

# Wolf Work

Aligning with the Voice of the Essential Self



By Dr. Steve Wolf  
with Jackie Parker

## Chapter One: What is WolfWork?

If you're tired of your old patterns. If you're stuck repeating the same self-sabotaging behaviors, even with years of therapy, or with years of meditation. If you simply want to be a better person, or you're sick of your life—you don't care anymore, tired of the internal dialogues that haunt you, the emotions that leave you feeling anxious and stressed, tired of telling yourself you're a loser, a fake, that you'll never be happy or lucky. Tired of overeating, overworking, over shopping. If you know you're not living fully, not being the person you want to be, the first thing I want you to know is like everyone else alive, you've been living through a pattern that formed before you were five. Recreating your life out of this childhood pattern is what has made you feel trapped, like you are the pattern and can never change.

There's another dimension of yourself that you may not even recognize. It's your deeper self that holds the key to another kind of life, one where calm and clarity are your natural states of being. Where you're free to explore, able to speak your truth, act in your best, highest interest and make choices that represent your authentic self. It's called the essential self. This is the dimension that will lead you to a more conscious, joyful way of living. You can learn to align with it, to hear its voice within you. It's not far away. This is how to connect to something positive in yourself. It's a dimension of you that was here before you were born and will be there after you die. And when you align with it you will get to experience many moments when you say Yes! This was my best self. I just did something that arose out of my best self. Not your fear or your defenses, but out of the best of you. In your relationships, in your work, in all the ways you live in the world.

And out of this you will experience joy. Joy is also a part of you. It is also waiting to express itself through you, even in times of crisis and difficulty. There's a lot to discover in yourself that will lead you to a new way of being that is far from the place you find yourself now. It begins with turning inward.

WolfWork is designed to help you discover this more joyful, fulfilling way to live. It's a new version of what therapy has become, integrating aspects of psychotherapy, so you become more self-aware, with daily practices that align you with the essential self so you connect with the spiritual part of your nature, your inner self. This is the key to changing old self-sabotaging patterns. It's how WolfWork is different from other forms of therapy.

Therapy alone can't bring about the consciousness needed to change those self-sabotaging behaviors because the psychological part of your nature is only one dimension of what you are. You have an essential spiritual nature that helps you to evolve and gives you the capacity to function at a higher level

of awareness where you can witness your emotions rather than being seduced by them. That's what WolfWork is designed to help you to do.

If this seems like something that is way out of reach, I can only tell you that after forty years of working with people of all ages and all walks of life, most of whom arrived at my office with issues that seemed impossible to resolve, this method has had the most consistent positive results. And the results are lasting. It's a way of being I use in my life to this day that's brought more love and creativity than I could imagine, for myself, my family, and the same is true of my clients.

Early in my career, while I was working on my Ph.D in psychology, struggling with anxiety and depression, falling into addictive patterns and hurting badly from the breakup of my young marriage--generally miserable despite years of therapy--I put myself on the spiritual path. I experimented with mescaline and read about Buddhism, mysticism, Kabbalah and, by chance, enrolled in a weekend workshop in New York City, where I'd just gotten a job running the first therapeutic drug program for inmates at Rikers Island, the infamous prison. The workshop was run by a group I'd never heard of called Arica and the goal was spiritual awareness, conscious development and higher understanding. I got to experience everything I'd been reading about including deep-breathing meditation and slow movement body exercises. At the end of the weekend I felt calm and centered, better than I'd ever remembered feeling in my life. With all my years of therapy I had never felt so good. I offered the Arica leaders a job at Rikers working with the inmates. For three months they led a course in the prison in basic breathing meditation and slow-movement exercise. I did the program alongside them. After only a few weeks the atmosphere on the cell blocks shifted. There was less tension, fewer fights. The inmates were able to communicate better with the prison therapists and I was better able to communicate with mine.

Seeing how these deeply troubled men responded to the exercises and experiencing the changes in myself led me deeper down the spiritual path. I took the road not taken, which my parents and teachers and half my friends warned me not to take, gave up my job and my studies, and immersed myself in the Arica teachings. Ten years later, when I returned I was a changed man, fully anchored in my essential self, knowing that for therapy to be successful both dimensions of human nature needed to be addressed, the psychological and the spiritual. But now I had tools. At long last I felt prepared to be a therapist. And when, at the age of forty, I finally completed my PhD and opened my therapy practice it was grounded in all I had learned: the spiritual teachings and the in-depth study of psychology. I married, had a child, and as my life flourished so did my clients'.

The practices you'll learn in this book are the ones I've used and refined over forty years, distilled from many years of spiritual study and a developmentally-centered, not problem-centered approach to change and growth. One of my clients named it WolfWork because it was so different from all the other therapies he'd tried. They bring results, but there's a catch. You have to do the work.

Are you ready for a challenge? I invite you to join me and discover your capacity for calm, clarity, and joy--an exciting process that will transform your relationship to yourself and your capacity to live in the world.

### **Exercise: Developing Your Connection to the Essential Self**

~Write about a moment in which you heard the voice of your inner self and followed its guidance. What were the consequences of listening to that voice?

~Recall a time you heard the voice of your inner self and didn't follow its guidance. What were the consequences of dismissing it? If you're moved to do so journal about this.

~Dialogue with someone you trust about an experience you had when you heard the voice of your inner self. Have they had a similar experience?

Turning inward for guidance is an important step in developing as an adult And it's the first step in aligning with the essential self.