

The Mythic Path: Discovering the Guiding Stories of Your Past-Creating a Vision for Your Future

David Feinstein and Stanley Krippner

Elite Books, 3rd Rev. Ed. (2007)

ISBN 9781600700163

Reviewed by Patty English for Reader Views (5/07)

This book contends that we all have an inner mythology working. It tells us that we might benefit from a quiet and sacred appraisal of outdated notions we feed ourselves, perhaps unknowingly. This concept is a welcomed relief in our daily lives amid loud debates and fistfights, murder in the streets, standardized testing, high oil prices, racism, too much trash in our dumps (literally and figuratively), harsh rap music, and a hundred other tragedies and annoyances.

Other authors have called this notion of self-inflicted mythology manifesting as “self talk” that can be positive or negative. The negative includes such ideas as -- “Real men don’t wear pink,” “Women can’t be leaders,” and “I’ll never be able to find a good job that I like.” Most people seem to live according to a pattern developed over the years of their lives and experiences, often tagged as a unique personal behavior set, or overall personality in psychological terms. Some believe that this set cannot be changed after a certain age, if ever. Many people state, “That’s just me,” or “I’m set in my ways,” and feel that they cannot change their personal patterns of living. In fact, many are not even aware of their behavior patterns. These people live a rather unexamined life. They do not live on purpose; they live at random. The authors of this book demonstrate that such randomness may not be random and does not need to be true. In fact, it is not true in anyone’s case.

Everyone lives by some pattern and system of beliefs, learned and developed with varying degrees of accuracy and truth in each belief or myth. Myths can be true or false. A personal mythology is a set of beliefs and motives that operate under the surface of the mind, like the wizard behind the curtain in Oz. The set actually guides one’s choices throughout life. If unknown and/or unexamined or if an individual is not even aware of the existence of belief systems, then their choices are far fewer in any circumstance. Feinstein and Krippner show that the underlying belief system (mythology) should be a guiding tool for our conscious use and not a secret mastermind. Moreover, the tool should be the most up to date and effective as possible for each one of us. Fairy tales and horror stories learned in childhood can be left behind for a new, effective truth.

First, one must discover the specific mythology that one is using as a guidance system. “The Mythic Path” offers a systematic approach for effectively doing so in well-organized and very easy exercises. The authors call this a treasure hunt. Even if the treasure turns out to be full of negative messages, there is treasure in the discovery of the myths imposed on one by one’s family of origin and culture, because once discovered, the negatives can be replaced with more-effective beliefs. This includes working toward emotional healing and cognitive reframing for a better-working belief system.

This Third Edition of “The Mythic Path” is an update of about 30-years of work, providing a five-step, twelve-week workbook for ritual observations that is pleasant, freeing, and uplifting. It also contains a set of energy exercises, or energy psychology activities, set on a more spiritual level - even a kind of religious level; these can be either added or ignored. The energy exercises include such simple techniques as acupressure paired with thinking activities. The work overall is not Hindu, although there are elements of that system included. It is not Christian, although there are some concepts included that are familiar to Christians. There are elements of the work of psychologist Carl Jung and mythologist Joseph Campbell as well. There are concepts and wisdom from global systems of many kinds. Therefore, this book can be useful to anyone of any faith, or none. The book seems to have a wide application, because it combines professional experience in many specialties of psychology, reframing, healing, philosophy, shamanism, Chinese medicine, and mythology. In reading the book, I found that I could gather what I needed, leave out what I did not, and have an effective program for my unique self.