

## Attributes of a Powerful Person

I think of power as happening in four ways: Somatic power (in our bodies), Intrapersonal power (in our relationships to ourselves), Interpersonal Power (in our relationships with others and the world around us) and Spiritual/Existential Power (in our capacity to make meaning in life). This is not a prescription; it is an evolving list of ways in which people empower themselves in the world.

### Somatic Power

The powerful person is in contact with her/his body; the body is experienced as a safe enough place; accepted as it is rather than forced to be larger or smaller than it would be if adequately nourished. If its size or shape creates a lack of safety for a person, change of size or shape happens in the service of safety. There is connection with bodily desires for food, sexual pleasure, and rest; no intentional harm is done to one's own body or that of others. Does not require the ability to see, hear, walk, or talk, nor is a powerful body necessarily free of pain or illness, nor strong or physically fit. Body modifications reflect moves toward power and congruence, and personal construction of self. There is compassion for one's body.

### Intrapersonal Power

The powerful person knows what she or he thinks; thinks critically, can change her or his mind; flexible, not suggestible, yet open to input. Trusts intuition, and also is able to find external data for validation of intuition; knows feelings as they are felt. Feelings are a useful source of information about the here and now. There is an absence of numbness, and the presence of aliveness. There is the ability to experience powerful emotions, to contain affect so as to feel it and function, to be able to self-

soothe in ways that are not harmful to self or others physically, psychosocially, or spiritually

### Interpersonal Power

A powerful person is more interpersonally effective than not, can have desired impacts on others more of the time than not; no illusions of control; forgives self and others, and is appropriately self-protective; differentiated, yet flexible. capable of forming relationships that work more of the time than not with other individuals, groups, and larger systems; able to create and sustain intimacy, to be close without loss of self or engulfment of other, and to be differentiated without being distant or detached; able to decide to end relationships when those become dangerous, toxic, or excessively problematic; able to remain and work out conflict when that's a possibility; enter roles in life—parent, partner, worker—most often from a place of choice, intention, and desire, not accidentally, although they welcome serendipity and the opportunity to encounter the new

### Spiritual/Existential Power

The powerful person has systems of meaning-making that assist with responding to the existential challenges of life, and that have the potential to give sense of comfort and well-being; sense of own heritage and culture integrated into identity in ways that allow for better understanding of self; is aware of the social context and can engage with it rather than being controlled by it or unaware of its impact; has a *raison d'être*, and is able to integrate that into important aspects of their daily lives; access to capacities for creativity, fantasy, play and joy; has a sense of reality that is alive, not fixed and concrete

