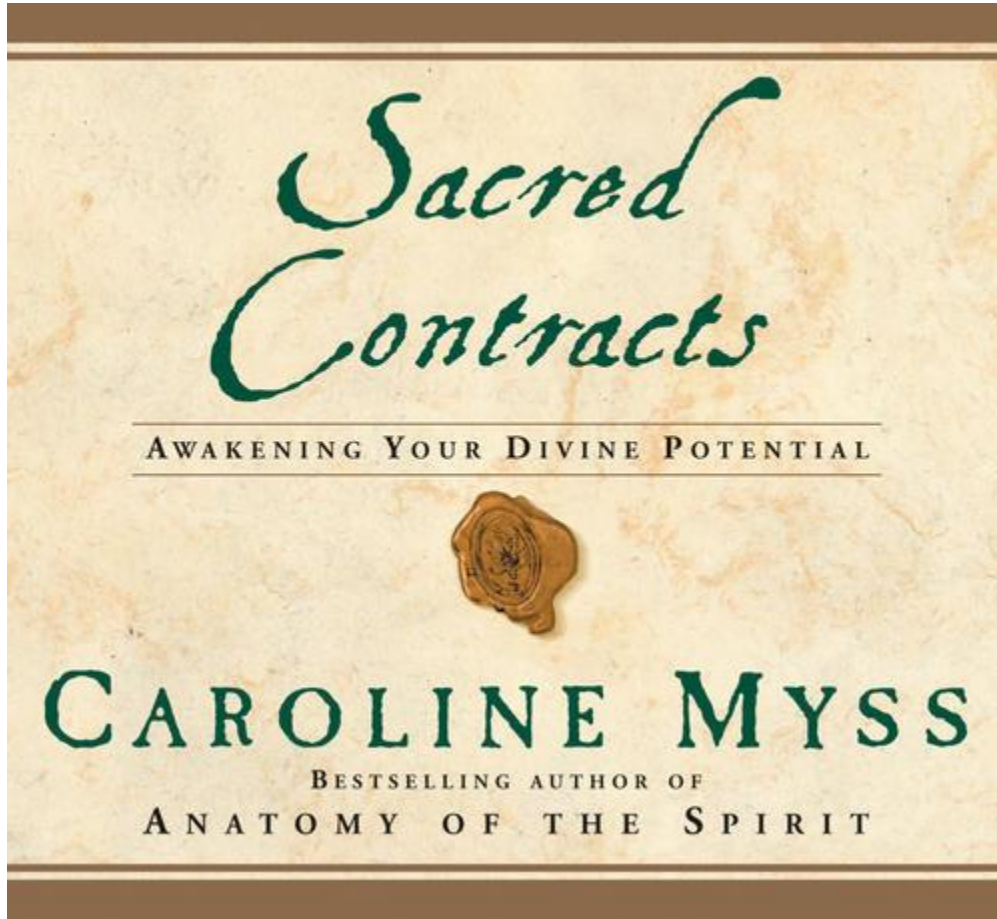


# Sacred Contracts – The Four Archetypes of Survival:

Child, Victim, Prostitute & Saboteur

By Caroline Myss



Current attitudes hold that our characters and personalities are formed during childhood through a combination of nature and nurture. Indeed, during the first two decades of life we make our first promises to ourselves to provide for and protect ourselves. Many people have told me that as adolescents they promised themselves they would never be physically abused or humiliated again. Children make vows to themselves that they will become scientists, artists, or mothers or simply find a way to become wealthy. These commitments are part of our path in the physical world. All are influenced by the four primary archetypes.

During the first years of our lives, we come to realize that the quality of our physical lives depends on our sense of personal power, our ability to survive. Long before we become emotionally and spiritually empowered, we must engage our personal power in the material world. We also begin to understand that we must deal with moral issues or suffer the consequences. In engaging with the physical world and the moral choices that present themselves, we develop self esteem. This is the beginning of spiritual maturity.

The four primary archetypes – the Child, Victim, Prostitute and Saboteur – symbolize our major life challenges and how we choose to survive. Together they represent the issues, fears, and vulnerabilities that cause us to negotiate away of our spirits within the physical world. They also can come to represent spiritual strengths for dealing with real-life and spiritual issues. These four archetypes are like the four legs of a table on which our Sacred Contract rests. The table leg represents our relationship to the ground beneath our feet and to the universal energy that supports our life. They might be straight or curved or embellished with carvings and images, depending on how these four archetypes work within our psyches during the course of our lives. But they need to be stable to support the weight of the tabletop - our life and mission.

All four archetypes influence how we relate to material power, how we respond to authority, and how we make choices. These archetypal energies are neutral and I must reinforce that point here because of the connotations of their names. Although it can be difficult to see how the Victim, Prostitute, and Saboteur can provide us with powerful and supportive imagery, they do and you will. You'll come to see how even the most common variant of the Child archetype, the Wounded Child, can help you deal with your life today.

These four archetypes are the intimate companions of your intuition. They make you conscious and your vulnerabilities, your fear of being victimized. They allow you to see how you sabotage your creative opportunities or abort your dreams, and in the future they will become your allies in fulfilling opportunities and dreams. Your archetypes will become your guardians and will preserve your integrity, refusing to allow you to negotiate it away under any circumstances. Your archetypes can help you transcend the shadow belief that "everyone has a price" and allow you to see that you are not for sale. They will allow you to become completely self-reliant; through them you will come to see options where others see excuses.

The richest reward in working with these survival archetypes, however, reveals itself in the manner in which your Contract unfolds. While it is a given that you have Contracts to meet certain people, it is not determined ahead of time what kind of interaction you will have with each of them. That is up to you and, of course, to them. You can choose how you interact, but the more conscious you are about the patterns that influence your behavior, the more likely it is that your choices - and the lessons you get from them – will be positive. If your choices are formed only by your unconscious, however, and you are unaware of the archetypal energies influencing you, you will more likely act out of insecurity and defensiveness. By remaining aware of the archetypal energies, you stay conscious of both your divinity and your potential and the everyday world. Through your archetypes, you will find the Middle Way, the path of your Sacred Contract.

### **The Child: Guardian of Innocence**

The Child archetype is our beginning point. We most easily identify with the Child, especially after several decades of popular books and workshops on the inner Child. This archetype establishes our perceptions of life, safety, nurturing, loyalty, and family. Its many

aspects include the Wounded Child, the Innocent Child, the Nature Child and the Divine Child. These energies may emerge in response to different situations in which we find ourselves, yet the core issue of all the Child archetypes is dependency and responsibility: when to take responsibility, when to have a healthy dependency, when to stand up to the group, and when to embrace communal life. The stages of growing up, from coming to the age of reason at about seven, to entering adolescence at around thirteen, to reaching the official age of adulthood at twenty-one, represent plateaus of spiritual and physical maturation. When we are completely dependent, from birth to age seven, we develop the first skills for taking care of ourselves, our bodies, and our possessions. At age seven, we begin learning what it means to be responsible not just for our belongings but for our actions and deeds as well. Through ages seven to thirteen we develop further emotionally, as we are introduced to larger issues of morality, ethics, loyalty, and the rules of relationships.

During adolescence we become self-aware, self-conscious, and self-centered. We become aware of – it not consumed with – the power of our mind, the pull of our heart, and the passion of our body. During the wild year's images of all that you could be or all that you fear you will never become also step to the fore. During the late teens and early twenties, you discover your vulnerabilities as an adult along with your strengths and talents. You make substantial choices about your life, and even though you will doubtless change your mind many times, or circumstances will reroute you, this is the beginning of your real contact with the world of physical responsibility separate from your tribe. Finally, the power of the spirit emerges around the age of twenty-one, as you begin to see beyond the physical aspect of life to find symbolic meaning in your actions, from political activism and social idealism to love and spiritual exploration. Around age twenty-eight you naturally transition into the next cycle of your life as interconnected, responsible adult.

The process that I have just described is, of course, how we ideally mature. Because of the complex challenges of everyday life, however, this spiritual maturation varies for most people. From an archetypal point of view, when these cycles are not followed in some way, adults will find it difficult if not impossible to be responsible for themselves in the physical world and to create successful relationships. Your inner Child will exhibit aspects of the Wounded or Orphan Child and will reflect that, somewhere along the line, you did not receive the nurturing necessary for you to become responsible and independent. And so you may well spend the early years of adulthood trying to heal and compensate for these deficiencies.

Confronting the Child archetype within you awakens a new relationship with life, a fresh beginning. Regardless of which aspect of the Child you relate to most intimately, this archetypal pattern brings you into contact with the untapped resources connected to creative thought. This is the core of the Innocent Child – the sensation anything and everything is possible.

As the guardian of your innocence, the Child helps heal, repair, and put a stop to the inner-directed abuse of the Wounded Child. If you are consumed with the Wounded, Neglected, Abandoned, or Orphan Child's psyche, you need to identify – or initiate – a new relationship or creative enterprise that makes you appreciate your life. Ask your Child what it

needs in order to heal or feel nurtured or cared for. The Child often inspires you to act outside restrictive boundaries or to explore an adventure without the burdensome weights of the adult mind. Indulge some of these inspirations as a means of making contact with your inner Child. Don't become over attached to the wound, however; don't over indulge the Child so that it becomes an inner brat. But give it the support it needs to grow up.

### **The Victim: Guardian of Self-Esteem**

Being a victim is a common fear. The Victim may manifest the first time you don't get what you want or need; are abused by a parent, playmate, sibling, or teacher; or are accused of or punished for something you didn't do. You may suppress your outrage at the injustice if the victimizer is bigger and more powerful than you. But at a certain point you discover a perverse advantage to being the Victim. You may be afraid to stand up for yourself, or you may enjoy getting sympathy. The core issue of the Victim is whether it's worth giving up your own sense of empowerment to avoid taking responsibility for your independence.

The lessons associated with the Victim archetype demand that you evaluate your relationship to power, particularly in your interactions with people with whom you have control issues and need to construct personal boundaries.

The primary objective of the Victim archetype is to develop self-esteem and personal power. When you are in a situation in which you feel threatened or you suspect that you lack the appropriate social, professional or personal power, take notice of that reaction physically, emotionally and mentally. That is the intuitive voice of your inner Victim. To help direct your responses to all of your experiences and relationships, say "I am committed to my own empowerment. What choice can I make here that will serve my own empowerment?" Name the problem or threat you need to overcome and the power that you need to possess in order to do so. Keep your eye on the truth that everything and everyone in your life is there by Contract to assist in your spiritual maturation.

You have Contracts with people who are directly connected to the Victim archetype. Their primary role is to help you develop your self-esteem through acts of honesty, integrity, courage, endurance, and self-respect. Those people whose Contracts are linked to empowering your Victim will play, or have played, the leading roles in awakening in you an awareness of the value of these spiritual qualities and how essential they are to your well-being.

### **The Prostitute: Guardian of Faith**

The act of prostitution is generally associated with selling one's body for money, but to my mind that perhaps the least significant example of the Prostitute archetype. The Prostitute thrives most bountifully in subtle ways and in ordinary, everyday circumstances. It comes into play most clearly when our survival is threatened. Its core issue is how much you are willing to sell of yourself – your morals, your integrity, your intellect, your word, your body, or your soul – for the sake of physical security. The Prostitute archetype also dramatically embodies and tests the power of faith. If you have faith, no one can buy you. You know that you can take care of

yourself and also that the Divine is looking out for you. Without faith, however, you will eventually meet the price you cannot turn down.

The majority of Prostitutes that I have met and continue to meet are men and women who are either in bad marriages or in miserable jobs. Their inability to move out of their toxic environments is totally tied to economics. Women have told me that they do not want to be middle-aged and single, or lose their social status, or have to support themselves, and so they stay in unhappy marriages. Men tell me this too, but not nearly as often, and both men and women say that they remain in jobs that make them miserable or sick, violate their ethics, or make them feel bad about themselves for the sake of financial security.

Many people tell me how unhappy they are and that they are waiting for just the right moment in their lives to make the “big break” and follow their dreams. Most often, these are the people who ask again and again, “But what exactly is my Contract? If I only knew, I could get on with it.” These people are actually hoping that I can direct them on a path that will guarantee them money and peace of mind. They want to hear that their Contract will give them all the time in the world, all the money they need while doing only what they want, a cabin retreat in the woods, and last but not least a soulmate. They also never want to age. (The energies and expectations of Prostitute, Child, and Victim all have to be addressed!)

All power, whether from lottery winnings or spiritual visions, will draw to you some outside opponent who will try to buy, use, or contaminate you. When Jesus was met by Satan as he prayed and fasted in the desert, Satan offered to give him the entire physical world in exchange for the power Jesus now had within him. Likewise, every time you take one step on your path of personal empowerment, you will meet someone who will want to buy a piece of your soul to render you less powerful and themselves more powerful.

A shadow characteristic of the human psyche in general is that we want to find the shortcuts in life, including shortcuts to our own empowerment. If we spot someone whose power appears as if it could be bought or shared, we will be attracted to it. A perfect example is the game of “name wealth” (I am a friend of a friend of Mr. and Ms. Famous”). The diluted energy that comes down this path of who’s who is, for many, valuable enough for them to remain in a relationship long past the time the friendship has grown cold – another expression of the Prostitute archetype.

Confronting the Prostitute within you transforms this archetype into guardian. It will watch over your relationships to faith. Think of the Prostitute as the ally who puts you in alert every time you contemplate shifting your faith from the Divine to the physical. Anytime you are in a crisis of faith, try to become mindful of your thoughts and fears. Name exactly what you are afraid of, especially those fears that try to talk you into compromising yourself in any way. The Prostitute appears when you begin to believe that you could order your life if you had the money to control the world around you – and to buy just a bit of everyone in it. It appears when you stay in a relationship that is not good for you just because you don’t want to be alone. It appears when you’re asked to do something unethical or illegal “for the good of the company.” People who are meant to bring out the Prostitute in you represent your most

painful relationships. Because Prostitute interactions make us confront our fears of survival, they are often terrifying and humiliating.

A woman named Linda told me that once she became conscious of the fact that she had a Prostitute archetype, she saw it everywhere. "I am one of those millions of people who thought of a prostitute as selling sex. Never did I think that I could apply that title to myself. But I'm noticing that even when asked an opinion at lunch about anything from someone's new shoes to a different office policy, I run it by my "What's this gonna cost me?" screen. If I think an opinion is going to cost me in terms of popularity or office politics, I pass. I often say things that earn me points, even when I don't believe a word of them. After I told one executive that I thought his ideas were brilliant, I was consumed by an overwhelming urge to wash my mouth out with soup. But he has the kind of power that can make things happen in my life. I guess what I'm saying here is that I am still a practicing Prostitute, but I've come a distance because at least I'm honest about it. I fully admit that I don't have enough faith to put my integrity before my mortgage and my spiritual direction before my promotions in the physical world."

### **The Saboteur: Guardian of Choice**

Like the Prostitute and the Victim, the Saboteur archetype is a neural energy within you that usually makes itself known through disruption. It can sabotage your efforts to be happy and successful if you are not aware of the patterns of thought and behaviour that it raises in you. It can cause you to resist opportunities. The Saboteur is the mirror that reflects your fears of taking responsibility for yourself and for what you create.

The Saboteur archetype may be the most intimately connected to your ability to survive in the physical world. Fears of being without the basic needs in life – from food to home to a social and personal network – often provide this archetype with the power to haunt you. You can silence the Saboteur with acts of courage and by following your intuition. It serves you brilliantly as a gut instinct that directs you to take action based on hunches rather than on rational thought. To learn to expertise that voice, you must respond to it. Only through response can you manifest the courage to expand your creative environment. Start with small choices, which may be life transforming acts of will disguised as harmless impulses.

The core issue for the Saboteur is fear of inviting change into your life, change that requires responding in a positive way to opportunities to shape and deepen your spirit. Yet it is impossible to stop the process of change. Deep in your tissue, you know that having power and using it necessitates change. And although many people want to have it all, they don't want to be all. All choices you make do not have the same potential to transform the environment of your life. The decision to meet a group of friends for dinner, as a rule, does not change your life as dramatically as the decision to get married, start a business or move to Europe. The choice to respond to an inner voice that directs you to pursue your spiritual life is obviously one that can rearrange your family world.

"I am a great one to sabotage my self-esteem," Erin said. "instead of saying thank you to someone who pays me a compliment, I deflect the kind words being offered. I am forever

discounting my talents. But this self-sabotage is the worst in my partnership. I have a wonderful partner, and when he tells me that he loves me or that he thinks I'm lovely, I tell him he's crazy. That's about as close as you can come to behavior that is directly trying to sabotage a relationship. He has challenged me on several occasions, asking me why I don't believe him when he tells me how he feels. I told him that I feel I am giving him a break, kind of like telling him he doesn't have to do any acting to make me feel good. It's a lethal pattern that came right out of my shadow Saboteur.

Now I am practicing to be conscious of when I'm shortchanging myself, and I compliment myself all the time. It sounds like a game, but I'm not playing at all. I feel that the Saboteur is now my chess partner, sitting right across the table from me. Every move I make, I look across that table to study the response. I am determined not to stand in the way of all that my life can be with my partner. Our life together is part of my highest potential, which means having the experience of wife and mother with someone I truly adore."

### **Living in the Shadow**

Although our archetypal patterns are essentially neutral, they do have both light and shadow aspects. The word *shadow* itself suggests a dark, secretive, possibly malevolent countenance that looms in the background of our nature, ready to do harm to others as well as to ourselves. A much more appropriate understanding of the shadow aspects of our archetypes, however, is that they represent the part of our being that is least familiar to our conscious mind. "Whether the shadow becomes our friend or enemy depends largely upon ourselves," wrote Marie-Louise von Franz, Jung's closest colleague and confidante. "The shadow is not necessarily always an opponent. In fact, it is exactly like any human being with whom one has to get along, sometimes by giving in, sometimes by resisting, sometimes by giving love – whatever the situation requires. The shadow becomes hostile only when it is ignored or misunderstood."

The shadow aspects of our archetypes are fed by our paradoxical relationship to power. We are as intimidated by being empowered as we are by being disempowered. That disempowerment is a threat to our well-being is easy to understand, at least at the surface level. But why should we also fear becoming empowered? That, in essence, is the paradox that feeds the shadow. The shadow can be seen as unexplored power. It expresses itself through behavior that often sabotages our express wishes and images of ourselves. These complex aspects of our personalities filter into our behavior by outwitting our conscious minds, after which they often assume a dominant role. We frequently don't know why we do the things we do, or why we have to cope with inexplicable fears. This leads to painful conflict when we feel one way and act another, separating mind and heart.

Living with mind and heart divided is like having two battle encampments within, each one fighting for authority over our power of choice. When isolated from each other, the heart and mind are each handicapped; the mind tends to become hyper rational, and the heart, overly emotional. This imbalance of forces fragments our power. And like a nation in which opposing forces are constantly at war with each other, when our nature is fragmented, it is

vulnerable to being dominated by fear. As Jesus said, “If a kingdom is divided against itself, it cannot stand” (Mark 3:24).

Even when we know we are acting fearfully, we sometimes choose to be willfully ignorant about it. If I don’t know why I am acting in a negative fashion, then it is easier to excuse my behavior or blame someone else. But if I am aware both emotionally and intellectually that I am harming another being, I am not only have to hold myself accountable, I must also admit that I consciously chose to be negative. I can no longer hide behind the state of confusion created by the split between heart and mind.

As long as your mind and heart lack a channel of clear communication, you will be confused about what to do with your life. Inevitably, as soon as you make contact with your life’s passion – which can mean finding your vocation, your life partner, or even your sexual identity – you are going to experience a kind of spiritual suffering until you act on that passion. That suffering is actually a form of divine motivation, urging you to pursue a more authentic life.

Awareness of a greater truth adds time pressure to your psyche and spirit, because the more you know, the faster you need to respond to that truth. I call this *spiritual accountability*. If you realize that negative judgements, including judging yourself, cause harm, then you must re-evaluate your behaviour as soon as you realize that you are being judgemental. You also need to recognize when you are justifying yourself and your actions. Judging others and creating excuses while knowing better are only two of the spiritual challenges that will arise as you work with your survival archetypes. The more aware you are of the demands of managing your consciousness, the fewer hiding places will be available in your psyche and soul for the shadow play of the Child, Victim, Prostitute, and Saboteur. This relationship between awareness and responsibility also applies to your health. Once you become aware of how toxic anger or guilt is to your body and spirit, the consequences of these energy poisons become more pronounced than if you did not know better – if for no other reason than that you now know their biological effects. This is negative visualization in action.

### **The Shadow and Your Divine Potential**

Jesus said to his disciples, about the miraculous healing abilities, “All this shall you do and more, if you have faith.” The Buddha’s enlightenment not only allowed him to view his past lives going back aeons but to become omniscient as well. Yet he also told his followers that with diligence they too could achieve enlightenment, and he urged them to “be lamps unto yourself.” These enlightened beings saw our highest potential as virtually unlimited. They were not necessarily referring to learning how to walk on water or effect miraculous cures, however, but to the fact that we can become as trusting of the Divine as they. The Buddha, for example, insisted that his followers discover who they would be if they called their spirits back from attaching to the illusions of the external world. And Jesus said, “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.... Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bushel or a bed?”



Instead, don't you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and what ever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open" (Mark 4:11, 21-22).

To engage in the journey that takes us from living outside of ourselves to processing the world inside ourselves means bringing light to our shadow. Your shadow aspects are primarily rooted in fear patterns that have more control over your behavior than does your conscious mind. This limits your ability to make choices in which you are aware of your motivations.

Your shadow self includes emotional and psychological patterns that come from represses feelings that you do not wish to deal with consciously for fear of the consequences. For example, rather than face the fact that your partner is in some kind of trouble or your child is using drugs, you may repress those strong, accurate instincts – possibly with disastrous results. And you may become short-tempered, angry, and depressed without realizing why.

Your shadow also contains the secret reasons why you would sabotage the opportunities that come your way. People often tell me why they have a fear of success. When I ask them to explain where that fear came from, many draw a blank. They have no idea why they have that fear, they just do. Having an unknown force controlling so much of the creative expression of our lives is a shadow. Eventually we have to confront each of our shadow aspects. This exploration into our shadow is so complex that it may be one reason why Eastern philosophy maintains that we need many lifetimes to achieve liberation.

Your highest potential, then, is that part of you that is not limited in its expression by the fears of the physical world and the business of living. It is what you actualize when you are willing to confront your shadow, openly acknowledge the reality of its presence within you, and then take steps to deal with it. To rely on your inner resources and to follow your inner guidance before all else is to express your highest potential at all times. It shows you who you would be if you could live constantly within the knowledge that genuine power exists inside the self and never outside of it.

Confronting your shadow requires that you strike out on your own. That isn't to say that you can't receive help from friends, therapists, and wise counselors, but you will have to make choices that exclude the collective needs of your family, tribe, or group, and separate yourself from them. If you do decide to follow an inner call and its unavoidable psychic ritual of separation, you have to withdraw your spirit from the magnetic field created by the collective power of your group's will so that you can organize your own energy, much as a mystic or seer might withdraw to hear divine promptings – like Jesus going into the desert or Muhammad to the cave of Mount Hira. This process of birthing your own power requires that you put yourself first, even though this may appear to the outside world to be "selfish."

During your separation you will have to face the most narcissistic aspects of your ego, such as the shadow Child, who is concerned only with its own well-being and will try to scare you back into the fold. Your shadow Victim, meanwhile, revels in its victimhood and will entice you to feel sorry for yourself for ever leaving. The shadow Prostitute will urge you to sell out your integrity and your vision of true independence at the first opportunity. And the shadow Saboteur will play to your suspicions that you just aren't good enough to accomplish anything on your own. You will have to strengthen your soul identity until it is strong enough to eclipse

all these fears. You are birthing your power of individual choice, increasing your potential for insight and for opportunities serving your highest potential. In dealing with the shadows, you ready yourself to accept full responsibility for the management of your spirit and the consequences of your choices.