



The Lover Archetype

An Excerpt from
Goddess Gift: Discover Your Goddess Type
by Sharon Turnbull, Ph.D.

Life itself is the proper binge.

~ Julia Child



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The Lover is the archetype of play and sensual pleasure. Living in the moment and tuned into her physical environment, the Lover is deeply connected to the energy of the universe—experiencing and empathizing with the world of people and things that surround her.

With a sparkle in her eyes and a gentle laugh that radiates affection, all the Lover has to do is show up to captivate her audience. Whether she is outfitted as a femme fatale or a girlie-girl, there is no mistaking that her behaviors are designed to emphasize that she is female. A man-magnet she may be, the woman who is a Lover type usually has plenty of girlfriends in her life.

Self-confident, poised and generous to a fault, the Lover considers herself a work of art. And she is not ashamed to show it. She is the archetype of the 'Designing Woman,' always paying attention to the effect she is producing. Her goal is to inspire tenderness, protectiveness and passion. Her self-assurance usually serves her well.

It is almost as if she does not experience herself directly, but instead searches for her self through the responses of others. The Lover's self-esteem is tied to the

quality of her relationships and based on how others interact with her. She works hard to make a good impression.

The Lover is capable of intense passionate appreciation and devotion to the people and things that add beauty to her life, whether it is art, music or gourmet dining. The Lover's alluring enthusiasm for life draws suitors to her side. Though she may seem full of 'feminine wiles,' singing harmony to her mate and letting him take the lead, it is often a mistake to think that she has accepted a subservient role.

The woman with The Lover as her archetype is not the least inhibited in demonstrating her childlike qualities. Her playfulness brings fun and laughter to social situations. She is determined to remain youthful in body, mind, and spirit. Unfortunately, this eternal youthfulness in the woman who has yet to embrace the fullness of the archetype may appear as a reluctance to grow up and accept responsibility.

The Lover thrives on stimulation and is capable of intense, passionate appreciation of all that adds beauty and excitement to her life. Unwilling to put up with drabness or boredom, she rushes from one experience to the next, bringing color into the lives of those around her. This enthusiastic pursuit of experiencing everything that the world has to offer can also lead her into trouble.

The immature Lover may turn to self-destructive behaviors such as sexual promiscuity, compulsive shopping, or substance abuse to bring excitement into her life that counters the restlessness and emptiness she feels when life gets too staid or stuffy.

Many myths of the Lover type goddesses are tales of transformation. Sometimes it is the goddess herself who undergoes the magical process of rebirth, shifting shapes or forms. But often the story is about a lesson that the goddess demands that another must learn. The power to transform one's self, to shed the old skin and start over again rejuvenated, belongs to the Lover archetype.

Hope, lightheartedness and vitality are the goddess gifts of The Lover. As an archetype of rebirth and transformation, the Lover shows us how to leave behind the parts of our self that we have outgrown so that we can become the goddesses that we were meant to be. Her grace and confidence bestow love and healing to those around her.

**Aphrodite, Greek Goddess of Romance:
An Example of the Lover Archetype**

The original 'Golden Girl,' perfectly attired in a simple string of pearls and a couple of strategically placed scallop shells, stepped out of the ocean on the island of Cypress and set the ancient world on its ear. Never had there been such sensual beauty and impeccable taste. A new standard had been set, and the world would never be the same! Henceforth, there would be candlelit dinners, heart-rending arias, high-heeled shoes and bright red lipstick (not to mention soap operas). Romance was here and planning to stay.

It is not clear how the goddess Aphrodite happened to be 'sea-born.' What is certain is that Aphrodite's arrival caused quite a stir! The Horae (Hours) welcomed her to step ashore. After adorning her with the finest gold ornaments and cloth, they brought her to Mount Olympus to present her to Zeus and the other gods and goddesses.

To his credit, Zeus instantly realized that this captivating creature could become the source of all sorts of trouble. He suspected that her radiance would stir every man's passion and lead to constant fights for her attention. To head off this possibility, Zeus decided she must be married immediately ('taken off the market,' so to speak) and awarded her to his son, Hephaestus, God of the Forge.

It goes without saying that Hephaestus must have thought himself the luckiest man alive, especially since he was lame and 'no great looker' himself. However, he was reliable and hard working. Overjoyed with his good fortune in acquiring this stunning bride, he did his best to please her – designing and creating for her the most beautiful jewelry and furniture that had ever been seen. He even went so far as to make her a magical golden girdle that made her irresistible to men when she wore it. Whatever could he have been thinking?

Needless to say, their marriage had its ups and downs. Aphrodite felt that she had married below her 'class.' Hephaestus was decidedly 'blue collar' even though he was a god – not at all what she, with her impeccable tastes, had in mind. Aphrodite insisted upon an 'open marriage' (at least for her) and indulged in numerous love affairs with both mortals and other gods. Except for a few occasions when he was overwhelmed with jealousy or resentment, her husband seemed to accept this arrangement – happy to just have and hold her when he could. Indeed, their marriage seemed companionable, perhaps with little passion but with little conflict either.

It was as if everyone recognized that Aphrodite had one gift and one gift only – to make love. And that one gift was so special that no one seemed to resent it. While all the other gods and goddesses had lengthy lists of divine duties to perform, Aphrodite was assigned only one; to bring romance into the world.

Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, once caught her weaving and reprimanded Aphrodite for encroaching upon her area of responsibility. Aphrodite was quick to apologize and vowed never to do any work ever again!

Although they were surely envious of Aphrodite's beauty and her easy and exciting life, other women were seldom jealous or resentful of her charms. None were what could be called really close friends, but they found her to be quite friendly and extraordinarily generous. She even went to the extent of loaning Hera, the wife of Zeus who was the ruler of Mount Olympus, her magic girdle to help Hera keep her husband's wandering eyes where they belonged. Aphrodite was always ready to help both the deities and the mortals to win the loves they sought.

Furthermore, Aphrodite is best known for her own love affairs, which were numerous and varied. She had many offspring by her various lovers, but none with her husband. Her most notable loves were the gods Ares, Dionysius, Hermes, Poseidon, and the mortal, Adonis.

The willingness of the community to suspend their norms for Aphrodite is clear. Her flagrant affair with Ares, the God of War, was the cause of much embarrassment to her husband. Hephaestus fashioned an invisible net made of bronze and captured them while they were in bed together. Hauling the pair in front of a jury of the Olympians, he demanded their punishment. Reluctant to get involved, the court instead chided Hephaestus for his foolishness in giving her an outfit that rendered her irresistible in the first place!

With the exception of her long standing affair with Ares, Aphrodite's amorous involvements could best be described as 'flings' – brief encounters without much

sign of emotional involvement on her part. Adonis was the exception. A mortal who was the personification of male beauty, Adonis captured her heart.

Aphrodite had begged Adonis to give up the dangerous sports he enjoyed because she could not bear to lose him. He ignored her advice and was killed by a wild boar while hunting. When he died, Aphrodite heard his cries and hastened to his side in her swan-drawn chariot.

She cursed the Fates that had ordained his death. With Adonis still in her arms, Aphrodite turned the blood drops that fell from his wounds onto the soil into windflowers (the short-lived anemone) as a memorial to their love.

The Aphrodite Archetype and the Personal Meaning of Her Myths

The woman who is an Aphrodite type radiates warmth, enjoys life, and is incurable optimistic. She is witty, charming and clever. Very responsive to her environment, she is great fun to be with. Like the goddess Aphrodite, she is extraordinarily generous with her attention and her possessions.

It is always easy for an Aphrodite to find company since others find her charismatic and very entertaining – which is a good thing because an Aphrodite hates being alone for very long.

An Aphrodite loves excitement and tends to create it wherever she happens to be. Her flowing conversation is often witty and amusing, and her joy in living is contagious. It is no wonder she creates a mood of gaiety wherever she goes.

Extraverted, friendly and sociable, an Aphrodite woman enjoys being with other people and finds that it energizes her and heightens her natural enthusiasm for

life and all its possibilities. Exuberant, optimistic and energetic, she is at her best in a social situation.

An Aphrodite woman is an entertainer and loves to bring people together. She enjoys being center stage. She is a born storyteller, quick with wordplay and wisecracks. There is nothing so sacred that an Aphrodite would not joke about it. Thanks to her kind nature, others are rarely hurt or offended by her remarks.

Most Aphrodites have an air of sophistication about them and are likely to be dressed in the latest fashions. They tend to display a fondness for all the good things in life – gourmet food, fine wines, beautiful surroundings, and happy times. ‘Variety is the spice of life’ is her motto, and anything new seems to attract her attention.

Though others seldom realize it because of an Aphrodite’s outgoing and outspoken personality, most Aphrodites are rather ‘private’ people. The typical Aphrodite may be unwilling to reveal intimate details or their innermost feelings to anyone except for those in her closest circle of friends.

Aphrodites do not spend much time or energy being angry, but they can react with considerable hostility when they feel challenged. They become irritated when criticized for acting foolishly; or when others try to impose rules or limits on their behavior.

An Aphrodite type is a woman who loves stimulation. If she does not find excitement and beauty in her environment, she will, like the goddess Aphrodite, certainly set about creating it.

Aphrodite's most famous son was Eros, the God of Love, who helped her with her work. A talented archer, Aphrodite assigned him to shoot arrows dipped in her love potion which caused the victims to fall madly in love with the next person they saw. Many great love stories began this way, but many respectable homes were broken up as well.

In similar fashion, an Aphrodite does not always pause to consider the consequences before she acts impulsively. As a result, abandoned or broken marriages, frequent job changes, and indebtedness may plague the life of the immature Aphrodite.

Although she was most often loving and generous, Aphrodite could also be quite malicious and vindictive. She insisted upon being given the honor she felt was due her and was quick and harsh in punishing those who were not sufficiently appreciative of her efforts.

Usually her punishments, though sometimes severe, held important lessons embedded within them. These were lessons that sparked growth and ultimately improved the life, or extended the vision, of the person she was punishing, as was the case in the story of Psyche. Accordingly, the influence of Aphrodite can be seen as generative. It goes far beyond that of romance, love or desire alone.

Aphrodite is associated with the life-giving sea. Just as the waves lapping on the shore refresh and renew the beach, Aphrodite brings us hope and the awareness of the transforming power of love and beauty.



Sharon Turnbull, PhD, is the author of *Goddess Gift: Discover Your Personal Goddess Type*, a book about how to connect with your inner goddess and start living the life you were always meant to live.

Sharon also created of the popular online personality assessments, The Goddess Quiz and The Greek Gods Quiz for men.

Sharon invites you to click here to subscribe to The Goddess Gift Newsletter, a free monthly e-zine that combines mythology, archetypal psychology, personal growth and just plain fun.

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