

Shadow Work Guide

Digging Deep Into The
Psyche For A Happier,
More Joyful Life

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Dominica Applegate

I used to not be able to look at people in the eyes because I thought they could see right through the mask I was wearing to see all my dark, shadowy monsters. The parts of me I was ashamed of and did my best to hide away. The parts I ran from, the darkness I felt swallowed up in, and the fear that I was alone in this gigantic cosmos.

We've been conditioned by parents and society to shy away from our shadow sides, no doubt.

However, diving inside to discover this part of us can be among the most important things we can do if we want to live a life experiencing decent amounts of peace, joy, and authentic love.

Carl Jung, famous swiss psychologist known for his work in the shadow aspects, says:

Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.

Your visions will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.

And isn't that what we want?

To wake up?

To understand **why** we're here? What our **purpose** is? Individually and collectively as a civilization?

It's easy to see other people's shadows, point fingers, and judge.

It's not so easy to face our own, but it's necessary. Exploring our shadows can be so helpful in the long run, helping us become more authentic, compassionate, spiritually mature, loving, peaceful, and happier human beings.

Let's take some time to explore the shadow and shadow work.

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Shadow Work: Are You Digging Under The Surface?

“Until you make the unconscious, conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate.” Carl Jung

If you're not familiar with “shadow work”, I encourage you to start learning about it pronto and get busy doing it. I never consciously knew what Carl Jung's concept of the shadow was until my late 30's – and that's after majoring in psychology. No doubt I was sleeping consciousness-wise in college.

Little did I know, my shadow side had been largely running my life since I was a child.

Today, after years of doing inner healing shadow work, (or, as some call “inner child healing”), I understand better just how important this work really is. Facing my past with all its shadows was my first step toward becoming more spiritually awake, more peaceful, and happier. It's helped me become more authentic, creative, and show up in life with a more loving presence for others.

It can do the same for you.

What Is The Shadow?

The shadow is also known as the false self, the unconscious, the Inner child, the disowned or split-off self. It's the dark side of our personality...the side we'd rather not see, because it can hold things like greed, selfishness, anger, fear, envy, etc.

It's that part of us that we repress, deny, or disown. The **unconscious part** of us that we're not aware of. The part of us that we, and society, may disapprove of.

If you want to learn a great deal about the shadow, study Carl Jung's work. I love the following quote by him, mainly because life can truly feel like madness at times.

“Be silent and listen: have you recognized your madness and do you admit it? Have you noticed that all your foundations are completely mired in madness? Do you not want to recognize your madness and welcome it in a friendly manner? You wanted to accept everything. So accept madness too. Let the light of your madness shine, and it will suddenly dawn on you. Madness is not to be despised and not to be feared, but instead you should give it life...If you want to find paths, you should also not spurn madness, since it makes up such a

great part of your nature...Be glad that you can recognize it, for you will thus avoid becoming its victim." Carl Jung

Let the light of your madness shine. I love that. He doesn't mean glory in negative traits or wounds. He means allow the LIGHT of consciousness to shine on those shadows to expose them, so then you can integrate or dissolve them. You can heal them more and more, realize they are only shadows and not the REAL you, and thus, they'll show up in your life less and less.

It's an amazing process.

How Is The Shadow Created?

Our shadow aspects are born early on in our life due to the very natural way an ego develops, as well as a result of socialization. As babies, we are birthed whole, without a personality per say.

We are born conscious spirits without a shadow aspect (ego). I mean, just look at a baby! They're pure and so precious!

We're also born fully dependent on others for survival. As such, the kind of attachments we form (or don't form) as babies and children will have an impact on the formation of our shadow side, as well as our whole personality.

Learn more about Attachment Styles and how they shape your life here:

[Attachment Styles: How Do You Attach To Others?](#)

We learn real quick what aspects of us are acceptable or not acceptable by our caregivers and society. The beliefs or behaviors that cause others to yell at us, reject us, or disapprove, we tend to disown, deny, or repress.

This is when we (who were fully whole and conscious) start splitting between conscious and subconscious. Fully conscious/ego.

Examples

➤ Mom, Dad, I Need You

Let's say you're two and your parent is not emotionally available for some reason (too busy, depressed, addicted to something, absent, etc.) As a toddler, we want a really close, safe connection with them, right?

However, they're not able to form that safe, close attachment. Either they've never learned how, or they're just not able due to some other reason. Because of this, we start to feel anxious. Maybe even scared or mad.

We don't know how to sit with our parents and say, "Hey Mom, I need you. I need you to be present and feel safe and that's not how I'm feeling." What two-year-old, or even five-year-old can have that conversation?

So, we end up stuffing or repressing those sad, scared feelings. **That anxiety.** That disappointment, confusion, or feeling unworthy. We start to **reject that part of us** that needs emotional connection.

➤ An Overly Tired Toddler

Or think about a three-year old who doesn't feel well or is overly tired. They're crying, upset, and have no idea how to convey to Dad what's really going on. And Dad, overly annoyed, grabs the child out of anger and frustration, screams, "Shut up! You're driving me crazy! Go to your room!"

And that child gets the message loud and clear that crying and anger are not alright. That **THEY** are not alright and Dad's rejecting them.

Dad can't help me. Dad doesn't care. I am bad. I am unworthy.

They want Dad's love without conditions. They want to feel safe, so to get this, they think that they must repress this part of them that gets such a strong reaction from Dad if they are to get their "love needs" met. They **repress, deny, and reject** those parts of themselves, and those feelings go right into their invisible shadow bag that they start lugging along in life.

They want to tell Dad, "Help me. Talk to me. Hold me. Protect me. Love me!" But they just don't know how. Little ones just don't know how to process or communicate such complex concepts or behaviors. And even when they can, they can still be met with angry, frustrated, wounded parents.

Thus, our shadow starts forming and over the years, plenty of things can occur that cause us to "split" off parts of ourselves and stuff them into our shadow bags. Trauma, abuse, neglect, being bullied, suffering illness, and so on.

So, by the time we're adults, we could have this huge bag of negative emotions, trauma, memories, etc. that are unconscious. **Our shadows.** We can't see them, but they're there. Lurking. Camping out in the dark recesses of the psyche. Like a balloon, that shadow bag is getting bigger and bigger.

And, it's a **driving force** behind our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

When We Ignore Our Shadows

I read somewhere that when I'm feeling a negative emotion, only about 10% of that has to deal with my current situation. That means 90% has to deal with my past, likely my shadows formed in childhood. **My ego.**

This ought to prompt us to start digging into the past.

You see, if we just bump along in life being oblivious to our shadows (ego, inner child), or ignoring them, we will experience certain situations and emotional states that don't feel so good.

Things like anxiety, depression, toxic relationships, illness, addiction to alcohol, drugs, porn, gambling, etc., rage, fear, isolation, and on and on.

In other words, ignoring our shadows, old wounds, etc. can and will bite us in the ass later in life.

At the same time, I like what Jacob Nordby says about the shadow:

“Every pain, addiction, anguish, longing, depression, anger or fear is an orphaned part of us seeking joy; some disowned shadow wanting to return to the light and home of ourselves.”

You see, we don't have to live our lives like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The Divine plan is that we **shine conscious light** on our shadow aspects, bring them from the unconscious to conscious, not so we can beat ourselves up – but so we can **let the LIGHT swallow that darkness up.**

So we can *“return to the light and home of ourselves.”*

Sounds pretty amazing, huh?

Benefits of Shadow Work: Part of the Divine Plan

Regardless of where you are on your life journey, you may benefit from doing shadow work. I tend to refer this as doing your “inner healing work”. Even if you've “been there, done that”, you can still benefit from going deeper.

You see, we're human beings comprised of mind, body, and spirit (consciousness).

As a society, we tend to spend a lot of time polishing the mind and body, all concerned about how we look and how we come across to others.

And we tend to put spiritual care last...which is not how it should be.

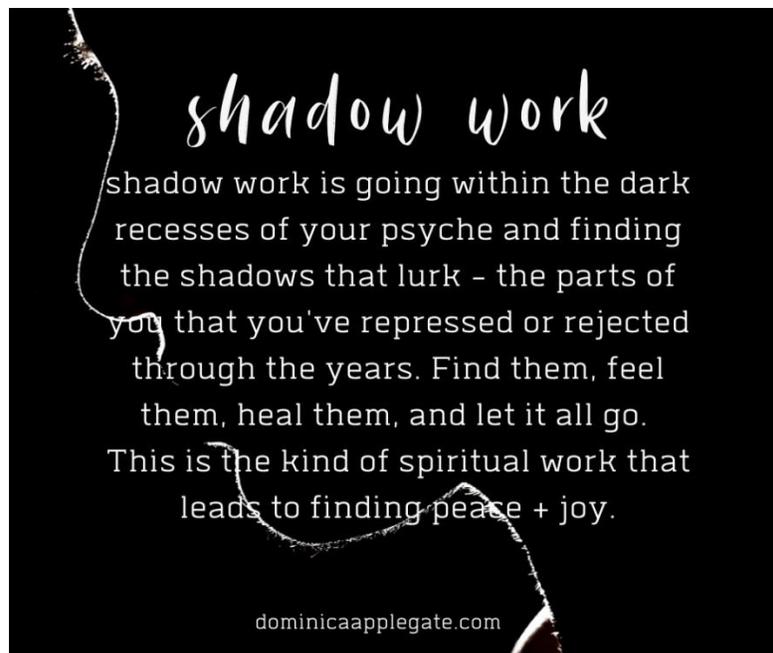
God, or Divine Intelligence, since the very beginning has been expanding and growing everything, including us. And part of our expansion is **waking up and growing up**. Becoming more spiritual, conscious, spiritual, etc.

You see, this is part of the divine plan – shadow work!

- *Waking up!*
- *Conscious evolution!*

There are so many benefits of doing shadow work, such as:

- Feeling more peaceful
- Feeling happier
- Feeling more connected to others and life itself
- Experiencing better relationships
- Experiencing spiritual growth or maturity
- Enjoying increased creativity
- Having better insight, more clarity



I hope this will inspire you to get real with yourself right now.

Have you ever really dug deep to excavate your shadows? Face your fears? Deal with your childhood, trauma, etc.? I mean consciously dig down to the roots?

Not that many people do, and this is one reason there's so much chaos and misery in the world.

But I always say, "As I heal, others heal. As we heal, the world heals."

How To Do Shadow Work

Shadow work is important, and I want to help you find your path to doing it in a way that works for you. The road to healing and wholeness may look different for each person. Some feel led to shadow work. Others enjoy inner child healing. Still others may see a Shaman or pastor or spiritual advisor.

Let's not judge others for their journey, but keep our focus on our own. My hope is that you'll be intrigued by shadow work and begin a fresh, inner spiritual journey, growing more conscious on your enlightenment journey.

The following are some things to keep in mind as you continue on in your shadow work:

One: Be Willing

Be willing. It might feel scary, but I promise you this can help you in so many ways. Be gentle with yourself too. It's not easy to consciously realize that you've been a jerk, or selfish, or abusive, or a whiner, or used substances to cope or harbor resentment, or use passive aggressive behavior, or try to manipulate and control others.

It might not be that comfortable, but know that those darker aspects of you can be overcome by CONSCIOUS LIGHT. **And love.** So, be willing to love yourself along this process.

Two: Become An Observer

When you begin Shadow Work, it's a great time to start a mindfulness and meditation practice. If you're not sure how to meditate, start learning. There are wonderful free teachings online, and likely in your community.

You'll want to learn how to become an observer of your thoughts, beliefs, etc. rather than think you ARE them. This will help you self-judge less.

For example, if you find a shadow part that's selfish, you can observe that part of you and dig around there to try to find the source, but you don't have to go around thinking and proclaiming, "I am selfish". You (your spirit self, your conscious self, your consciousness, real part of you) is not selfish at all. **It's pure Love.**

That shadow part of you that's selfish, that's a part of you that you can deal with in shadow work, ultimately dissolving it (or some say integrating it) into your psyche. (Letting it go)

Note: Meditation is great, but it alone may not cause your shadows to disappear (integrate). Why? Because meditation prompts us NOT to identify with our "self", which is our false self, which is our shadow. By being in the present, and not ever taking the time to dive deep into the

shadow, you're not making the unconscious conscious. You're not facing your shadow (old wounds, negative emotions, etc.)

How can you let go of something you've never actually picked up? Handled?

So, when beginning shadow work, you will begin the path of "being an observer" of your thoughts, beliefs, etc., but you'll also want to do some digging to find what's lurking in the shadows. (Rather than ignore)

Check out Eckhart Tolle's short video here on the basics of meditation (and enjoy his laughter).

[What Is Meditation?](#)

Three: Explore Your Wounds/Trauma: Do The Work

Directly exploring your past wounds or trauma is necessary at least once in your life. Just thinking about doing the inner healing work won't get you far. Doing it for a few days won't either. You've got to roll your sleeves up, put your sh&t kickers on, and get digging.

The farther down you go, the better.

Shadow work is a long-term process. You've got to put forth the effort and make a commitment. Praying and asking God for help is great, but it's going to take more than that.

For many years, I thought I had no issues. I really thought I had a great childhood. I strived to be the best wife, mother, and servant in the church.

I learned a lot about the Bible and the God of the Bible, but I never learned about the shadows lurking in my subconscious. Professing Jesus as Savior didn't remove those shadows, at least for me. The church didn't encourage "shadow digging".

When I went to the pastor for help in various areas, I was given a few scriptures to think on. When, in reality I would have benefitted from him saying, "Go to therapy. Start a journey to dig deep emotionally and contend with what you find there, so you can begin healing. So you don't pass your wounds onto your children."

[Awakening](#) doesn't happen automatically. Growth requires vulnerability, humility, wisdom, and oftentimes help.

Know that you don't have to do shadow work on your own if you don't want to. Reach out for help from a therapist, spiritual director, or wise sage. You can even do some pretty good digging by working the 12 Steps from the 12 Step support group communities. Get yourself a sponsor and start working the steps, and watch what happens.

I love how Rumi says, *“The wound is where the light enters”*. In other words, our pain and suffering can point us in the direction of our inner world, including our shadows, which ultimately, can be the source of our waking up, or becoming enLIGHTened.

Four: Watch For Triggers

A trigger is something that causes you to emotionally react. It’s the buttons that can be pressed that get you riled up, dramatic, or experience some other sort of negative emotion.

Jung says:

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

I know that isn’t the easiest thing to hear, because it’s so much easier to point fingers at others for our emotional reactions. But I’ve learned this to be true.

What triggers you? Someone’s defiance? Your partner’s neediness? Feeling out of control? Co-worker’s obnoxiousness? Being alone? Feeling afraid? Another’s incompetence? A loved one’s emotional absence?

Pay attention to your strong emotional responses to others and you might just discover parts of your shadow.

Over time, as you become aware of your own dis-owned parts, reclaim them, and integrate them, you’ll have less and less of a reaction to others. Your buttons won’t get pressed as much, and that will feel super good.

Five: Commit For The Long Haul

Shadow work takes time and consistency. If you think it’s “one and done”, I’ve got news for you. Consciously waking up, evolving, growing more enlightened, and transforming is a lifelong process.

Some shadow aspects can be sly, hiding in the far crevices of the mind for long periods of time. For me, I can be feeling oh so spiritual, until, my partner and I have some contrast in the relationship. And, as much as I’d love to say I never get triggered, I certainly do – even after years of “doing the work”.

However, we can look at conflict, contrast, circumstances, people, etc. as props or opportunities to go within and do a “shadow check”. Rather than project onto others, check in with ourselves to see what’s being triggered.

That’s one area you’ll want to get more familiar with as you consciously grow spiritually:

Triggers.

What are your triggers? What buttons, when pressed, cause you to regress into a wounded child?

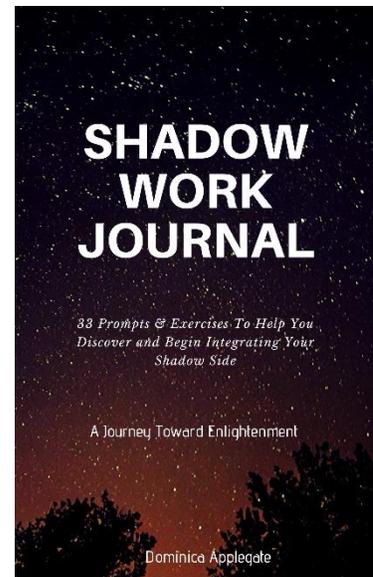
A great way to see how you're doing is to gauge your relationships. If you're struggling with [toxic relationships](#), there's some shadows triggered on one or both sides. Relationships are simply props that we can use to see how WE are doing...rather than just pointing fingers and projecting our shadows onto others. I won't go off on that rabbit hole here...

Six: Tracking: Start A Shadow Work Journal

Journaling is a wonderful tool for growing and healing. Think about starting a journal and writing down how you're doing in your shadow or inner healing work. You don't have to write every day, but it'll be good for you to track your progress.

The power of writing as a healing agent has been known about for eons. Over the years, I've filled many pages with thoughts, feelings, stories, hopes, and dreams – and it's been quite therapeutic.

To help others begin exploring their own shadows in the psyche, I've created a Shadow Work Journal filled with provoking prompts and exercises. This powerful tool is designed to get you digging under the surface, getting to know your shadow side, as well as your authentic, light-filled spirit.



Seven: Learn Your Personality Type/Shadow Archetypes

There are plenty of personality types created by psychologists and theorists. Carl Jung stated that archetypes are universal, archaic tendencies that arise from the collective unconscious and influence human behavior.

Rather than explain [Jung's main archetypes](#) here, I'd rather direct you to the Enneagram, which is what really helped me understand myself and others better.

The Enneagram is “a model of the human psyche which is principally understood and taught as a typology of nine interconnected personality types.”¹

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enneagram_of_Personality

Wrapping It Up

My hope is that this Shadow Work guide has helped you begin to see the importance of shadow work or inner healing work. I hope that you're all in when it comes to taking a fresh approach and enthusiasm about going inside to contend with whatever may be lurking there.

How do you know if you should be doing shadow work?

Well, all of us can benefit from continuing to do this type of work throughout our lives, as we individually and collectively **move toward conscious evolution**. Spiritual growth.

Enlightenment.

If you're struggling with things like alcohol or drug addiction, (or other addictions), depression, anxiety, PTSD, codependency, isolation, existential angst, behavior issues, relationship problems, fear of abandonment, abusive words or behaviors, horrible communication skills, and more, then you'll certainly benefit from doing some shadow work.

You can begin a self-directed inner healing journey, for sure. However, it's a great idea to reach out for some professional mental health or spiritual help from a professional too. Make that investment in yourself, as you are worth it.

I believe in you and I'm rooting for you,

Dominica

Additional Resources:

The following are some great resources that have helped me through the years. Rather than reinvent the wheel, I'd rather direct you to others that are well-known for their work in the field.

Videos:

[Carl Jung and the Shadow – The Mechanics of Your Dark Side](#)

[How to Integrate Your Shadow - The Dark Side is Unrealized Potential](#)

Books:

[Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche](#) by Robert Johnson

[Meeting the Shadow: The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature Paperback](#) by Connie Zweig

[Integral Life Practice: A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening](#) by Ken Wilber

[The Shadow Effect: Illuminating the Hidden Power of Your True Self](#) by Deepak Chopra, Debbie Ford, and Marianne Williamson

Meditations For Shadow Work

[Shadow Work Meditation and Guided Visualization for Healing](#)

[Beautiful Shadow Work Meditation Music](#)

[Medicine Chant by Anilah](#) – Music and video footage of the gorgeous planet.