

Shadow Work

Moving beyond the socially acceptable mask
towards wholeness and authenticity
A Simple Guide



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"Unfortunately there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continually subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected." C. Jung

Background

Growing up in this dense reality most of us learn from our family and friends, and later wider society, that parts of us are undesirable. Because at a core level we all crave love and acceptance, we learn to hide those parts of ourselves that we fear might make us unlovable.

Example: Child gets angry in the presence of parent(s) who are unable to hold space for this emotion. Parent(s) react with a form of rejection. Child learns to suppress their anger in order to appease their loved ones.

All the parts of us that we have deemed unacceptable get relegated to the unconscious and become our shadows. But as hard as we try to hide or deny these aspects from ourselves and others, they will continue to negatively affect us. In fact because they are hidden from awareness, away from the light of consciousness, usually blanketed in a veil of undefined shame or guilt, most of us don't know why ... but we are left with an underlying sense of ... 'something is wrong with me, I am not worthy.'

Though this strategy operates as a default in our dysfunctional society, this 'solution' causes more problems than it solves.

Hidden from our own awareness, our shadow parts still continue to operate and color our world. Being rejected and cut off from the heart, they don't work in alignment with our sense of self. Instead, they can push us to take destructive actions, sabotaging our dreams, and creating uncomfortable feelings and disingenuous or inappropriate reactions.

How Shadow work can help

"One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious." C. Jung

Shadow work is the process of bringing our shadows back into the light of awareness so that they can be understood and reintegrated into self.

When we take the time to understand the rejected aspects of self we discover the fullness of who we are. We are not all butterflies and rainbows ... and that's ok.

We all contain parts that are cruel, that are obnoxious, that are controlling, self-centred etc.

By acknowledging and owning these parts, coming to terms with their reality in our inner world, we create a powerful internal shift. No longer hiding in the dark away from the conscious self, these aspects cease to operate in a covert or illusive way. As well, the guilt and shame associated with these qualities can be released, leaving us feeling a deeper sense of personal ease.

The more self-aware we become, the more we are able to take responsibility for what we create in this life: the less we are driven by unconscious impulses, the more autonomy and clarity we have.

Often the qualities we judge as negative are just exaggerated versions of healthy qualities. For example a person who is terrified of appearing weak, may present as overly aggressive. So even though weakness is hiding in the shadows, it is ultimately still driving behaviour by pushing them to embrace the opposite. When a person is able to accept their vulnerability it becomes easier for aggressiveness to express as strength or assertiveness.

Other times the qualities we judge as negative may only be damaging when used inappropriately, and when used appropriately become important tools to successfully navigate reality. For instance when anger is expressed in a balanced way, it can help us to maintain healthy boundaries. Similarly a critical approach can be useful when used in the right time and place; like assessing the viability of a potential business.

Integrating shadows frees up energy. The less our energy is needed to repress our shadows away from the light of consciousness, the more energy we have to promote the aims of our true self. Also the shadow parts themselves are personal energy expressions that are cut off from the whole, so by reintegrating these parts we bring even more energy to the table of self.

Finally, not only do we learn to hide our less desirable qualities in order to fit in; we often hide away our brightest and shiniest aspects as well. We all have incredible unique qualities that each of us came into this world with. However, in a society that promotes homogeny and fears difference, many of us learned to relegate these unique, exceptional parts of ourselves into the shadows of the unconscious.

Why Shadow work is more important than ever

The world is changing ... fast. Some may be able to sense how the planetary energies are becoming less dense. With less density it is not as easy for things to hide in the dark. Even those not attuned to energies can likely see the results of this shift. Every day on both an individual and collective level we are being faced with uncomfortable truths that were previously obscured from our awareness.

This process is going to increase in intensity.

We are going to be faced with our shadows whether we like it or not, so the more we are able to embrace this process, and work with the flow of energy, the smoother this journey towards increased clarity and authenticity will be.

The more we have integrated our own shadows, the less we will be triggered by the collective shadows that appear on the world stage, and the better positioned we will be hold a space of calmness, and to help others process disturbing internal and external truths.

Finally it is time to shine! As mentioned above we each have unique gifts that we came here to share. The time of holding back and keeping small is over.

Exercises to promote the process

Remember that every quality or aspect you re-integrate is part of the whole you. This does not mean that you have to become it, or even express it, only that you are able to comfortably acknowledge it as part of the wholeness of your being.

Read through the list of qualities below and circle or highlight ones that you notice you have a lot of judgement around.

Pay attention to the ones you highly value as well. Identifying their opposing quality can be a good way to find qualities you may judge negatively.

1. Bring it Home

Step 1: Read through the list of qualities below and choose one that irritates, annoys, or infuriates you when you see it in others.

Step 2: Close your eyes and imagine a person expressing the quality you chose. See it as clearly as you can.

Step 3: Pay attention to your body. Do you feel your face take on an expression? Do emotions surface? Can you feel a reaction in your body? If so what and where?

Step 4: Now, still holding that mental image, take a moment to focus on your breath. Allow yourself to step back a bit. Make a bit of room around the idea.

Step 5: Connect any emotions (e.g. sadness, anger, resentment, disgust) that may have surfaced to your compassionate heart. Just accept whatever surfaces without judgement. If you could feel an area of your body that reacted to the imagery focus your breath and awareness there. Notice any changes, softening, relaxing.

Step 6: Let the image go.

Step 7: Bring the quality home to self: Say out loud, "I am everything, I am...(quality)."

Step 8: Follow steps 3, 4 and 5.

Step 9: Bring in several other qualities that are easy for you to see in yourself. Say out loud "I am everything... I am ..." -list several positive qualities and include the uncomfortable quality with them.

Step 10: Notice the difference between holding the quality on its own, to how it sits amongst the group. Often when the undesirable is placed within the context of the whole it feels much more tolerable.

Step 11: Take some time to sit with the results of this process. The more you can cultivate a space of loving acceptance, the less charge will remain around this quality.

When you feel ready you can move onto another quality from the list that holds a powerful charge for you.

2. Journaling

In this exercise you can take the quality you worked with above and journal around it. Explore it from many angles.

- What associations do you have with it?
- What feelings are connected with it?
- What people do you know who exhibit this quality?
- Do you have any specific memories that relate to it?
- If so what are they?
- What would be the opposite of this quality? (consider whether you might be **overly** attached to the opposite quality because of the unresolved feelings around the negative aspect).
- What would you be afraid would happen if you allowed this quality into your inner system? (Allow any parts of you to express fears around this idea- acknowledge the fears and reassure them that these qualities will now be in the light of consciousness and thus balanced with awareness of the whole.)
- What would the quality look like if it was toned down a bit? See if you can connect any positive qualities to the quality? (eg disorganized—laidback, or organic)

3. Make the world your mirror

Pay attention to how you react to your external reality. Notice people, events, stories, conversations, or experiences that elicit a negative reaction in you.

Consider what qualities may be associated with the different situations.

Allow external happenings to act as guides showing you internal areas that need work to accept and integrate.

4. Dialogue

When you are in a relaxed state, like soaking in a bath or laying in nature use inner dialoguing to explore the shadow self.

- Allow parts that hold fears around the shadows to express concerns and speak to them from a place of love and compassion (remember most of our shadows were created in childhood so there will be a lot of young energy holding these concerns)
- Give the shadows a voice. Allow the shadow parts to explore their experience of being rejected. Invite them to connect to your heart. Observe with compassion.

5. Meditation

Take some time to meditate with the intent of healing your relationship with shadow aspects. Once you are in a deeply relaxed and detached state, allow any awareness or insight that relates to this relationship to surface. Afterwards journaling around what surfaced can be helpful

6. Let it out

If you come to see that a quality you initially perceived negatively could benefit you if used in a healthy way then you might like to incorporate it into your life. Initially practice using it with people you feel safe with. As you get more comfortable and notice your confidence building you can expand out into new, more challenging situations.

List of qualities

(Feel free to add to the list)

<p>A</p> <p>aggressive aloof adaptable adventurous affectionate arrogant attention seeker agreeable ambitious</p> <p>B</p> <p>bitchy brave brazen boastful boring bossy</p> <p>C</p> <p>callous careless changeable clingy compulsive conceited confident calm careful charming communicative condescending controlling cowardly cruel cynical compassionate conscientious considerate courageous creative</p> <p>D</p> <p>deceitful detached decisive determined diplomatic dishonest disorganized dogmatic domineering</p>	<p>E</p> <p>easygoing emotional energetic enthusiastic</p> <p>F</p> <p>finicky fair faithful flexible fearless forceful frank friendly funny flirtatious foolish fussy</p> <p>G</p> <p>greedy generous gossip gentle good grumpy gullible</p> <p>H</p> <p>harsh humble hard-working helpful honest</p> <p>I</p> <p>impatient impolite impulsive imaginative independent intellectual intelligent intuitive inventive inconsiderate inconsistent indecisive indiscreet interfering intolerant irresponsible</p> <p>J</p> <p>jealous</p>	<p>K</p> <p>kind</p> <p>L</p> <p>lazy loving loyal</p> <p>M</p> <p>machiavellian materialistic modest mean meticulous miserly moody</p> <p>N</p> <p>neat nice narrow-minded nasty naughty nervous</p> <p>O</p> <p>optimistic obsessive overcritical</p> <p>P</p> <p>patronizing practical pro-active perverse pessimistic petty passionate patient persistent pioneering placid plucky polite powerful pompous possessive polite powerful practical pro-active</p>	<p>passionate patient persistent pioneering philosophical placid</p> <p>Q</p> <p>quarrelsome quick-tempered quick-witted quiet</p> <p>R</p> <p>rude rational reliable reserved realist resourceful rigid ruthless romantic</p> <p>S</p> <p>sarcastic scattered secretive self-confident self-disciplined sensible sensitive selfish self-centred self-indulgent silly sloppy sneaky shy sincere sociable straightforward sympathetic stingy stubborn stupid superficial</p>	<p>tactless talkative timid touchy thoughtful tidy tough thoughtless</p> <p>U</p> <p>unkind unpredictable unreliable unassuming understanding untidy untrustworthy</p> <p>V</p> <p>vague versatile vain vengeful vulgar</p> <p>W</p> <p>weak warmhearted willing witty weird wild</p>
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Additional Support

If you feel called I would love to work with you!

Working with a coach can be extremely helpful in exploring our shadow sides. A good coach can help us see ourselves and situations from different perspectives which expands our ability to see and understand our drives. A coach can also assist us to identify aspects that are holding us back by asking great questions that go beyond our own patterns and habitual way of looking at things. Coaches can also offer us encouragement, support and accountability as we walk through uncomfortable territory.

I also offer BQH hypnosis sessions which are an incredible way to explore our journeys.

To find out more please visit: <https://www.christinalaverscoaching.com/>

Additional Reading

I wanted to keep the information in this guide as simple as possible. However for those who want to explore further the following articles and books may be helpful.

Articles:

Carl Jung and the Shadow: The Ultimate Dark side By Jack E Othon

<https://highexistence.com/carl-jung-shadow-guide-unconscious/>

Know Thy Self—By Christina Lavers <https://wakeup-world.com/2016/05/20/know-thyself/>

Taking Responsibility for our Energy—By Christina Lavers

<https://wakeup-world.com/2015/05/30/taking-responsibility-for-our-energy/>

Books:

Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche by Robert Johnson

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0062507540/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=ceosage08-20&camp=1789&creative=9325&linkCode=as2&creativeASIN=0062507540&linkId=fd7be3e324d5b18a4fb08007f97df108

Dispelling Wetiko Breaking Curse Evil by Paul Levy

<https://www.amazon.com/Dispelling-Wetiko-Breaking-Curse-Evil/dp/1583945482>