



Huna Article

Finding Each Other Beyond the Labels

by Graeme Kapono Ulrich

I was replying to a social media post recently and it turned into a bit of a thought piece so I decided to share it in its raw, unedited form. A fuller discussion of compatibility could also take in patterns such as people pleasing, conflict avoidance, controlling behaviour, emotional withdrawal, poor boundaries, difficulty expressing needs and fear of intimacy.

I have written before in [Lost in Metaphors](#) and [Spiritual Pitfalls](#) about the problems that can arise when useful labels and metaphors are mistaken for objective realities. “Masculine energy” and “feminine energy” are good examples. These terms can sometimes help us describe patterns of behaviour, but trouble begins when we turn them into fixed spiritual identities and then judge ourselves or other people according to how well they fit the label.

The post makes some very useful points about qualities to look for in a partner — kindness, reliability, generosity, honesty, accountability, willingness to support each other and so on.

Where I tend to differ is in treating “masculine” and “feminine” as though they are fixed parts of someone’s spiritual make-up or necessarily tied to gender.

From a Huna perspective, I find it more useful to bring these ideas back to behaviour. Men can display behaviours that might commonly be described as feminine, and women can display behaviours that might commonly be described as masculine. More importantly, being able to adjust our behaviour to suit the context is a useful skill.

In Hawaiian terms, **hu** refers to energy in an active or projective state and **na** to energy in a passive or receptive state. These are states of energy movement, not different kinds of energy, and they are not the Hawaiian words for male and female. Today, **kāne** refers to man or male and **wahine** to woman or female.

In the older Huna understanding I was taught, Aumakua, or Spirit Mind, is complete in both male and female aspects. In physical human expression we may be male or female, but the older term **kānewahine** reflects the idea that both genders are present within the greater spiritual whole rather than being absolutely separate.

So I find it more useful to separate masculine and feminine behaviour from gender and look instead at what is actually happening.

Sometimes a situation calls for active, projective behaviour — initiating, deciding, protecting, providing, leading or taking action.

At other times it calls for receptive behaviour — listening, allowing, receiving, supporting, sensing or responding.

A healthy person can move between these states rather than being trapped in one role.

A good example is the idea that men should provide emotional stability in a relationship while women should be free to express their emotions and receive that support. There is certainly value in being able to remain calm and supportive when a partner is distressed, but why should that ability be determined by gender?

There is an important distinction between supporting someone emotionally and taking responsibility for managing their emotions. We can listen, comfort, encourage and help someone regain their confidence without becoming responsible for their feelings or decisions. Nor does offering emotional support mean taking on the role of a parent.

In a loving relationship, both partners can develop these skills. Sometimes one will need more support than the other, and those roles may reverse as circumstances change. Being able to adapt our behaviour to the needs of the moment is far more useful than trying to conform to a fixed masculine or feminine ideal.

I recently encountered the metaphor of a man being a grounding rod for his female partner, providing stability when her emotions become turbulent. It's a useful metaphor, but surely either partner can provide that grounding when needed? What matters is not who is supposed to play the role, but whether the way we relate to each other creates greater confidence, trust, happiness and cooperation.

That is why I would be cautious about saying someone is fundamentally a "masculine being" or that a relationship requires a fixed polarity. Those can be useful metaphors, but they are still labels placed around behaviour.

For me the more useful questions are: Is this person kind? Do they keep their word? Can they listen? Can they act when action is needed? Can they receive help? Can they apologise? Can we cooperate? Do the patterns between us create trust, affection and a life that works well for both of us?

Those are things we can actually observe.

Metaphors can help us organise experience, but once we start treating the metaphor as an objective reality, we can end up trying to make people fit the label rather than responding to the person who is actually in front of us.

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