

Aphrodite and Friends and Me

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When I was ten years old, my grandmother and caretaker took her life in my childhood home. I am now sixty-six years old, five years older than she was when she died. I realize what a pivotal experience that was for me.

For years, I've been studying the reason people take their lives. I learned a lot by reading her retrospective journal and while writing my book, *Regina's Closet: Finding My Grandmother's Secret Journal*. I've also been thinking about the role of women for the past 100 years. My mother told me that my grandmother took her life because she was depressed and didn't feel she had anything to live for, as I became more independent. She had no personal passion. Thankfully, I feel different, as my children and grandchildren need me in another way and my writing is thriving. Times were also different for my grandmother, who was orphaned during World War I. There were fewer opportunities then.

Recently, I've reread Jean Shinoda Bolen's book, *Goddesses in Everywoman* which reminded me of the power of women to initiate change and transformation. After all, my name, Diana is after the Roman Goddess of the Hunt, which resonates with the way I lead my life, as a seeker and a hunter. I've also always experienced a theme of loss of love, which Bolen says is a common theme in many heroine myths.

She explains that most women define themselves by their relationships rather than their accomplishments. Women's identities are very closely tied to their relationships, so when a loved one dies, we suffer twice—loss of the relationship and a loss of an identity.

According to Bolen, we may be different goddesses during different times in our lives. The goddess archetypes are deep desires that vary from woman to woman, providing autonomy, creativity, power, intellectual change, spirituality, sexuality and/or relationships. She identifies seven complex archetypes within each woman which can be called upon at various times during our lives. These can be used to describe certain personality patterns or characteristics.

On a more personal level, I can say that I am a creative and sensual person, the goddess I most identify with is Aphrodite, which is characterized by heightened energy, stimulating thoughts and feelings. At other times in my life, such as after graduating university, I felt like the goddess Athena, focusing on career enhancement. After marriage, I became Hera, who puts marriage first.

While we might be different goddesses during different stages in our lives, there's usually one goddess that is the most prominent. Understanding this provides a container for our sentiments. It's okay to be who we want to be when we need to be. Currently, I'm in the wise woman stage.

According to Carol Pearson in her book *Awakening the Heroes Within*, archetypes or inner guides, help us on our journey. Whichever archetype is prominent at a given time brings with it a task, a lesson and a gift. Overall, they teach us how to live and behave. It's powerful knowing and believing in our archetypes as we navigate this life journey. One thing I can say for sure is unlike my grandmother, I am not ready for my life to end yet. I have so many more stories to share with the universe.

References

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