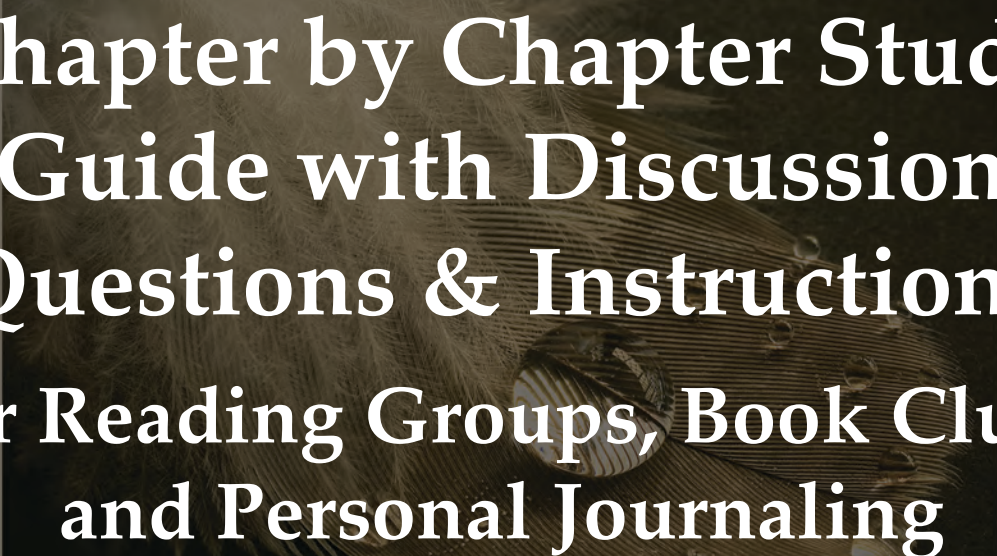


INTO THE HEART OF THE FEMININE



Chapter by Chapter Study
Guide with Discussion
Questions & Instructions
For Reading Groups, Book Clubs,
and Personal Journaling

An Archetypal Journey to Renew
Strength, Love, and Creativity

Massimilla Harris, Ph.D. and Bud Harris, Ph.D.

Into the Heart of the Feminine Chapter by Chapter Study Guide

***With Discussion Questions & Instructions
For Reading Groups, Book Clubs,
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By Massimilla Harris, Ph.D. and Bud Harris, Ph.D.
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Greetings!

We are glad to welcome you and your group members into the adventure of restoring and revitalizing the eternal feminine into our lives and culture. We believe that as you journey through this book and your discussions, you will discover how you can heal the feelings of loneliness, loss, and rejections that live below the surface in our world today.

This opportunity offers you the possibility of discovering how to renew the deep strength of the feminine within you - a strength that fosters the confidence, connectedness, and joy that so many of us long for. We also hope you find that this journey empowers your ability to transform grief and anger into passion and creativity. As your readings and discussions progress, we hope you come to recognize how the courage to journey into your own soul brings you the true experience of your own voice and the strength to change your fate.

One of the best ways to learn about things that can deepen and transform our lives is to invite others to join us in the search. This discussion group is such an invitation for you. As a participant, let yourself be receptive...receptive to what is going on within you...receptive to your thoughts, feelings, words, and stories that come to mind... and personal images that may come up with each topic. With this attitude of receptivity – which is a key quality of the inner feminine to cultivate - we encourage you to read this book slowly, chapter by chapter, and let it flow into you.

As you journey together with the readings and the discussions, it is particularly important to be receptive and listen carefully to everyone in your discussion group. In terms of “process”, some groups use a talking stick to signify who has the floor in the discussion. [Note: A talking stick or other special object gets passed around in a meeting to each person who wants to speak. Only the person holding the talking stick is the one who speaks at that time, while everyone else is respectfully quiet and listens carefully to what is being shared.

This allows each person present at a meeting to be heard, especially those who may be particularly shy.] Some other groups may choose to just use a timer and set it for a few minutes for each person to speak, and other groups may simply let everyone take as long as they need. See what works best for you and your group.

In this Study Guide, we give a quotation from each chapter for you to reflect upon and discuss with the group. You might consider reviewing the quotation first, ahead of reading that particular chapter, and then come back to your initial thoughts and feelings about it, after you have read the chapter. Or you may find another passage from that chapter that speaks to you more, and then choose to share and discuss that one with the group, instead.

With each quotation, we also give you questions to think about and explore with each other. Of course, these quotations and questions are primarily to get you started. We hope that you will go further and create your own questions and discussions.

Every chapter is a quietly powerful, life-changing experience. Your reading and then discussion of each chapter offer the opportunity for clarity, hope, and a new relationship to yourself and your life. You may find that on some days, the book and your discussions will challenge you. On other days, they may help you experience the flow of love and creativity that supports life. There also may be days when your life is turbulent and the book and your discussion group may become an anchor, helping you hold fast against the winds of life.

When we each awaken to the call of the feminine soul within us, we learn to treat ourselves and our lives as sacred. If we don't know how to treat ourselves as sacred, we cannot genuinely treat anyone else as sacred either. Reading and discussing this book encourages you to realize how sacred you are, how sacred your life is, and to explore how you can experience the world that way.

We have done all we can to help present this path to you. Hopefully, this book conveys to you a sense of the spirit of the miraculous that you can learn to experience by this exploration. We invite you to join in and find out what it means to journey "Into the Heart of the Feminine" and how to rekindle the ability to live from the heart of life.

We appreciate your desire to be a seeker and we give you our warmest best wishes for your journey and your willingness to share it with fellow travelers.

- Massimilla and Bud Harris

Introduction - *Into the Heart of the Feminine*

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

Many of my female analysands painfully confess that they no longer have an idea of what it is to be feminine. Over twenty-five years ago, the Jungian analyst June Singer, in an article titled “The Sadness of the Successful Woman,” said that she believed that such women are suffering from a particular form of depression: They are mourning for their lost femininity. She also considered this an archetypal problem because it affects all of us—women, men, and children. Singer points out that our patriarchal society places its highest value on the archetype of personal identity. The emphasis on fame in our culture epitomizes this idea. From preschool, to sports, to jobs, to careers, to where and how we live, identity in our culture is based on personal achievements. The terror that goes hand-in-hand with our idolatry of identity grips us when we do not achieve what we want to, plan to, or should accomplish. We must then face the shame of failure, of not being good enough, or of not being who we thought we were. No wonder losing a job, getting divorced, becoming seriously ill, or—even on a smaller scale—having our kid’s team lose a game can fill us (or our kids) with shame. Shame haunts the identity-oriented person. (p. xiii)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

How do you feel about the “lost femininity” that Singer talks about and how this actually “affects all of us - women, men, and children?”

How were you taught to deal with your emotions?

How would you describe feeling a sense of shame or guilt or failure?

How does pursuit of “success” and “social identity” get in the way of our authentic, personal relationship values?

Chapter 1.

Facing the Death Mother: Remembrance of Things Lost

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

When we first come into the world, we are small, fragile, and defenseless. We are totally dependent on the love and care of our parents, especially our mothers. In our modern society, we have learned very well how to take care of the physical, biological, and even the developmental needs of our babies, even though parents at various socio-economic levels still face vastly different challenges as they meet their infants' needs. But we have let a vital need, the one whose fulfillment will determine our ability to have a feeling of self-worth and security, slip through the cracks of modern life. If our emotional needs are not met at the right time, we will face a daunting task later in life as we try to heal the structural wounds of our personalities. Like a plant that doesn't get enough water or sun early on, we will have trouble growing to our full height, no matter how much fertilizer we get later. Fortunately, unlike plants, we can direct our consciousness and self-awareness toward healing, which can give us new foundations for fulfilling our lives. (p. 4)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Are you surprised to how much our earliest life affects us today?

Does it make sense to you that our own attitudes towards ourselves began with our mother's attitudes?

Were you surprised to see how many of the attributes (p. 15) of the Death Mother are common in your life and surroundings?

Chapter 2.

Where Love Begins

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

Learning how we are really wounded, how our childhood was lacking, and how we need to be healed and grow is crucially important to living a fulfilled life. If we aren't able to determine and face the truth of how we were formed, then in our radical achievement- and identity-oriented society we will constantly blame ourselves for what we consider to be our failures and inadequacies. Let me make it clear that blaming ourselves is not taking responsibility for ourselves. On the other hand, seeking the truth about ourselves and how we became who we are is taking responsibility for ourselves. Blaming ourselves usually means that we are on a constant search to find new ways to discipline ourselves and new programs to improve ourselves. When these efforts flounder, we risk creating a growing pool of deep inner shame, as we never seem to be able to come to who or what we want or are striving to be. If we consider the analogy of a house, we can see that remodeling or adding on to a structure is never really satisfying when there are preexisting problems in the foundation or the design of the structure. (p.20-21)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Does it give you hope to hear we can work on and refine the dark emotions we have kept locked away in our hearts?

Can you name some time when you have blamed yourself for not being loved, for early failures, and for missed opportunities?

Share ways you have experienced “the Self” – the center of your soul that is the seat of our inborn urge to heal and grow.

Chapter 3. Turning Points

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

As we are touched by the feminine and are able to step outside of our traps of rationality, efficiency, and “things that have to be done,” we become more open to our innate wisdom. An awareness of our innate wisdom helps us understand the language of love, the mystical, art and poetry—the language of symbolism, metaphor, meaning, eternity, and, most of all, the real language of stories. (p. 36)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Where have you put your sense of your own story?

Can you find it exciting to seek out your story, including its darker parts?

Do you see how denying the truth of our stories, even if they are painful, endangers our possibilities for a rich, satisfying life?

Chapter 4.

From Paralysis to full Vitality/The Myth of Medusa

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

The myth of Medusa is an extraordinary mythic story from our collective past. What it can tell us today is as sacred as any religious parable. This myth is a symbolic story of how the patriarchy has abused and banished the feminine, how it can be redeemed, and the tremendous healing and instinctual power that can be freed in this process. As you will see, the bridge enabling us to make this great story relevant to our own healing, growth, and freedom is the Jungian perspective. The Jungian point of view is that our most troublesome complexes, which result from the wounds that shaped us, also hold a promise. Jung considered complexes to be the “royal road” to our unconscious and the architect of symptoms, dreams, and a transformed life. A myth like this one will show us what has been wounded, how the wound occurred, and the suffering such a wound inflicts. And we will then see what must be healed within ourselves by dying and being transformed and, finally, what new potentials we must live. (p. 55)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Do you see how the Death Mother supports our inner and outer patriarchal systems?

How have you ever experienced bottling up your emotions?

Can you feel the power of this ancient myth of Medusa and its potential for transforming life?

Chapter 5.

Power, Reality, the Feminine, and Projections

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

We have all experienced the destructive effects of the projections onto the feminine in Western societies. These projections trace their origins to the joining of the patriarchy with institutionalized monotheism. The patriarchy grew out of the middle ages into the Age of Reason, and this movement birthed a cultural mentality that became rational, verbal, and literal. This new mindset rejected the mythological and symbolic values in our religious writings, which had nurtured and guided people's lives for centuries. Today, because we have lost these values and are allowing information to replace knowledge, we no longer realize that symbols and images carry a deeper reality than words. Part of our devaluation of the feminine results from our loss of the art of thinking symbolically. To lose this art is to lose the kind of grounding that enables us to experience the beautiful depths of love and the Divine presence that is potentially within our capacities. (p. 73)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Can you think of ways that you have denied the feminine in yourself?

Can you see how our society's denial of the feminine causes us to ignore our longings for love and for meaning until they erupt in negative ways?

What do you think about our culture's fear of the transformative power of the feminine?

Chapter 6.

The Reality of Medusa's Myth

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

Every myth represents a treasure-house of wisdom regarding the world and our personality. On the other hand, the way to these treasures is difficult and tangled. All too often when it seems like the mythic map is clear, we suddenly discover that there is a whole new level of the myth before us. Myths are meant to take us beyond ourselves, beyond the ways we have looked at life and particularly at our difficulties and struggles. For example in *The Odyssey*, we find two levels in the story. The first is the quest of Telemachus to find his father. The second is the quest of Odysseus to return home to his wife. In mythic terms, Telemachus is searching for his own inner authority and Odysseus is trying to return home through a journey haunted by his encounters with feminine figures. Both quests come together as Odysseus completes the symbolic masculine search for the inner feminine. Myths are about the realization of different aspects of our wholeness, and they are not about gender roles. They reflect how the archetypal patterns of the masculine and feminine live and intertwine in all of us. And they describe what happens when such patterns become one-sided: Nature sets the stage to redirect them through journeys of transformation. (p. 85-86)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Do you feel like you had the opportunity to fully live your youthful years?

How much negative energy did you feel that you "internalized" from your parents?

How do the questions on page 93 help you understand your life and look forward to a renewed future?

Chapter 7.

Women Turned to Stone: Confronting Fear

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

I have worked with woman after woman who was intelligent, capable, even professionally trained, and yet was still paralyzed when it came to pursuing her life with a sense of authenticity and security, grounded in her own ability. I am even more saddened to see how our ability to love and be loved and to be whole people in relationships has been frozen by the Death Mother's influence in our families and in our society. Not only have I seen this in the people I work with, but I have experienced it myself. I have questioned my own ability to believe in myself, in my potentials, and in my own success, not for years, but for decades. And I have wondered if I would ever really know what love is and if I would ever really experience it.

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Have you ever experienced becoming "paralyzed in normalcy"?

How do understand our statement that "...the Death Mother gives us a frightening picture of the outside world, but she also gives a terrifying countenance to our own inner world"?

Does it make sense to you that the "writhing snakes of rage" are the first emotions we need to face, and then once they are faced and transformed, they become the source of our strength and life?

Chapter 8.

Men Turned to Stone: Confronting Shame

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

“Where love reigns, there is no will to power; and where the will to power is paramount, love is lacking.” (Jung)
Where the Death Mother lives, “love is lacking,” and in fact, an understanding of love is rarely even present. Yet “love is lacking” describes the denied conditions of our collective world. The presence of this force in our lives robs us of the great feminine values we need to live, both within and outside of ourselves. The Death Mother crushes the ability to love, nurture, and affirm ourselves and new life; the ability to foster transformation of ourselves, life, and culture by being emotionally engaged in life and devoted to it; and the ability to make Eros, the feminine principle of love and relatedness, a central value we live by. These are the potentials for healing and a renewed future that make undertaking our journey, as Perseus did, worthwhile. p. 120

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Have you seen how the Death Mother can bring imbalance to fathers and rob them of love and compassion?

Have you ever experienced men whose fear of emotions have turned them to stone?

Do you see what a great opportunity we have in healing and growing ourselves to free and inspire future generations?

Chapter 9.

Mirroring the Death Mother Up Close

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

Women, over the centuries, have been unfairly victimized, misused, belittled, and considered to be inferior human beings. This blaming and belittling of women, and also of the feminine principle, still goes on in this century and in some countries is a common way of dealing with women. Unfortunately, this is our modern form of the plague.

In a similar way, men scapegoat their own feeling selves and, all too often, make fun of other men who express feelings, thus scapegoating the feminine inside and outside of themselves. In fact, men are scapegoated by their own moods as well. Their negative and often critical anima, their inner Medusa, makes them feel that they are inadequate and that their ideas and accomplishments are insignificant. Men have to discover their own inner path for Perseus, in order to take control of their moods. (p. 131)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Have you come to realize that the first act of self-love is actually the journey into knowing yourself?

What do you think of the seven effects of the Death Mother, as outlined in the book, beginning on p. 127?

How do you answer the questions we ask on p. 134?

Chapter 10.

A Map for the Journey

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

Every life, if it is going to be fulfilled, is a journey. It is a journey from one state of being to another. It is a journey through the death of an old way of life into a new one. It is a journey that parallels a woman's giving birth—we must go with the pain, for to resist it, increases the tearing and hinders the birth. This kind of journey, which is no stranger to suffering, becomes one of transformation, healing, growth, and the realization of a life that is beyond what we could have imagined or planned.

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Do you see why the desire to simply put painful and unpleasant experiences behind us and move on with our lives is actually a wish that would leave us shallow and disconnected from ourselves...and alienated from the human family?

Have you explored a denial that you need to recognize and come to grips with - and the reality that you need to accept, behind what has been denied?

How do you feel about our suggestions that you must build your inner strength and that "we must be determined to live, to say yes to life"?

Chapter 11. Finding Our Voice

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

One of our greatest longings is to have our own voice, one that speaks of our greatest values with strength, clarity, compassion, and understanding. I want a voice like that and more. I want a voice that can also speak with authority, tenderness, love, joy, sorrow, anger, respect, and humor. I want a voice of my own that expresses the fullness of who I am. And I believe, my husband believes, and the people I have worked with believe that gaining this voice is worth every step in the struggle. (p. 162)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

How far back in your life does your “longing to be heard” go?

Was there a time, when out of frustration, you even stopped listening to yourself...to your own longing?

Can you believe that having your own voice is worth the journey and the struggle?

Chapter 12.

Changing Our Fate

Quotation for reflection and discussion:

As we wander on these journeys, we find that just like in the stories, we often begin in shadowy places, dark forests of the heart or lonely castles that reflect some of the gloomiest wounded and denied places within the kingdom of ourselves. Along the way, we will meet monsters, strange animals (even talking ones), and extraordinary people like dwarfs, witches, beggars, old hags, and even the devil. Some of these figures are helpful; others try to hinder us or even destroy us. But if we want to follow the maps laid out by these stories and to be transported by the stories, we must remember to embrace the world of metaphor because, in reality, the story is within us. The dangers are within ourselves, in our situation and in our unconscious. The helpful figures are parts of our unconscious as well. Psychologically, as you have probably imagined by now, to be in a spell, cursed, or enchanted is to be in the grips of a major complex in our personality. The helpful figures and the guiding plot of the story come from what we Jungians call the Self. For us, the Self represents both the center of who we are and the totality of who we are. We may also think of the Self as an integration point, the ground of our being, where the mind, body, soul, and spirit come together. Our perceptions, feelings, personal history, cultural history, and collective history join in the Self. And the Self carries the unique pattern for who we are to become psychologically, creatively, and emotionally, just as it contains the patterns of our physical growth through our DNA. These patterns come to us through our DNA in the same way our instinctual urge to grow into them does. (p. 164)

Questions for Journaling and Group Discussion:

Do you see how your journey into facing your real emotions and true reality can free you to face a new destiny?

Can you value yourself enough to be devoted to this journey that you have begun?

What do you feel about our statement: "To change our fate, we must learn to recognize it, to honor it, and to give it bread, nourishment, and body"?

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Thanks so much for participating in this Adventure with our book ***Into the Heart of the Feminine*** and our complementary study guide ***Into the Heart of the Feminine Chapter by Chapter Study Guide***. We invite you to write directly to us to let us know what you found valuable about the book.
info@budharris.com

The world needs the Feminine! Let your healing journey ripple outward to reach others:

- Tell a friend about this book
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Again, thanks and best wishes on your journey,

Massimilla and Bud Harris



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