



## Eliot Spitzer, Your Dark Side and Being Calm

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I had a very disturbing experience several months ago and I am almost reluctant to talk about it because it was so disturbing. I am hesitant because I recognize that your natural response might be to assume I am a little aberrated for being in the situation in the first place; however, I am human and must admit that at times I do find myself in situations that are a bit odd. This was one of the stranger situations I have encountered, and it really threw me into a tailspin.

For several years a friend of mine, whom I respect very much, had been asking me to go on a weekend men's retreat run by a nonprofit group. He had partaken in the retreat in Washington, DC, and the group of people with whom he participated in the program comprised of politicians, important lobbyists, lawyers, and others. He had made some really solid contacts in the program, and had also gotten a lot out of the program itself.

It sounded very enticing to me, and as the years passed, I had thought many times I would finally attend. At one point I actually signed up, paid and everything, and planned to make the retreat, but I never made it. Something always seemed to come up, which prevented me from taking the retreat. Eventually, after hearing continually from my friend how much the seminar had altered his life, I finally committed to going—rain or shine. Now, I want to admit at the outset that I love this sort of stuff, and a weekend long self improvement retreat is right up my alley. I could just leave work a little early on a Friday and be back right at my desk on Monday morning. I am somewhat of a workaholic so any retreat that offers so much promise and potential for only a little time off is exactly the sort of thing I need. When I finally made up my mind I was really psyched and ready for a great weekend.

For the sake of the confidentiality of the program, and those participants involved, I can not share too many details. However, I will explain what happened to me that was so disturbing.

The program involved a ton of secret *man rituals*, which were so different you could not imagine them if you tried. A big part of the program involved getting in touch with our *dark sides*, and the other parts of ourselves that we suppress. On Saturday afternoon I was put into a circle with 7 or 8 other men who were in my *group*, and the leaders of the program went to work bringing out the dark side of each of us. Each of the men in the group were asked to walk to the middle of the circle and then the leaders of the program surrounded each one of them and berated them for several minutes, in order to bring out their dark sides. The idea was that each man would be subjected to various rituals and behaviors which involved screaming, crying, symbolic acts and so forth, in order to break through the pattern that characterizes their dark side.

I should add that I have a tremendous amount of appreciation for the men who were running the program. They are all volunteers and they are trying to help people. They are all really solid, grounded individuals. However, they do not have control over the people who enroll in the program for help. I could see there were clearly some very damaged people in my group, and it was nothing like the group my friend had been a part of.

One of my fellow group members had just gotten out of prison recently, having served time on counts of child molestation. He was the first man to step into the middle of the circle. As the leaders of the program surrounded him and started questioning him, he described some very disturbing sexual fantasies that he had apparently carried out on more than one occasion. They involved various horrible combinations of women, children, sex, and violence.

I was so shocked by the man's revelations that I considered leaving the program immediately. I also was wondering whether the police should get involved. I was disgusted and truly sickened by the entire ordeal. However, over the course of an hour or so, the men leading the program appeared to *cure* the sexual deviant. He ended up falling to his knees, crying and asking God for forgiveness. And finally he declared he was cured. It was very convincing to witness, and I felt a newfound respect for the program and what this ritual had just achieved before my eyes.

The men leading the program started questioning me, they determined that I worked too much and needed to get out more. This was my dark side. As they screamed at me they wrapped me in a blanket and taped it up—then they declared I needed to *break free*, so I did not spend so much time hiding behind a desk. I did break free and the experience, to be honest, was quite liberating. I was met with hugs from the leaders of the group when, after a 20 minute struggle, I managed to slip out of the blanket in a symbolic act of liberation from my desk.

The rest of the weekend went fairly well; however, things ended up stranger for me on Sunday afternoon, right before the program ended. All of the men were instructed to get naked and go into an Indian sweat lodge for an ancient sweat lodge ceremony. When we were all gathered in the sweat lodge (an Indian Teepee), the door flap was closed and it got completely dark. One of the leaders started to mumble symbolic things and was putting various herbs and so forth on the rocks. I was sitting there sweating in the dark when all of a sudden someone started rubbing my back. Since so many unusual things had happened over the course of the weekend, I assumed that this was part of the process and was enjoying the back rub. Then, about 5 minutes into the back rub, a voice I recognized as the child molester's whispered in my ear while his hand moved to my rump:

"Get on your hands and knees, it will be glorious."

I was absolutely shocked. I do not remember what I said to the man, probably something along the lines of "get away from me" or something like that. The second that sweat lodge opened I was out of there. The experience was terrifying in so many respects. This convicted felon obviously had a big dark side, and it was completely out of control.

One of the more unusual things that happened in 2008 was the resignation of the Governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer. Before becoming the Governor of New York, Spitzer was the New York State Attorney General. Throughout Spitzer's entire career he was an extremely visible fixture in fighting the mafia, price fixing, fraud, predatory lending, and excess executive compensation. For example, he sued Richard Grasso, the former chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, for his

deferred compensation package, which exceeded \$140 million.

In all respects, Spitzer appeared as a politician who was on the side of good, fighting against evil. He was one of the most famous and well known "law fighters" in the United States, and for good reason. However, on March 10, 2008, the *New York Times* reported that Spitzer was a client of a prostitution ring called Emperor's Club VIP, and he reportedly spent two hours meeting with a thousand-dollars-an-hour prostitute named Ashley Alexandra Dupré. It was subsequently discovered that Spitzer had met at least seven or eight women from the agency over the past six months, paying out more than \$15,000. Some reports stated that Spitzer had paid up to \$80,000 for prostitutes over several years starting back when he was Attorney General, and carrying through to his position as Governor of New York. Spitzer first drew the higher government's attention due to suspicious money transfers, which led federal investigators to believe he may have been hiding bribe proceeds. The resulting investigation of the governor led to the discovery of the prostitution ring.

Two days after the *New York Times* reported his involvement with prostitution, Spitzer resigned as Governor of New York amidst threats of impeachment. In resigning, Spitzer issued the following statement:

"I cannot allow for my private failings to disrupt the people's work. Over the course of my public life, I have insisted, I believe correctly, that people take responsibility for their conduct. I can and will ask no less of myself. For this reason, I am resigning from the office of governor."

The Spitzer scandal demonstrates a basic situation that is not uncommon: Someone tries to deny a part of himself that eventually ends up coming out. If there are parts of yourself that you are denying and trying to suppress, they are going to come out in some fashion, at some time. It can be a supreme challenge to face and accept who you are, and to allow all the parts of your innermost self to be revealed, even those that hide down in the deep.

One of the most important things you will ever do is get in touch with your own dark side. The better you control and understand how your dark side limits and controls you, the better you will do in life and in your career. Your dark side may not be related to sexual deviance whatsoever -- nor workaholicism: It is something different for every individual. But we all have dark sides.

Every personality trait and each facet of your being serves you to some extent, and it is important that you allow these personalities to serve you as much as you can. The most important thing is for you to love yourself and not feel the constant need to suppress various parts of yourself. If you understand and accept your dark side you will be more likely to control and influence it, rather than having your dark side control and influence you.

One of the worst things we can experience in the world is the kind of constant misery that comes from worrying about what others think about us, or what we think about ourselves. These worries can drain us of our energy entirely, consuming our whole focus. Self consciousness makes friendship and life, in general, a lot more difficult.

Most of us feel that everything about us is consistently being judged and interpreted. For example, we worry about whether people think we are intelligent or unintelligent, good or bad, right or wrong. The human mind is constantly evaluating. We all make judgments all the time, each and every day. Therefore, for good reason, we feel like we are being judged and evaluated all the time. Focusing on this, however, can make us feel awkward and uncomfortable in even the most common daily situations.

It is important that we learn to be comfortable with our thoughts and who we are, for we are calm when we are at ease with ourselves. Most of us feel for the most part ill at ease. The resistance to accepting and knowing the way we truly are is what causes this suffering. There is nothing wrong with experiencing your dark side. *The moment you internally label your dark side as being "bad" and therefore unworthy of your attention and respect, you deprive yourself of an important life experience--that of being and knowing your true self.*

In knowing and experiencing your true self, you can achieve a state of calm known as inner peace. And if you can achieve inner peace, you can pursue more vigorously all the goals of your life.

## **THE LESSON**

When you try to mask or suppress aspects of your personality, those traits will inevitably come to the fore anyway. You need to develop a comprehensive understanding of yourself, including your darker or deeply buried traits; once you know how your dark side limits and controls you, the better you will do in your life and career. Self-discovery will ultimately lead to inner peace, which in turn will enable you to more fully develop your goals.

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