

7 Signs That Herald The Dark Night Of The Soul

September 10th, 2018, By [Mateo Sol](#), Guest writer for [Wake Up World](#)

<https://wakeup-world.com/2018/09/10/7-signs-that-herald-the-dark-night-of-the-soul/>

(The Dark night of the soul is a VERY individuated experience. This author is attempting to intellectualize a deep personal experience so that only one sentence of this ‘explanation’ rings true for me: “Those that have experienced, or are currently experiencing a Dark Night of the Soul will know that something very fundamental at a core level is out of focus or completely lacking in their lives.” For me, it was as if my connection with God, which I had previously been totally unaware of, was suddenly withdrawn. ~ Don Chapin)

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest Souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.” – Khalil Gibran

Although we are all born with Souls, not all of us know how to fully embody them and integrate them into our human experience. The truth is that in our modern world, we live Ego-centrally rather than Soul-centrally

Mystics, saints, and shamans throughout history have referred to our struggle as humans in different ways – but they all pointed to the need for us to consciously grow into our divine potential. One of these people was [Saint John of the Cross](#), a Spanish monk who coined the term “[Dark Night of the Soul](#)” (“[Noche Oscura](#)”, the name of one of his poems) based on his own mystical experience.

These days, the concept of the Dark Night of the Soul has come to be used in a much broader way. What was once a term reserved for people actively going through a Spiritual Journey, now has come to easily label anything ranging from a few bad days and a period of depression, to the death of a loved one.

But what really is the Dark Night of the Soul?

Are You Going Through a Dark Night or Depression?

“I am a forest, and a night of dark trees: but he who is not afraid of my darkness, will find banks full of roses under my cypresses.” – Friedrich Nietzsche, [Thus Spoke Zarathustra](#)

Even back in the 16th century, Saint John of the Cross himself was at great pains to distinguish the Dark Night from mere melancholia (depression).

After all, the symptoms of the Dark Night of the Soul are not that different from depression. But while depression is considered psychological/neurological/biological, the Dark Night heralds a deeply occurring change within known as *spiritual transformation*.

Here are 7 “omens” that together signify you might be going through a Dark Night of the Soul:

1. You feel a deep sense of sadness, which often verges on despair (this sadness is often triggered by the state of your life, humanity, and/or the world as a whole)
2. You feel an acute sense of unworthiness
3. You have the constant feeling of being lost or “condemned” to a life of suffering or emptiness
4. You possess a painful feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness
5. Your will and self-control is weakened, making it difficult for you to act
6. You lack interest and find no joy in things that once excited you
7. You crave for the loss of something intangible; a longing for a distant place or to “return home” again

The ultimate difference between depression and the Dark Night of the Soul is that depression is usually self-centric, whereas the Dark Night is philosophical in nature and is accompanied by existential reflections such as “*Why am I here?*” and “*What is my purpose?*”

Also, when depression ends, not much changes in your life in terms of your beliefs, values, and habits. However, when the Dark Night of the Soul ends, everything in your life is transformed, and life becomes wondrous again.

The Necessity for Suffering

“My desire to live is as intense as ever, and though my heart is broken, hearts are made to be broken: that is why God sends sorrow into the world ... To me, suffering seems now a sacramental thing, that makes those whom it touches holy ... any materialism in life coarsens the soul.” – Oscar Wilde, [Letters](#)

Polish psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski coined a term [positive disintegration](#) which views tension and anxiety as necessary in the process of spiritual and psychological maturing. In other words, it is the friction within us that causes the mirror of our Souls to be polished enough for us to glimpse our True Nature.

I often hear people speak of the Dark Night as some kind problem they have to “fix,” or something they “went through a long time ago, that is now over, thank God.” But what these people thought was a Dark Night may have just been a glimpse of the darkness within them, especially when they speak egotistically about it as if it were a badge of honor.

A true [Dark Night of the Soul](#) leaves a long-lasting impact on you – it changes you completely. When you exit a Dark Night, you will discover that something is always taken away from you (for the better), such as your beliefs, your perceptions, your former meaning in life, or even in rare cases, your ego. The metaphysician Ananda Coomaraswamy put it this way:

“No creature can attain a higher grade of nature without ceasing to exist.”

Have you ever seen a butterfly begin to emerge from its cocoon? It must struggle in order to strengthen its wings. If someone frees the butterfly from its cocoon prematurely, it won't be able to fly because its crucial tempering stage will not have occurred. The same is true for trees. Trees need wind in order to build their structural strength to stay upright. *Your Dark Night of the Soul is your wind, your cocoon; it is the struggle of shedding the Ego Self in order to embody the Soul Self.* If you try to avoid the hard work of, as Ananda put it, “ceasing to exist,” or breaking down your old confining structures, you won't have what it takes to truly embody your essential nature.

The Spiritual Awakening Process

As humans, the prospect of change is avoided and resisted because it is unknown territory. Therefore, we fear it. For this reason, we require a [Spiritual Awakening](#).

There are three ways that Spiritual Awakenings can occur: the first is at the hands of wise Teachers, the second is through the pursuit of soulfully mature people, and the third is spontaneously due to life experience.

Spontaneous awakenings arrive in a number of ways: a terminal diagnosis, old age, a near-death experience, a physical accident, the loss of a loved one, a romantic breakup, the destruction of your home or homeland, suicidal depression, or the complete loss of your religious faith.

The Dark Night is a herald, an omen, of change. It lets us know that we can't continue living the way we have been living. There is no growth, no awakening in life, to life, without first seeing and acknowledging our existing disappointment.

Acknowledging our disappointment means becoming aware of the deeply held sense of “incompletion” that we all carry; *it means becoming aware that something is desperately missing from our lives.* Those that have experienced, or are currently experiencing a Dark Night of the Soul will know that something very fundamental at a core level is out of focus or completely lacking in their lives. Those going through a Dark Night will sense that so much more is possible in their lives, even though they don't exactly know what that “so much more” is.

One of the common reasons why Dark Nights occur and are prolonged, is due to [mystical experiences](#), or short glimpses of the divine, which spiritual teachers often refer to as “grace” or samadhi. Soon afterwards, the person “loses” this experience, and is plunged into unhappiness again. This is called the “halo effect,” “afterglow” or what the Sufis speak of as the “sobriety of union.”

Why does the “halo effect” happen? It happens because of the stark contrast between one's rediscovered Divine Self and the return to one's disconnected and tormented Ego self. To the [spiritually mature](#) person, the halo effect sets the stage for a future encounter with the transcendental, with God.

However, for the less prepared seeker, the glimpse into the Divine stirs up even more distress as old habits, obsessions, thoughts, and behaviors reappear. Now, such a person realizes that he has a long, complex, and demanding task of purification and transformation ahead of him.

In [Spiritual Alchemy](#), there is a word for this experience called “solutio”; putting all the hard stuff in the waters of reflection (your ideas, your habits, etc.), where it dissolves and breaks apart, shows itself for what it is, and gives you the opportunity for a fresh start.

The solution to one’s suffering and disconnection from the divine realm can be any method of cutting away, dislodging, disintegrating and clearing old pieces of your life so that you can begin afresh.

Essentially, the Dark night is a process of shedding away your old home and going in search of a new one. Understandably, this process requires a huge leap of faith into the unknown which can come at quite a sudden and frightening pace.

If you think you might be going through this journey, it’s important that you know that many of us have been where you are. Many people still are. There is no map, there is only the flickering luminescence of your Soul to light the way.

I hope our work can encourage, embolden and support you if you are undertaking this descent into your Underworld. (You can read more about our Spiritual Awakening Process [in our book](#).)

For now, here is my favorite quote about the Dark Night of the Soul, by David Whyte, who understood the value of making peace with the darkness:

*Time to go into the dark
where the night has eyes
to recognize its own.*

*There you can be sure
you are not beyond love.*

*The dark will be your womb
tonight.*

*The night will give you a horizon
further than you can see.*

*You must learn one thing.
The world was made to be free in.*

*Give up all the other worlds
except the one to which you belong.*

*Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness
to learn*

*anything or anyone
that does not bring you alive
is too small for you.*

– [“Sweet Darkness”](#) by David Whyte

Related reading:

- [The Dark Night Of The Soul](#)
- [The Day I Died – The Dark Night of The Soul](#)
- [21 Signs You’re Experiencing “Soul Loss”](#)

Also by Mateo Sol:

- [Spiritual Sex: 3 Types of Divine Union](#)
- [6 Powerful Solfeggio Frequencies that Raise Your Vibration](#)
- [Hypnagogia: The Trippy Mental State That is the Key to Deep Self-Discovery](#)
- [39 Self-Care Ideas for Those Who Struggle with Self-Love](#)
- [Signs and Omens: Listening to the Messages of Spirit](#)
- [Transforming Sexual Energy Into Spiritual Energy](#)
- [21 Signs You’re Experiencing “Soul Loss”](#)
- [Soul Retrieval Can Heal Addiction, Trauma and Mental Illness – Here’s How](#)
- [Soulful Energy: Origins of the Soul](#)
- [Mind, Self, Spirit and Soul: What’s the Difference?](#)

About the author:



Mateo Sol is a prominent psychospiritual teacher whose work has influenced the lives of thousands of people worldwide. Born into a family with a history of drug addiction, schizophrenia, and mental illness, Mateo Sol was taught about the plight of the human condition from a young age. However, at the age of 18, Sol experienced a spiritual awakening which aroused in him the desire to help others. After reconnecting with his ancient Peruvian roots and

being initiated into their ancestral wisdom, Sol co-founded the influential spiritual website lonerwolf.com in 2012. As a shaman, soulwork therapist and spiritual guide, Sol's mission is to help others experience freedom, wholeness, and peace in any stage of life.

This article [*7 Omens That Herald the Dark Night of the Soul*](#) was originally published on lonerwolf.com.