

The Lover (Feeling Body)

An article by Marianne Hill

This post gives an introduction to the Lover archetype. The Lover is an aspect of ourselves that we all have inside us. However, as shadows form in our early life, many of us lose touch with the sensitivity, spontaneity and vulnerability of this side of ourselves which drives – either consciously or unconsciously – many of our decisions and actions.

Recently I have begun to re-name this archetype the Feeling Body. It speaks to me in a slightly different way to the word Lover, which can potentially limit the scope and depth of this archetype. I like each, but in this article I have chosen to use the term Feeling Body. You are welcome to replace this with the word Lover if that works better for you.

I find that an essential part of working with the archetypes is to start to make them your own and to feel into your own personal version of each of the archetypes. With this in mind I always encourage people to come up with their own names if they wish. So if, when you read this, you find a word that works better for you as a name for this part of yourself, then please feel free to use it!

The Feeling Body

Connection to all

Our Feeling Body is the part of us that is capable of deep connection. This part of us connects to our feelings and allows them to flow and be felt fully. Someone who is in touch with the Feeling Body archetype lives in constant connection with their body. They enjoy their body and are sensual and sexual, they connect with others easily and share themselves with openness

and vulnerability. This part of us connects with nature, with the universe and with spirit. This archetype is connected to the flow of life and is spontaneous, creative, imaginative and carefree. The Feeling Body is willing to yield to life's flow, and to be taken wherever it leads.

Vulnerability

When we are in our Feeling Body we are open and defenceless. This can be an intensely vulnerable place – think about how exposed we are while making love or sharing our deepest emotions. We need the protection of our Action Taker, and the care and support of a good Heart Centred Leader if we are to be connected to our Feeling Body and still be safe in the world. The Feeling Body is certainly not an archetype that can survive alone. This part of us knows no caution and is undefended.

The Inner Child

The Feeling Body is the place of our Inner Child, for the Feeling Body carries the vulnerability, innocence and openness of our childhood. Our body also holds the memories of our trauma and distress deep in our tissues. In this way our traumatised Inner Child can be seen as living in our body, awaiting the time when these overwhelming feelings can receive the love and healing they need.

Detecting undercurrents

The Feeling Body connects with others in an unspoken way. Many studies have shown that our ability to understand someone else's emotional experience depends much more on non-verbal communication than verbal communication. In fact, the vast majority of what we know about another person's emotional experience comes from tone of voice, body posture and gestures – all of which are the territory of the Feeling Body.

So while two smartly dressed business people may appear to be having a serious, unemotional, 'grown up' conversation during a meeting, at another level there are also two inner children having a conversation with each other, without the adults even knowing about it. Indeed, the outcome of the meeting may even be determined by this 'hidden' conversation, without either of the participants really understanding what has happened.

This simple example demonstrates the power of the Feeling Body archetype. This is the archetypal energy which drives many of our choices and decisions, without us necessarily being consciously aware of it.

Yielding

Our Feeling Body holds our capacity to trust and rely on others, and is able to receive without needing to give anything back in exchange. We can think of this as 'giving the gift of receiving' to those around us: when we are well cared for, we learn in the first few years of life that our very existence is a gift to those around us, and that looking after us, and giving to us, is a joy to our parents and carers. From this, we conclude that we are intrinsically valuable and lovable – and that we are not required to 'earn' our parent's love.

So when all goes well in this area we learn that we are loved and loveable, that it is safe to rely on those around us, and that we have a right to openly receive their love and care. If all doesn't go well in the first few years of our life, our Feeling Body archetype will not be able to fully develop in a healthy and trusting way.

The physical body

As the name suggests our physical body is integral to the Feeling Body archetype. Our emotions are experienced as sensations in our physical body, this is why they are called 'feelings'. Sensual and sexual pleasure are also

experienced in the body. Trauma responses from the past are held in our bodily tissues as 'body memories'.

Our physical bodies carry out many activities over which we have no conscious control: regulating our heart rate, digesting food, healing physical wounds, releasing hormones and so on. There is a whole world of life-giving activities which go on unseen inside our bodies and these are good examples of the often unconscious, non verbal, intangible yet essential nature of the Feeling Body archetype.

The bonding instinct

When we are born we are almost totally in our Feeling Body, and the other archetypes haven't yet developed in us. A child's first and most urgent need as a helpless baby is to bond with its mother. Their very survival depends on it. The Feeling Body archetype helps us to do this: it's programmed to try and connect with other people from the moment we appear in the world. The power of this drive is immense, yet it's not consciously felt by most people. Even so, it controls much of what we do and how we are in the world as adults. We are social animals, and when we don't have the opportunity to meet others and connect with them on a social level we may descend into mental disorder and lose touch with reality.

Connecting

The role of the Feeling Body is to help us connect. The openness, vulnerability and softness of the Feeling Body are intensely connecting qualities. However, the Feeling Body does not connect with others by 'helping' or 'supporting' or 'caring for' them. The Feeling Body connects by 'being with' them. This part of us connects through a deep listening and quality of attention, through emotional presence, and perhaps through physical touch or simple actions. The Feeling Body can connect in a way

where no words are necessary, and can connect when there is nothing helpful that could possibly be said. In the purest form, this archetype is not trying to make things better for someone, or trying to improve them, or to take away their pain. There is no agenda. There is no 'doing'. There is just presence and connection. This is the quality of connection that some of us feel when we are 'in love', which is why this archetype was historically known as the 'Lover' archetype.

Key emotion – Grief

Grief is the emotion that opens the door to this archetype. Feeling our grief – a natural response to loss of any kind – allows us to feel our vulnerability and makes us aware of our simple human need for connection. Grief can shake us to our core and may destroy any image we have of being 'independent' or 'strong'.

Grief puts us in touch with our overwhelming need for connection with others. It also puts us in touch with our inability to control the world and what happens in it, and the need to yield, and accept our vulnerability in life. Over time, when we grieve fully, we can come to terms with the losses we have experienced. This brings a new openness which allows us to move on and form new, healthy and joyful connections in our lives.

The element of water

We find that water is a good representation of the Feeling Body archetype. We associate water with the flow of life, often referred to as the 'river of life'. We also associate water with our bodies, which are made mostly of water, and with the tears we shed when we grieve.

In addition, the metaphor of water can also be applied to the undercurrents with which the Feeling Body connects, and to the unconscious nature of

many of our bodily interactions. In dream imagery, water is often said to represent the unconscious.

Wounding message

The messages which wound the Feeling Body are all about our ability to love or be loved. In essence, the wounding is anything which makes us believe that somehow we don't love in the 'right' way, or that we're not lovable.

If we pick up these messages early in life, from our parents or siblings, our friends or teachers, or indeed from anyone with whom we look to bond, they may stop us opening ourselves up to others for connection in a natural, trusting and unforced way. These messages take away our innocent trust in what we feel and how we want to connect. They replace our innocence with doubt, uncertainty and self-judgement.

Shadows

If we have been wounded with the idea that we aren't capable of loving properly, or that we're unlovable, then our Feeling Body archetype will be wounded and will show up in unconscious shadowy ways that we don't really understand.

Maybe we start trying really hard to show how loving we are and how well we can connect. We may become intensely emotional and demanding of attention – gazing intensely into people's eyes, touching them, or being very familiar in ways that cause them to feel uncomfortable.

We may live a life of drama, going from one emotional crisis to another. This somehow annoys other people, as they sense, quite rightly, that the emotion is not entirely genuine – rather it is an unconscious attempt to 'prove' how emotionally connected we are. However, we never really connect with the

deeper pain that is driving us – the belief that we can't love and aren't lovable.

The wounded Feeling Body can show up in the physical body through flashbacks, or post traumatic stress episodes – these are strong bodily responses unrelated to the present day. Out of balance Feeling Body energy can also reveal itself through the body in the form of illness, physical gestures, facial tics and other 'body language'.

Our overwhelming need for connection, underpinned by the belief that we may never get it, can drive us to look for connection in damaging or dangerous behaviours such as addictions to food, alcohol and drugs, or the use of sex or pornography. We can also become addicted to work, social media, fitness and many other activities which don't, on the surface, appear damaging. However, because these addictions and self-soothing behaviours simply cannot offer the true human connection we need, our deeper needs are never satisfied, and so we keep going back to these behaviours, needing more and more of the same 'fix'. This drive lies behind the compulsive nature of addiction.

On the other hand, on receiving these wounding messages, rather than displaying this compulsive need to connect, and the intense overreactions linked to the underlying need, we may 'deflate' in our Feeling Body archetype and collapse completely. We may come to believe that we will never be able to give and receive love, and we might decide to give up entirely on this aspect of our lives. We may become very stoical, dry, and unemotional. We may defend ourselves from further hurt by adopting a pretence, a façade, of neither needing nor looking for love. We may judge and look down on people who are strongly connected to their Feeling Body, and we might shame people who are emotional, sexual, or vulnerable, and find these aspects of human nature quite distasteful.

Speech patterns of the Feeling Body

Someone with a healthy connection to the Feeling Body side of themselves is very happy to openly share their emotions. They will say 'I'm so angry with you' or 'I'm so very, very sad', and their body language will be congruent with what they are saying: they will look angry, or they will look sad, when they say such things.

However, when we are wounded in our Feeling Body we might find it hard to say what we're feeling directly. We might say 'I rather wish you hadn't left me last night' instead of 'I felt angry when you left me last night'.

Alternatively we may attribute feeling where there is none. We may say 'I really feel she's the best person for the job' rather than 'In my opinion she's the best person for the job'.

Healing Messages for the Feeling Body

The messages that we need to hear in order to heal wounded Feeling Body energy are:

'You are loveable.'

'I enjoy connecting with you.'

'I enjoy loving you.'

'I enjoy being loved by you.'
