

Demeter – Nurturer & Mother

These researches are based on Jean Bolen's book 'Goddesses in everywoman'.

With Demeter we stay in the realms of the Vulnerable Goddesses who are all relationship-oriented. Demeter's 'apple of her eye' is her daughter Persephone. A Demeter woman carries a deep longing for becoming pregnant with her own child. Then she lives solely for them and even experiencing life through them. To her, adoption or being a foster mum are seldom alternatives. If a Demeter woman cannot become a biological mother, she is deeply wounded and struggles all her life to find meaning and purpose, no matter what luxury is offered to her.

A woman who is influenced by Demeter needs to express her maternal role in some way or another and often does so in turning her attention to others. She is the one who can overwhelm us with her carrying attitude. As good her intentions are, we may avoid her company as she makes us feel incompetent and powerless. It is important for a Demeter woman to direct her attention from others towards her own needs. She needs to learn how to nurture herself and become her own best friend.

Let's have a closer look to this Goddess whose positive nurturing qualities carry the danger of creating dependence in those around her:

Mythology

Like Hestia and Hera, Demeter is a child of Rhea and Cronos. She is the second born child swallowed by her father. From her union with Zeus (her brother!) Persephone is born, with whom Demeter is linked strongly and eternally through myth and worship. When Zeus sanctions the abduction of Persephone into the Underworld, Demeter falls into a deep depression and stops to function. She is not powerful enough to prevent her husband of causing her such harm, however, through her persistence she gets her daughter back from the Underworld and is happily reunited with her.

Demeter – the Archetype

Demeter is the maternal archetype. She represents maternal instinct fulfilled through pregnancy or through providing physical, psychological or spiritual nourishment to others. This powerful archetype can dictate the course a woman's life will take. She can have a significant impact on others in her life and has the potential for depression if her need to nurture is rejected or thwarted.

Positive aspects

Demeter is the most nurturing of all goddesses. This feminine archetype is generous and giving, helpful and supportive and creates safety around her. These expressions of bountifulness are all found in Demeter women; some naturally provide tangible food and physical care, some provide emotional and psychological support while others give spiritual nourishment. Usually, she has solid friendships with other Demeter women. The maternal persistence of Demeter makes a woman stand up for the needs of her child, no matter how difficult or dangerous it may be. Stubbornness, patience and perseverance are some more of the positive Demeter qualities that may eventually influence a powerful man or an institution.

Shadow aspects

In moments of loss and grief a Demeter woman, rather than rage or actively striking out at those she holds responsible like Artemis and Hera, tends to sink into depression and stops functioning. The destructive aspect of Demeter is expressed by withholding what another person needs. For example, a gravely depressed new mother can be life endangering to her infant by refusing to nourish it. A woman with strong Demeter influence is almost incapable to say 'no' to others and therefore has the tendency to burnout through taking on too many tasks. She feels responsible for others, feels guilty for causing pain and is easily abused for this lack of setting healthy boundaries. When she ignores her own boundaries and suppresses her true feelings, she often shows a passive-aggressive behaviour and may become very defensive.

Her strongest shadow side can appear in the relationship with her children. With the intention of protecting them, she may become over controlling. This tendency fosters feelings of insecurity and inadequacy as well as a strong dependence in the other person. Victimization and possessiveness are two more traps a Demeter influenced woman can fall into. It is crucial for a Demeter woman to learn how to take care of herself and nurture herself as if she was her own mother.

How to balance a too strong Demeter character

If you have behaviour patterns of forgetting about your own needs and being too controlling and fostering dependence apply the following practices:

Body

- Meditate to observe what is going on inside yourself (mind & soul)
- Integrate physical discipline in your daily schedule
- Spoil yourself with Massages & sensual underwear

Mind

- Recognize your controlling and over nourishing patterns
- Step back and give others space to make their own experiences
- Cultivate loving kindness for yourself
- Put yourself in first place

Emotions

- Step back from taking care of others, especially of your children
- Encourage them & trust in their abilities to take care of themselves
- Look for charity activities to use your talent for nurturing
- Invite Athena (learning new things) and Hestia (self-focused)

How to activate Demeter in your life

If you lack generosity and nurturing qualities integrate the following practices:

Body

- Practice Yin Yoga
- Offer massages, yoga classes or treatments to others

Mind

- Put others in first place
- Be aware of your critical mind towards yourself and others
- Take responsibility for others

Emotions

- Practice being patience and loving
- Give more generously to those in need
- Offer your help to foster homes or animal rescues

“Demeter, help me to be patient and generous”

