



# **Shadow Work**

**June 2024**

The Shadow, comprising our deepest fears, shames, and regrets along with judgments, core beliefs, and unconscious contracts, resides in our subconscious, influenced by past lives and ancestral ties.

Shadow Work delves into profound self-awareness, aiming for forgiveness, release, and growth towards newfound freedom and positivity. Coined by Carl Jung, the concept of the Shadow Self highlights its prevalence in every individual's life. Suppressed, it can lead to detrimental consequences such as addiction, low self-esteem, and mental or chronic illnesses. Unchecked, the Shadow can escalate to extreme behaviours like infidelity or violence, often exacerbated by substances like alcohol and drugs. However, Shadow Work offers a means to confront and integrate these shadow aspects, preventing them from consuming our lives.

Historically practiced by Shamans and spiritual leaders, Shadow Work now finds application in psychotherapy, employing creative techniques to embrace and integrate the shadow self, fostering wholeness and resilience.

Contrary to its negative connotations, the shadow also harbours positive attributes, described by Jung as "ninety percent pure gold." Within lie untapped creativity, intuition, and other potent gifts suppressed by societal norms.

Exploring the Golden Shadow presents opportunities for both psychological and spiritual growth, as each negative aspect holds a corresponding gift waiting to be unearthed. Through acceptance and liberation, participants will harness their positive qualities, embracing creativity and passion.

## **The Shamanic Healing Perspective**

The shamanic healing perspective posits that unresolved wounds from our past affect our present by continuously attracting similar experiences. This stems from the energetic vibration linked to these deep-seated wounds, which are often guarded by our Shadow Self, also known as the Protector Self. This part of us is shaped by past hurts—such as rejection, abandonment, betrayal, humiliation, worthlessness, or prolonged abuse—and it strives to protect us by avoiding situations that may cause similar pain. By facing our Shadow, we can become more whole and live with greater authenticity, creativity, and joy.

## **The Protector – Shadow Self**

The Shadow Self acts as an inner saboteur, keeping us in fear and reinforcing limiting beliefs. While its actions might seem counterproductive, its intention is to shield us from pain based on past experiences. This protective mechanism is deeply embedded in our psyche, causing us to react emotionally and repeat past patterns. The goal of the Shadow Self is to avoid revisiting the original hurt, which often leads to self-sabotage and a cycle of negative experiences.

### The Purpose of Repeating Patterns

Despite the Shadow Self's protective efforts, we often encounter recurring situations and people because our Soul aims to confront and heal these past wounds. This process is essential for resolving past Karma and fulfilling our Soul's divine purpose. Shamanic healing practices, such as journeying and energy work, help reveal and address repressed parts of ourselves. Identifying and integrating our shadow helps us become balanced and complete. It involves acknowledging the parts of ourselves that need healing, often tied to our Inner Child, and working with spiritual guides and allies for insight and transformation. By understanding and integrating these old wounds, we can dissolve the protective programming of the Shadow Self.

### Alice Miller's Insight

Alice Miller emphasized the necessity of addressing our distress on three levels: body, feeling, and mind. She argued that unresolved trauma remains in the body's cells, perpetuating our distress until it is acknowledged and understood. This holistic approach underscores the importance of comprehensive healing.

### Dealing with Shadow Moments

When our behaviour is out of control, it signifies pure shadow at play. Post-shadow moments can bring shame, but they also offer an opportunity to confront and understand our shadow. By seeing the shadow as a friend acting out of protection, we can work with it to achieve personal empowerment and individuation.

### Understanding Triggers and Trauma

Traumatic events create sensory associations that can trigger memories later in life. Shadow work involves recognizing and addressing these triggers. When triggered, asking reflective questions about our judgments and reactions can reveal our own shadow traits. This self-awareness helps us understand where these traits appear in our lives and how they may serve or hinder us.

In conclusion, shamanic healing and shadow work aim to uncover, understand, and integrate the repressed parts of ourselves. This process helps us break free from past wounds, enabling us to live more authentically and fulfilling lives.

The following just a few ways you might work with your shadow:

### Decide Your Approach

Therapy vs. Solo Work: For therapy work, evaluate whether you work better with a shamanic practitioner or a counsellor guiding you. You might prefer to work on your own. Therapy provides guidance and a safe space, while solo work offers personal control and introspection.

### Express Through Art

Art is the highest form of self-expression and is a strong way of allowing your shadow to manifest itself. Counsellors use art therapy to help clients explore their inner selves. It is not

about being a good artist but by letting the inner child have its play, healing and processing situations can take place. Artistic expression reveals much about your obscure darker self in a safe way.

**Artistic Expression:** Use mediums like drawing, painting, or writing to express your shadow. This spontaneous creation can reveal deep insights.

**Storytelling:** Write stories projecting your shadow elements onto characters to explore your inner darkness.

#### Continuous Observation

When disowning our shadow qualities, we can become unbalanced and explode in frightening ways. What we deny in ourselves we project/manifest onto others and into our lives. Understand that your everyday life reflects your Shadow self.

Reflect on every action.

Reflect on every reaction.

Reflect on every interaction.

Allow judgements to melt away, just observe.

Use your breath to calm your heart rate and just observe.

#### Positive Signs of Progress

- **Increased Self-Awareness:** Greater understanding of your thoughts and behaviours.
- **Emotional Resilience:** Better acceptance and management of emotions.
- **Improved Relationships:** Healthier interactions with others.
- **Release of Repressed Memories:** Healing past traumas.
- **Healthy Boundaries:** Clearer personal boundaries.
- **Less Self-Sabotage:** Reduced negative self-behaviours.
- **Authenticity and Wholeness:** Embracing your true self.

#### Inspiring Shadow Work Quotes:

The secret is out: all of us, no exceptions, have qualities we won't let anyone see, including ourselves – our Shadow. If we face up to our dark side, our life can be energized. If not, there is the devil to pay. This is one of life's most urgent projects.

— *Larry Dossey*

If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we are not really living. Growth demands a temporary surrender of security.

— *Gail Sheehy*

Who has not at one time, or another felt a sourness, wrath, selfishness, envy, and pride, which he could not tell what to do with, or how to bear, rising up in him without his consent, casting a blackness over all his thoughts ... It is exceeding good and beneficial to us to discover this dark, disordered fire of our soul; because when rightly known and rightly dealt with, it can as well be made the foundation of heaven as it is of hell.

— *William Law*

If we do not work on all three levels — body, feeling, mind — the symptoms of our distress will keep returning, as the body goes on repeating the story stored in its cells until it is finally listened to and understood.

- *Alice Miller*

To confront a person with his own shadow is to show him his own light.

— *Carl Jung*

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What is Shadow Work? Steve Wolf and Connie Zweig

What is Shadow Work by Kateri Berasi, PsyD

How to Love Your Dark Side By Leo Babauta

Shadow Work - Carl Jung

Shadow Quotes - Alice Miller, William Law, Gail Sheehy, Larry Dossey.