



**By Joe Byerly**

*This is the second question, in a five question interview with author [Robert Greene](#).*

**Joe: In Chapter 9 Confront Your Dark Side of [The Laws of Human Nature](#), you describe the darker aspects of our personalities. Do you think it's possible to gain self-awareness to understand and conquer these blind spots?**

Robert: That's the goal. It's not easy because we don't like to look at ourselves and sometimes these things are hidden. In the book, I make the point that we have a shadow or dark side and that it comes from our earliest years as children. We have a certain spirit, perhaps a mischievous one, and we learn to cover it up and to present the most polite

agreeable front to the world as possible. So the people around you that are all smiling and showing off what they what want people to see. They are hiding their dark side and you are doing the same thing.

You don't want people to know that you have a temper or that you're extremely sensitive to criticism, etc. So you've learned to compensate for that over the years. You've learned to project the very opposite of what your weakness is or what you're vulnerabilities are. And then comes a moment of tremendous stress or pressure and suddenly you don't have the self-control, that mask that you wear slips off, and the dark side of yourself comes out.

It's not easy to see, particularly because we've learned to disguise it even from ourselves. I provide you many ways of gauging it, particularly in reference to other people, but you can apply it to yourself.

Self-awareness is really what this book is all about. Basically, I want the reader to realize that you are a mystery to yourself. You walk around and you think you know who you are. This seems obvious to you. You spend the most time with yourself, locked inside your own thoughts. But really, there's so much about yourself that you do not understand.

There are things buried in your early childhood, wounds that you have from when you were four or five years old; things you didn't get from your parents will tend to contribute to this dark side. And these are things that are very hard to access in daily life. It takes effort and it takes a willingness to explore yourself.

In looking at myself and my dark side, I would have to say that I'm extremely aggressive. I like to present a front of being very charming and easy go lucky. But if I look at myself and see myself in action, I reveal through my actions that I'm a very aggressive and ambitious person. I've also found that I don't have a great deal of tolerance for people who don't have very high standards. I had to go through that discovery in writing the book. I had to reflect

on my own dark side.

What I did was go through and look at the patterns in my life. I looked at the moments where something leaked out that seemed unusual to my behavior and things happened that were out of character. But in truth, they were very much in character. I had to look at those moments when I got fired (which happened a few times) or I lost my temper.

These moments that stand out, where you think that was the exception and you lost control, are actually very much revealing your character and something from deep within. So these are ways you can look at yourself and gauge what your dark side is.

It's not a matter of repressing it and being an angel. Nobody in life is really an angel. I'm very suspicious of people who try to project this image of being a saint. I don't believe it. Because we are human, we have a dark side, and we all have flaws. It's not a matter of repressing it. It's a matter of knowing it and being aware so that you can control the shadow or dark side so that it doesn't control you. And you can perhaps channel it in productive ways. So, knowing that I have an aggressive nature, I have to learn to channel it into my work as opposed to harming other people.

Throughout the book, in each chapter, I make it clear that your tendency will be to think of other people as irrational. You think "He's irrational" or "She's a narcissist" or "He's grandiose." I want you to look and see that you have these very negative qualities that I'm writing about.

Because these dark qualities are embedded in human nature.

***Robert Greene is the author of The New York Times Best Sellers [48 Laws of Power](#), [the Art of Seduction](#), [The 33 Strategies for War](#), and [Mastery](#). He also coauthored [The 50th Law](#) with rapper 50 Cent.***

***In his latest book [The Laws of Human Nature](#) he examines people's drives and motivations. Drawing from ideas and examples of Pericles, Queen Elizabeth I, Martin Luther King Jr, and many others, Greene teaches us how to detach ourselves from our own emotions and master self-control.***

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