incarnates into a human body; when it takes possession of the energy field of the human egg created at conception.

The soul is the dominant mind of the embryo for the first three months of life in the womb. Once the body mind (reptilian mind/brain) forms after three months of gestation, it then becomes the dominant interface with the material world. At this point, the soul mind becomes the subconscious of the body mind.

The main preoccupation of the body mind is survival. It attempts to do this through a biological process called homeostasis. The purpose of homeostasis is to maintain the life support functions of the body. In our three dimensional material world this involves maintaining the chemical balance of the body. In the four-dimensional world, this involves maintaining the energetic balance of the soul's energy field.

The first experiences the soul has of three-dimensional material awareness are the physical sensations experienced by the body mind. Some of these experiences are positive—life enhancing (the body's homeostatic needs are met) and some are negative—life depleting (the body's homeostatic needs are not met).

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The soul experiences life-enhancing experiences as love energy, and life depleting experiences as fear energy. Whenever the baby's survival needs are met, the soul experiences the energy of love. Whenever baby's survival needs are compromised, the soul experiences the energy of fear generated by the body mind.

Around the age of two, when the limbic mind/brain (emotional mind) takes over as the dominant interface with the world the sense of oneness that the soul experienced in the womb and during the first few months as a baby begins to disappear as it realizes there are other entities in the world with competing needs, and there are times it does not feel loved because it cannot get its needs met.

At this point, the pain (energetic instability) associated with the negative sensations of the body-mind and the negative feelings of the emotional mind cause the soul to protect itself from the pain of separation by creating a psychic buffer we call the ego.

When the emotional mind becomes our dominant interface with the world, the body mind becomes the subconscious of the emotional mind, and the soul mind becomes the unconscious.

At around the age of eight, the neocortex (the rational mind) which has been developing in the background, starts to become the dominant mind/brain. The emotional mind becomes the subconscious of the rational mind, the body mind becomes the unconscious, and the soul mind becomes the super unconscious.

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The ego-mind develops in three stages: It learns how to survive with the help of the body-mind (the reptilian mind/brain); it learns how to stay safe with the aid of the emotional mind (the limbic mind/brain), and it learns how to keep secure with the aid of the rational mind (the neocortex mind/brain).

Only after the ego-mind has learned how to manage its internal stability and external equilibrium in its physical and social framework of existence – when it has learned to master its deficiency (survival, safety, and security) needs – does the soul mind begin to re-emerge as a psychic force in our lives. Normally, this begins to happen in our 20s or 30s. However, for most people - those who continue to be challenged in getting their deficiency needs met - it can happen much later life.

We must learn to overcome or master our significant survival, safety and security fears (trauma) before the soul-mind can re-emerge as a dominant force in our lives. The process of re-emergence of the soul-mind occurs in four stages: at the individuating stage of personal development where we learn dis-embed ourselves from our group identity; the self-actualization stage, where we learn to express our unique gifts and talents; at the integrating stage, where we learn to empathise and connect with other souls ; and the serving stage, where we learn to contribute to the wellbeing of others and the planet.

Each stage of these four stages of personal development leads us into an increasing expansion of consciousness awareness which leads us to adopt a more inclusive send of identity.

If we are unable, for whatever reason, to overcome or master the fears we accumulated in the early stages of our development when our three mind/brains were growing and developing, our ego-mind may stay dominant for the rest of our lives and the soul-mind will not re-emerge.

What prevents the soul-mind from re-emerging is the energy of fear associated with the ego's unmet needs, particularly our subconscious needs.

The fears we learned at the survival stages of development affect our ability to master the self-expression stage of development. The fears we learned at the conforming stage of development affect our ability to master the integrating stage of development. The fears we learned at the differentiating stage of development affect our ability to master the serving stage of development.

The difference between ego awareness and soul awareness

Viewed from the perspective of the ego, the fundamental properties of the material dimension of reality are time, space, and matter. By conjoining time and space, we create the illusion of separation; by conjoining time and matter, we create the illusion of death and decay; by conjoining space and matter, we create the illusion of physical forms and mass. Together, these concepts align with the classical three-dimensional material interpretation of reality explained by Newtonian mechanics and the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics.

Viewed from the perspective of the soul, the fundamental properties of the energetic dimension are timelessness, omnipresence, and energy. Because the soul has no awareness of time or space to give the illusion of separation, the soul experiences a sense of oneness and connectedness. Because the soul has no awareness of time and matter to give the illusion of death and decay, it experiences a state of being (present moment awareness).

Because the soul has no awareness of space and matter to give the illusion of form and mass; the soul experiences a shift in the frequency of energetic vibration.

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Together, these concepts - the reality of the soul - align with the quantum scientific interpretation of reality. In the world of the soul everything is wave-like with different frequencies of vibration—the energy dimension; in the world of the ego, everything is particle-like with different densities of matter—the material dimension.

In the material dimension of reality, the ego lives in a world limited by time and the impact of entropy - the gradual decomposition of matter. Therefore, it believes in death and decay.

Because the ego believes in death and decay, it experiences separation. Because it experiences separation, it believes in limitation. Because it believes in limitation, it experiences lack. Because it experiences lack, it believes it has needs. Because it believes it has needs, it experiences anger when its needs are not met and fear if it believes its needs might not be met in the present moment or in the future

In the energetic dimension of reality, there is no time or space. Because there is no time and space, the soul lives in a constant state of being and connection. Because it lives in constant state of being and connection, it experiences oneness and is not aware of separation. Because it has no awareness of separation, it does not experience limitation. It lives in a world of possibility and abundance. Every thought of the soul is an act of creativity. It creates through its thoughts whatever it needs. Because it has no needs, it has no fears, and its primary experience of its world is unconditional love. Because it lives in a field of love, the natural state of the soul is energetic equilibrium.

When we let the fears of the ego influence our thoughts, the level of energetic instability in the soul's energy field increases and the amount of love energy we can project out into the world decreases. From the soul's perspective, the energy associated with the emotion of fear and anger, which the ego experiences when it believes its needs might not be met is experienced by the soul as a lack of love and leads us into the world of separation.

Unmet ego needs - Anger/fear - Lack of love - Separation

Thus, the source of energetic instability we experience in our soul mind and physical body (mental and physical dis-ease) is the energy of fear that the ego holds about not getting its conscious and subconscious needs met.

The soul has desires, but unlike the ego, it has no needs. The soul's desires are to fully express its unique gifts and talents, connect with others in empathic relationships, and contribute to the wellbeing of others.

When the motivations of the ego prevent the soul from fulfilling its desires, our mental and physical health will become compromised. The part of the body that becomes diseased is related to the stage of development that is compromised by the ego's fears, which in turn is related to the body's seven energy centres (the chakra system).

There is a strong correlation between our ability to master the seven stages of personal development and the frequency of vibration of the seven energy centres. When the energy centres become over active or under active the health of the mind and body is compromised.

The Seven Stages of Psychological Development.

The first three stages of psychological development (Surviving, Conforming and Differentiating) involve establishing the ego as a viable, independent entity in its physical, social, and cultural framework of existence.

According to Professor Robert Kegan, most people, approximately 64% of the population, never get passed these stages of development. They operate with what Professor Robert Kegan calls either an Imperial mind (6% of the population) or a socialized mind (58% of the population). I would suggest this estimate refers to the more advanced nations – those that operate with a full democracy. This percentage will be much smaller in authoritarian regimes where more the proportion of people operating with an Imperial mind and socialized mind will be greater.

Those operating with an imperial mind (mostly adolescents) view other people as a means to get their needs met.

Those operating with a socialized mind conform to the ideas, norms, and beliefs of their family, culture or society. These people are not conscious. They get their thoughts, beliefs and morals from external sources. They want to fit into the norms of their society so they can get their deficiency needs met. Their sense of self is determined by external validation. They lead a dependent life.

The fourth stage of development (Individuating) is about finding the freedom to free oneself from this conditioning. It involves mastering the fears of the ego and finding out who you truly are. Kegan refers to this stage of development as the self-authoring mind (Kegan estimates that approximately 35% of the population is at this stage of development) – less in authoritarian regimes and perhaps slightly more in the most democratic regimes.

At this stage of development, we can distinguish our own thoughts and opinions from those of the group we belong to. When we start to individuate, we become conscious. We develop an internal sense of direction and a capacity to follow our most important motivations. We begin to make choices based on our values and we start to take responsibility for our life. We become independent.

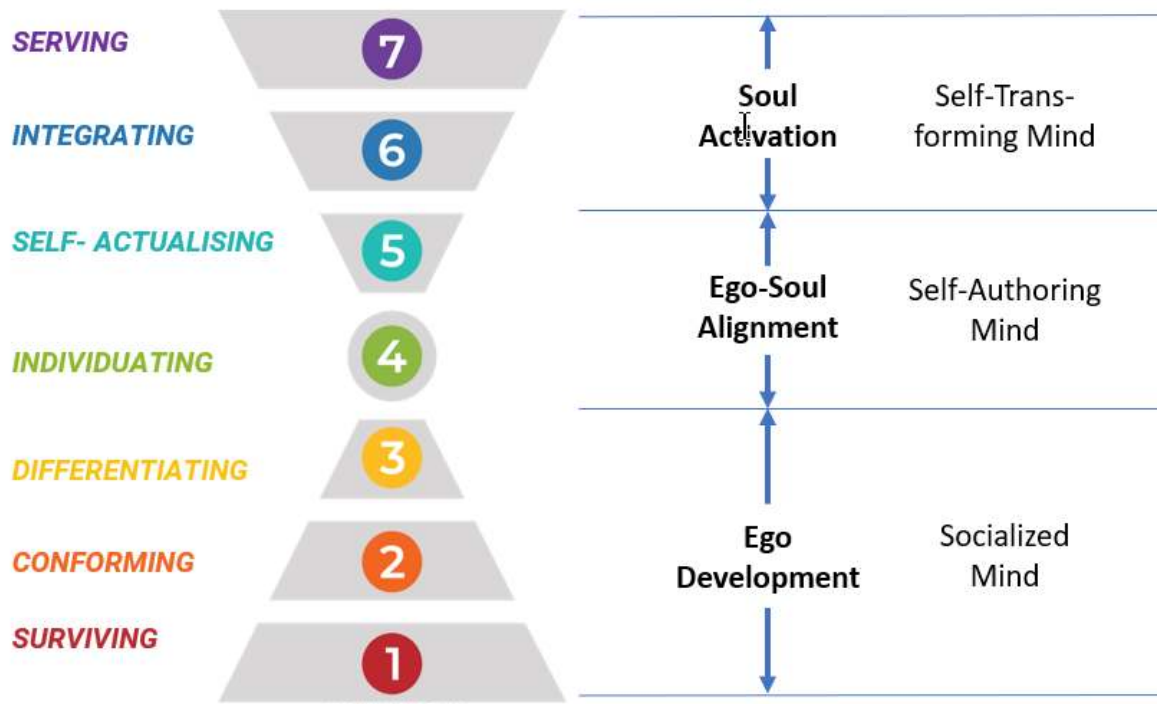
At fifth stage of psychological development (Self-Actualizing), we fully embrace our self-expression – begin to explore our unique gifts and talents (this also forms part of Kegan's self-authoring mind). At sixth stage of psychological development (Integrating), we connect with others in empathic relationships and use our gifts and talents to make a difference in the world. At the seventh stage of psychological development (Serving), we lead a life of service by contributing our skills and talents to the wellbeing of others and the planet.

These last two stages correspond to Kegan's self-transforming or interconnected mind. He estimates that 1% of the population is at this stage of development.

Globally, I would this is a very small fraction of 1%, since most of the world's population struggle to meet their deficiency needs and live inside authoritarian regimes. At the seventh stage of development, we no longer allow our ego mind to dominate our motivations; we are not held prisoner by our racial, religious, gender, or national identities.

The Seven Stages of Psychological Development, the three evolutionary stages of the ego-soul dynamic and Kegan's adult stages of development are shown in the following diagram.

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Ego development

Between the moment we are born and the time we reach physical and mental maturity, around 20–25 years old, we pass through three stages of psychological development: surviving, conforming, and differentiating.

What we are learning during these stages of psychological development is how to satisfy our deficiency needs—our survival, safety, and security needs—in the physical and cultural framework of our existence. If for any reason, we are unable to satisfy our deficiency needs we will feel anxious and fearful.

How well you were able to master your deficiency needs will, to a large extent, depend on the parental programming and cultural conditioning you experienced during your infant, childhood, and teenage years. If you grew up in a safe physical environment and a loving and respectful social and cultural environment, without experiencing any traumatic experiences, you will find it relatively easy to master your deficiency needs.

If, on the other hand, you grew up in a challenging physical, social and cultural environment where you had to struggle to get your needs met, you may find it difficult to master your deficiency needs.

Ego-soul alignment

Unlike the ego stages of psychological development, the individuating stage of development is not thrust upon you by the biological and societal exigencies of growing up: it is driven by the evolutionary impulse of your soul willing itself to become fully present in three dimensional material awareness.

The process of ego-soul alignment begins at the individuating stage of psychological development. What you are attempting to do at this stage of development is to let go of the fears of your ego that keep you dependent on your social and cultural frameworks of existence to satisfy your deficiency needs. Your goal is to become an independent human being; to find the freedom and autonomy you need to take control of your life. You do this by letting go of the conscious and unconscious fears you learned during the first three stages of development about how to get your deficiency needs met.

The individuating stage can be quite challenging for a number of reasons. First, it involves facing and overcoming your fears. Second, it involves becoming responsible and accountable for every aspect of your life. Third, it involves beginning to embrace your soul nature, particularly the values that support soul consciousness. Adopting these new values may mean distancing yourself from your family of origin, your cultural heritage, and your religious affiliation, especially if the people involved have never individuated and self-actualized.

For various reasons, some of which are normally out of our control, many people find it difficult to individuate. They remain stuck in the lower stages of development because the physical, social and cultural conditions in which they live prevent them from embracing their true nature, finding their voice and expressing their unique selves.

Soul activation

The last three stages of psychological development represent various stages of soul activation. If you have been relatively successful in mastering the individuating stage of development, you will begin to feel the pull of the self-actualizing stage of development in your early 40s.

This is the stage of development where you begin to explore your true nature and your unique self - your inborn gifts and talents. This is also, normally, the stage where you begin to uncover your soul's purpose - the activities that give a sense of meaning and purpose to your life. Uncovering your soul's purpose can be challenging for some people, especially if the career you chose in your teens or twenties does not align with your unique gifts and talents.

The next stage of soul activation—the integrating stage of development, which usually occurs in your 50s—involves connecting with others in loving relationships to make a difference in the world.

Your challenge now, is to develop your empathy skills so you can connect and collaborate with others and use your gifts and talents to make a difference in people's lives. If you cannot reach out and connect with others, you will be unable to fulfil your purpose.

The last stage of soul activation—the serving stage of development, which usually occurs in your 60s—involves living a life of self-less service. Having learned how to connect, what you are now tasked with doing is contributing to the common good. To fulfil this requirement, you will need to develop your compassion; embrace the deepest aspects of your soul's wisdom to support those who are suffering, disadvantaged or are less well off than yourself.

It is important to note that there are some significant differences between the first three stages of psychological development, which occur in our infant, childhood, and teenage years, and the last four stages, which occur after we have reached adulthood. The first three stages of development occur during a period when our physical brains and our minds are growing and developing; during a period of rapid emergent learning about how to establish ourselves in the physical, parental, and cultural frameworks of our existence.

Furthermore, the first three stages of development are thrust upon us by the circumstances of growing up: from being a baby, through childhood and adolescence, to becoming a young adult. We have no choice in this matter. We are unaware of the psychological changes that are happening to us. This can be very destabilizing if we are not brought up in a loving caring environment. As far as adult development is concerned, we can choose to individuate or not, and we can choose to self-actualize or not. If we make these choices, then the remaining stages of psychological development will naturally flow when we reach our 50s and 60s.

Our ability to master the soul activation stages of our development is fundamentally dependent on our ability to master the ego development stages. We have to master meeting our ego's deficiency needs before we can master our soul's growth desires.

References

Richard Barrett, [What My Soul Told Me](#).

Richard Barrett, [A New Psychology of Human Wellbeing](#).

Video: [Peace and Soul Consciousness](#)