

# SHADOW WORKBOOK



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*\*When you see an asterisk next to a word, it means that the word is defined in the glossary at the end of the workbook.\**





# PART I: INTRO TO SHADOW WORK

## What Is Shadow Work?

The short answer: Shadow work\* is processing your emotions without judgment. It is allowing the more troubling aspects of yourself to surface and have a voice. From this practice, emotional healing\* becomes possible.

The long answer: Shadow work is founded on the basic idea that there is a conscious mind, with which you are very familiar, and a subconscious mind, with which you are *not* very familiar. This is why self-sabotage is such a common issue people face – There's a split. For example, you may consciously want something, but subconsciously fear it. The fact that this dichotomy exists is **rule #1** of healing.

As you've probably noticed, all sorts of problems arise from only knowing half of ourselves. You may really want to pursue something in life, but you don't because an experience taught you something negative about it. You may grapple with chronic depression, apathy, phobias, or anger, having no genuine understanding of why. You may feel codependent in relationships and powerless to change it. All of these little things can impact your relationships, career satisfaction, family life, income, health, etc. And you can't just shove them aside and get rid of them (which I'm sure you've already tried :) The more gunk you have in your subconscious, the less happiness and self-empowerment you can access.

Emotional healing is a natural byproduct of shadow work because traumas are stuffed down deep in the psyche. In other words, the troubling things you experienced - especially at a young age - left distinct imprints. They created fears, beliefs, and negative patterns in you. Everyone has unique emotional imprints, but we face a lot of the same human problems as a result.

Any of your personal traits that were deemed "wrong" (either by you or your caregivers) will exist in your shadow. This is hugely important to acknowledge because those traits don't go away - They express themselves in a negative way. For example, healthy confidence might degrade into self-loathing or some other warped expression if we feel that confidence is somehow "bad."

In another instance, someone's drive and ambition can go awry, mutating into workaholism or even anorexia. Basically, when something in you is being repressed, it will find a convoluted way to express itself. This is **rule #2: No repressed traits are without consequence.**

## What Is a "Shadow Aspect?"

In simple terms, a shadow aspect\* is a part of you – such as a personality trait, a recurring emotion, or a negative habit – that you do not fully understand or control. Typically, we resist associating ourselves with these aspects because they go against our conscious understanding of who we are - They don't fit comfortably. These aspects can wreak havoc on your life simply because they have been shunned, misunderstood, and kept in the dark. Some of the most destructive people on the planet are the ones who are least aware of their shadow aspects and most unwilling to face them. Facing your shadow can be a humbling experience, which is why it's not exactly a favored past-time in our society.

This brings us to **rule #3: You haven't done anything wrong.** In Freudian times, shadow aspects were painted as sinister - evidence that all humans were evil and egotistical. But honestly, that's just unnecessary drama that creates guilt and fear. While shadow aspects have led people to do negative things, it doesn't mean that we're all monsters doomed to act out our pain. Shadow aspects are normal, and they don't mean that you've failed at anything.

## The Benefits of Shadow Work

*"The rewards are profound. Shadow work enables us to alter our self-sabotaging behavior so that we can achieve a more self-directed life."* - Connie Zweig

Shadow work slowly eliminates the boundary between light and dark, our conscious and subconscious. Self-sabotage happens when we have fears and negative beliefs that contradict something we want. For example, someone may consciously want to eat healthy and lose weight, but subconsciously they have a belief that thin people must starve and go without. You can't possibly sabotage yourself when ALL of you is in favor of something - when ALL of your heart is in it. Shadow work reveals the aspects that are holding you back from being "all in."

## Why Do You Need a Shadow Work Practice?

*"When we were children we had what we might visualize as a 360-degree personality. Energy radiated out from all parts of our body and our psyche. We had a ball of energy, all right; but one day we noticed that our parents didn't like certain parts of that ball. They said things like: 'Can't you sit still?' Behind us, we have an invisible bag that we filled with the parts of us our parents didn't like, to keep their love. By the time we go to school our bag is quite large. Then our teachers have their say: 'Good children don't get angry.' So we take our anger and put it in the bag. 'By the time my brother and I were twelve we were known as 'the nice Bly boys.' Our bags were already a mile long."* - Robert Bly

Regardless of where in the world you live, you exist in a society where people are not fully free. People don't feel empowered or capable of being authentic. We harbor fear, and we're conditioned by social norms that don't always benefit us.



We live in societies where fragmentation\* occurs. If you read a lot of spiritual content, you may hear this referred to as “splitting” or “fracturing” as well. In any case, fragmentation is when we lose a part of ourselves to trauma. You don’t have to think of this in an esoteric or mystical way if it makes you uncomfortable. You can also think of fragmentation in a literal sense – When even a minor trauma occurs, usually in childhood, our nervous systems are shocked. Our survival instinct is activated, perhaps for the first time in our life. In these moments, your mind dissociates from your bodies so that you don’t have to fully **FEEL or PROCESS** what is occurring (This is especially common with abuse). We are permanently impacted by these events, typically developing fears and negative thinking patterns associated with the original trauma. Throughout our lives, a ripple effect occurs and we experience situations in ways that are reminiscent of the original trauma. This happens so that we have recurring opportunities to recognize and heal the issue. But most people don’t realize this, and so the patterns are solidified in our lives.

So why do we need shadow work? Shadow work lets you **return to original traumas so you can both feel and process in a way you couldn’t the first time**. Even without knowing the original source, shadow work teaches you how to be self-aware and heal heavy emotions. Through shadow work, we learn to “parent” ourselves from the safety of our own practice. We create the safe space we needed - and didn’t quite have - in our early life. In this sense, you can see shadow work as a maturity practice - We become more emotionally developed and stable.

### **How do you know if you are “traumatized?”**

Ok, here’s the short answer – pretty much everyone is. In psychiatry, doctors are only taught to recognize the most severe and obvious kinds of trauma – things like PTSD, dissociative identity disorder, sexual abuse, etc. But in reality, something as common as witnessing an argument can be traumatizing – especially at a very young age. So why doesn’t anyone talk about this? Here’s the thing: **We are desensitized to trauma**.

Unfortunately, this is why lot of people feel silly or weak for having emotional issues. They think, “I have no reason to be upset. I must just be crazy.” They pretend nothing is wrong, and so the issues fester. If you feel this way too, let me reassure you: This is never the case. You are never crazy or hopeless. The idea of emotions being meaningless nonsense is left over from the age of patriarchy, which over-emphasized logic and undermined emotion + intuition. If you’re feeling a strong negative emotion, it does come from somewhere, and it is valid.

**What about lightworkers, empaths, highly sensitive people, etc?** There is nothing radically different about people who identify with these labels. You may be more impacted by life simply because your nervous system is especially sensitive to stimulus. The more capacity you have to feel, the more negative emotions you can absorb. This doesn’t make you more “messed up” than everyone else – just more aware of, and affected by negativity (although there may be people telling you that you’re “broken” and have a “mental illness”). You are not *as* desensitized as others. It’s as if everyone was given rose-colored glasses, but they skipped you. You see the pain in humanity and you *feel* it. Distracting and suppressing doesn’t work as well for you. Being more sensitive initially seems like a weakness/problem because we just see the pain. But when sensitive people become empowered, they realize it’s more like a superpower than a disability.

# What Actually Happens When You Start Shadow Work

## (8 Changes)

### **You become aware of discomfort.**

Ehhh... yea. It gets worse before it gets better. The most obvious change at the beginning of a shadow work practice is the fact that you feel like crap. Does shadow work make people feel like crap? **No!** It makes you aware that you feel like crap. Ya feel me? This will look different for each person. For example, you may simply notice that you feel super agitated when you try to sit with your emotions. You may feel the same difficult emotion come up over and over. You might also feel blank and empty and think, "This isn't working." Though it sounds odd, all of this is good, and it's a sign that you're making progress. If you feel awful, don't panic. This is to be expected.

### **You start having realizations.**

If you continue practicing shadow work for a while, you'll start getting insights that you didn't have access to before. In my experience, these insights can just pop into your head without any effort. For example, someone might realize that they use sugar or caffeine to keep a "buzz" and avoid the constant fatigue they feel at work. After further observation, they might discover that the root of this habit lies in childhood, when they saw their parents working themselves to exhaustion but trying to stay peppy. Maybe they notice they feel guilty when they're not feeling peppy, which means they suppress the aspect of themselves that gets depressed sometimes.. and so on. These realizations can happen during shadow work, but often they happen spontaneously when we're engaged in something else.

### **You become less reactive.**

Over time, you start to realize that your (and others') reactions are **patterns** rather than genuine responses. For example, every time your spouse criticizes you, you sulk or fly into a rage without even addressing the situation. Rather than being at the mercy of these unpleasant patterns, you start to develop a habit of watching them – just as you would watch a character in a tv show. This is you learning to separate your full self from your ego self. The freedom this provides will shift your entire life in a more productive direction. Over time, you'll grow tired of your old reactions; you'll see them coming from a mile away so you can redirect them.

### **You begin to see the shadows of others.**

While you used to be uncertain about what other people were feeling, now you can start to see the subtle underlying reasons for their behavior. You can start taking things less personally, knowing that other people are dealing with their own emotional baggage too (oftentimes, being run by their shadow without even knowing it). In addition, you'll be able to intuitively respond to people in ways that smooth over conflict and pain because you've learned to **soothe** yourself.

### **You have flashbacks.**

In shadow work, it's very common to have flashbacks that relate to your unique issues. It could start with bits of a sensory memory, like a familiar smell or a snapshot of a scene from your past. These are often significant experiences that shaped you in some way - Otherwise, they wouldn't

be rising up out of nowhere. Sometimes you won't know the meaning or message right off the bat, but that's ok. If a memory is surfacing, just keep observing and staying open.

### **You start having more dreams.**

When you begin any kind of meditative practice, it's quite common to start dreaming more. You may not remember your dreams, but you'll wake up sensing that you had them. You might also have nightmares, which scare many people away from meditation & shadow work. But if this happens, don't worry and don't stop your practice. It simply means that you've shaken loose some mental content, which is actually a good thing. Dreams of any kind – especially nightmares – can signify that our minds are trying to work out a problem. This has been shown in research [studies](#). It can be quite enlightening to start a dream journal, writing in it each morning before the details of a dream fade away. Recurring dreams are your mind's attempt at bringing shadow content to the surface, so pay extra attention to these.

### **You stop believing your own bullshit.**

Yep. This can't be underestimated. There is immense value in being able to look at what you're doing and know – truly know – why you're doing it. So often we stunt our personal growth by assuming we know why. We come up with a logical reason, but it's the emotional reasons you want to uncover. A regular shadow work practice eliminates your ability to do the whole "ignorance is bliss" thing. Even if you try to bullshit yourself about something, it won't work anymore ;) Ignorance is easy, but it's not true bliss.

### **You start to realize your power.**

It sounds cheesy, but I swear a lot of this stuff is like a karate kid movie. At first, you're frustrated. You feel weak, powerless, and victimized by the world. But as you learn more and practice the art of emotional fluency (navigating your emotions consciously), you'll start to notice progress. Maybe you're not reacting to people like you once were. Maybe the little nuisances that used to ruin your day don't even get under your skin anymore. Maybe you suddenly feel like pursuing your goals instead of making excuses. You choose self-respect over self-pity, patience over complaining, self-care over self-abuse. You know that growth is a challenge, but you know you're up for it. Eventually you reach a point in shadow work practice where you are in it for the long haul. You realize that you don't need to be perfect to play the game. Once you reach that tipping point, you're unstoppable. Because at that point, you've officially switched from amateur to pro.

*"The sure sign of an amateur is he has a million plans and they all start tomorrow. The amateur dreads becoming who he really is because he fears that this new person will be judged by others as "different." The tribe will declare us "weird" or "queer" or "crazy." The tribe will reject us. Here's the truth: The tribe doesn't give a shit. There is no tribe. That gang or posse that we imagine is sustaining us by the bonds we share is in fact a conglomeration of individuals who are just as fucked up as we are and just as terrified. When we truly understand that the tribe doesn't give a damn, we're free. Our lives are entirely up to us." - Steven Pressfield*



## What Does Shadow Work Look Like?

Before launching into the five processes, I want to address this and say that shadow work can look a lot of ways. It depends on your unique issues and healing\* preferences. For someone who has a lot of pent up grief and sadness, shadow work may be letting themselves cry – every time they feel like it. No more holding it in. For another person who struggles with anger and feels trapped, there might be a more physical element involved – maybe movement or exercise can help them experience a catharsis – a detoxing of that angry energy. Another person might enjoy the comfort of a regular meditation practice or stream-of-consciousness writing to gain insights. Your personality and needs will shape your shadow work, so don't expect your experiences to be identical to someone else's. Everyone's at a different stage, healing a different thing, in a different way. Roll with whatever happens.

It's kind of funny that even with all the self-development resources and spiritual gurus around today, we still have very little exposure to healthy emotionality in our day-to-day lives. We still struggle to open up to people we are close to. Our coworkers still answer, "I'm fine," when we ask how they're doing after the death of a loved one. We still feel ashamed to cry or show too much feeling in public spaces. Many of us don't even know our own families that well.

For the average person, shadow work is a foreign concept. Embarking on it alone is even more befuddling. There are so few examples of what shadow work LOOKS like – aside from a handful of awesome people who are publishing this kind of content on YouTube and other social platforms in recent years (do some exploring!)

So how do you know if you're doing shadow work 'right?' Start SIMPLE and TRUST yourself. Trust that your process will be just as good as any spiritual guru or psychologist with a fancy degree – because if you stay faithful to yourself, it will be even better.

If you feel freer and  
more like yourself at  
the end of something,  
that something was  
shadow work.

A woman's face is submerged in water, with only her eyes, nose, and mouth visible above the surface. She is looking directly at the camera with a calm expression. The water is slightly rippled, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

## PART II: HOW TO DO SHADOW WORK

Without further ado, let's get to the how. The processes below are the most common ways to do shadow work from my perspective. This is what has worked for me and what I've seen work for other people. By no means is this an exhaustive list of shadow work processes. In addition, these practices are not a one-time magic wand to "fix" all of your problems. Over time, you'll find that shadow work is a lifelong tool that teaches you how to navigate your internal world.

### Uncovering Your Root Issues

Down in the trenches of it, shadow work can seem really hard. How could we possibly expect to discover root issues\* in our subconscious without the help of a psychologist.. or a hypnotherapist.. or a nagging in-law who seems to know everything that's wrong with us?

But the exact opposite is true. Shadow work is accessible to anyone and doesn't require any special expertise. In fact, if more people understood this sacred practice, therapists would be out of business. This brings us to the final rule of shadow work, **rule #5**: The only real requirements are **presence, honesty, repetition, and a willingness to feel**. You do *not* need to be perfect! Keeping this rule in mind and doing your best is all you need to create positive change.

### Choosing a Process

There is no one way that shadow work must be done. Think of it as a maze with infinite starting points all leading to the same end. Healing is an intuitive process that you can sculpt to suit your needs and preferences. You'll know if something is "right" by how it feels to you, not by what it says in a manual. With that said, the process of cracking into your subconscious can be daunting, to say the least. This section is intended to provide some structure and suggestions for how to get started.



## Process 1: Conscious Questioning

The barrier between the conscious and subconscious is more permeable than we realize. It's not necessary to be in a deeply meditative or altered state to access deeper layers of consciousness. All it takes is intention and trusting your intuition, which you'll get better at with practice. Conscious questioning is just what it sounds like – asking yourself questions.

The good thing about conscious questioning is that it's practical and provides insight into your \*root issues right away. It also starts from a place of logic, which is very comfortable and familiar for the human brain. For this reason, I feel like it's the best method for total beginners, or those who are super uncomfortable with more emotional processes.

Conscious questioning works like this:

1. **Pick a troubling issue you want to gain insight about.** For example: I always feel overwhelmed before visiting my parents (yup, that's a common one :).
2. **Go through the questions: who, what, when, where, and why.** For example: What specifically makes me overwhelmed? Precisely when do I start getting overwhelmed? Where in my body do I feel overwhelmed?
3. Once you've answered these simply and directly, **question each question until it feels like you've hit a root issue.** For example: The precise time I start getting overwhelmed is when my parents start asking me questions. Why do questions make me overwhelmed? Because they make me feel judged. What do I feel judged about? My decisions. What about my decisions do I feel uncomfortable sharing? My career decisions. Why? Because my parents will believe I'm stupid. Why? Because they don't trust me.

At this point, you can keep going with the other questions. But a major negative belief has already surfaced: (in this example) My parents don't trust me. Conscious questioning is like drawing a map of your belief systems. You want to explore an issue as far as you can go and record all your findings. Once you're finished, you can zoom out and look at the full map to gain a better understanding of where you are. It's important not to go fishing around your brain too hard for answers. Instead, ask a question and allow your mind to go blank so an **honest** answer can surface. You'll notice that the part of you answering the questions is usually the part of you that is afraid. Fear-based beliefs are usually what we're uncovering here. The answers need to come from your *emotions* rather than your *intellect* to be reliable.

## Process 2: Direct Processing

In behavioral psychology, there's a treatment concept called "flooding." A therapist will have a patient face their fears in increasing increments. So someone who is afraid to fly might be instructed to watch a video about an airplane. Then they might have to drive by the airport. Then they'd be asked to go inside and watch a plane take off. Eventually, the therapist would work the patient up to taking an actual flight on an airline – facing their ultimate fear. Direct processing is much like flooding – except it all happens in your emotions rather than out in the world.

From this perspective, the best time to practice shadow work is right when you are **triggered\***. Think of triggers as your best opportunity to heal and understand a negative emotion. When it arises naturally, you can feel it clearly and intensely - that's exactly what you want. This isn't to say that all shadow work must be done in the middle of emotional crisis. It's simply means that **(rule #4) when something is rising up in you, it wants to be healed**. If there was nothing to heal, you would feel neutral. Contrary to what we are taught throughout life, feeling strong negative emotion is NOT bad – It's just your mind giving you an opportunity to face a wound in real-time.

So if you experience something that stirs up a strong negative emotion in you, right away, pay attention and explore it instead of avoiding it. If you can, find a quiet space away from other people so that you can fully engage in this process.

Here's the gist of direct processing:

1. **Notice the heaviness.** "I suddenly feel kinda bad right now.."
2. **Name the feeling.** "Is that... sadness? No... it feels more like dread."
3. **Declare openness.** "I'm open to learning what this is. It is safe to feel this fully."
4. **Breath + observe.** Let your mind clear and notice any memories or thoughts that pop up. Stay with the emotion and keep allowing yourself to feel it fully. It even helps to intensify the emotion by thinking about whatever trigger provoked it. The point is not to ruminate on a problem. The point is to intensify the feeling so you can observe, process, and release it (that's what a trigger is for - use it!) Remember the flooding analogy - If an emotion is too overwhelming, we want to work with it in increments. Rather than hopping on an airplane and panicking, the patient takes small steps toward facing their biggest fear.

The most significant part of direct processing is allowing all the visceral feelings to arise and be truly felt. If there is something that you are too afraid to feel, help yourself feel safer first.

## Process 3: Creativity as Shadow Work

There is no better way to discover, examine, and heal from painful wounds than to engage in the creative process. If you boil it down, art is taking abstract concepts and bringing them into reality. We create something tangible from the intangible. We express what was previously hiding in our mind. **This is why art, music, or any type of creative endeavor can be an entry-point to shadow work**, especially if you have trouble expressing verbally. If you're an artist of any kind, you're probably already doing some shadow work without realizing it.

We're all familiar with the stereotype of the tortured artist shutting themselves away from the world and re-emerging with some masterpiece, some work of art. It's no coincidence humans have been creating art since the beginning of our existence. You can argue that it's one of the staples of our existence like food and water. Art assists us in dredging up the gunk at the base of our psyche and uncovering the meaning in it. It has dragged many a human out of the depths of despair, stronger and wiser than before. After we create, we understand a little piece of ourselves and the world better.

Humanity's most beloved artists used their craft to grapple with deeply painful emotion - Van Gogh, Edgar Allen Poe, Virginia Woolf, just to name a few. There was no logical reason to create in those times - It certainly didn't pay the bills or earn you much respect. Yet they created relentlessly because the intuitive part of them knew that within their art was healing. These artists lived during harder times and many committed suicide.

Thankfully, times have changed. Stigmas surrounding mental health issues are loosening. People are getting tired of suppressing their pain and plunging forward in a fruitless rat race. They're speaking up. Healing modalities like meditation and yoga are more accessible today - even to those living in poverty. So if you're an artist who isn't sure if there's any point to exploring your craft, I assure you, there is.

If the other shadow work processes described in this book don't appeal to you, try this instead:

1. Select your favorite artistic medium - drawing, singing, knitting - anything that genuinely interests you.
2. Now, the key is to use this medium to express, not to distract yourself or zone out. It's fine to let your mind wander a bit, but you want to focus on expressing. Creating is intuitive, so allow any emotions to guide your creation. It doesn't need to make sense.
3. Explore your theme to its end. Once inspiration comes, follow the thread as long as you can. Keep letting ideas flow. Intuitive information often seems nonsensical at first because it comes to you in non-linear ways. Receiving inspiration from your intuition is like seeing random parts of a movie out of order - They're all meaningful and significant, but you won't have a coherent story right away.

*"Follow your own fascinations, obsessions, and compulsions. Trust them. Create whatever causes a revolution in your heart."* - Elizabeth Gilbert



## Process 4: Shadow Meditation

Consider this a daily check-in - a 'speak-now-or-forever-hold-your-peace' opportunity for your shadow aspects. This process is the opposite of direct processing in that you are not facing heavy emotions right as they arise. A shadow meditation should be entered into when you feel mostly calm, safe, and in an environment that won't distract you.

A shadow meditation is much like any other mindfulness practice to quiet your thoughts. However, the intention is to specifically invite heavy emotions to emerge. This is a great practice to cultivate before bed - a kind of debriefing of the day and any uncomfortable feelings that may not have had a chance to express consciously. I know this happens to me all the time - I'll have a vague negative feeling pop up, seemingly out of nowhere. Eventually, I'll notice the subtle dis-ease that I feel. So I sit down to examine it and ask myself, "At what point today did I start feeling this? What is this feeling?" I've often been surprised at what fears make themselves known.

Meditation is accessible to anyone, and the more you practice, the more you get the hang of it. Any meditation that causes you to observe or recognize inner discomfort is a great start. Before launching straight into trauma work, try a simple vipassana meditation just to get used to sitting with discomfort. It's important to cultivate a sense of safety before dredging up painful feelings. Our psyche has mechanisms in place to protect us from pain. So if we try to force negative emotions out without creating a safe environment, they will resist. This stalemate with our emotions is why many people feel "stuck."

You might also benefit from reading [What Is Enmeshment?](#), where I talk about carving out space and learning to distinguish yourself/your needs/your emotions from others. A shadow meditation can help tremendously with this because we separate ourselves from the outside and listen. The world is full of loud voices that are not your own, but it can be hard to tell the difference. Regularly checking in with yourself will ensure you don't become lost in the agendas of others. It will also help you get out of the habit of suppressing your negative emotions and letting them build up.

*Carve out space for that which wants to emerge.*



**"Chaos  
is merely  
order  
waiting to be  
deciphered."**

-José Saramago



# PART III: THE SHADOW WORKBOOK

## Habit Assessment

In the space below or in a separate notebook, free-write answers to the following questions:

What is one habit you have that drains you/upsets you/frustrates you the most?

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If you stop doing the habit above, what negative outcomes do you fear?

I fear I will \_\_\_\_\_

I don't think I can \_\_\_\_\_

People will think \_\_\_\_\_

I'll lose \_\_\_\_\_

I'll be \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If you stop doing this habit, what **positive** things/feelings will you miss out on? (Yes, your negative habits provide something, otherwise you wouldn't have them! What might it be?)

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Can you identify outside sources that makes you feel obligated to continue this habit? (boss, family, spouse, kids, neighbors, the media, etc.)

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List all toxic people and situations that you must begin to distance yourself from (This includes anything that regularly discourages you, makes you question your self worth, or drains you):

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Brainstorm: What are some ways you can distance yourself from these outside influences? What practices can you begin to incorporate **in place of** these negative influences to remind yourself that *you* have power?

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If you're feeling overwhelmed, guilty or like you can't possibly shift your life this radically, don't worry. This doesn't need to be done overnight. This is just a surface-level assessment to get you started in understanding what needs to change. Examining habits and outside influences may seem somewhat unrelated to shadow work. But what is consciously known to you is the easiest starting point. We must begin to distinguish between the roles we play and our real selves. Making the tough decision to cut toxic things out of our lives is necessary to become a truly empowered being.

## Signature Emotion Identifier

We can feel overwhelmed as if there are so many issues stewing under the surface. But as we practice feeling our emotions fully, we may find that the same few feelings arise again and again. Some signature emotions\* will take time to surface, but you can start with the ones you are consciously aware of. Start getting acquainted with your emotional norms and what springs up on a regular basis.

Circle the dominant emotions that arise most often for you. (Remember, this is not what you *think* you are, or what you've been *told* you are. This is what you *feel*.)

embarrassment	anger	hatred
laziness	depression	dread
sadness	anxiety	emptiness
unmotivated	panic	embarrassment
uncertainty	hopelessness	laziness
self-pity	numbness	sadness
jealousy	worthlessness	grief
envy	insincerity	loss
unmotivated	desperation	rage
uncertainty	shame	silence/unable to
self-pity	hesitance	express self
betrayed		

Something not listed above? List it here:

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Be precise. For example, don't say, "I feel bad when people are mean to me." Instead say, "I frequently feel mistreated." In this case, feeling *mistreated* is the recurring emotion, regardless of outside circumstances.

What are the specific situations [that you know of] that usually trigger\* the emotions you circled?

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Once you identify some signature emotions, you have a good sense of where to aim your healing work. If you can't seem to identify your emotions just yet, start by observing them. Sit in meditation and observe any discomfort until it intensifies and becomes precise enough to name. In addition, **remember that negative emotions are always symptoms of something deeper**, never a problem in and of themselves. The goal is *not* to stop feeling the emotion. The goal is to understand the underlying reasons for the emotion and to process it with self-compassion.

## Shadow Meditation Sheet

Start by simply setting an intention for healing at the start of a meditation. Once relaxed, ask that any unresolved content of the day reveal itself. Say or think, "Is there anything that needs to be shown to me right now?" This simple question can trigger a memory or reveal something significant to work with. If it does, just relax, observe, and let it play out. This kind of routine check-in is the basis of self-care and "mental hygiene" as they'd say in the old days. It's a profound and fundamental healing practice anyone can do. Sometimes these revelations will surprise or confuse you ("I never knew I felt that way.") That's perfectly normal and expected - It means you are tapping into subconscious material, which is precisely the point.

What thoughts popped up during this meditation?

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What feelings arose during this meditation?

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What memories surfaced during this meditation?

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What insights, even if seemingly random, surfaced during this meditation?

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If painful feelings arose, what are some positive things that came out of having these feelings (new realizations, lessons, experiences, growth, changes, etc)?

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From now on, how can I demonstrate more compassion for myself surround these issues?

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## Automatic Writing Prompts

If you're feeling blank or blocked, automatic writing prompts can get you thinking and interacting with shadow aspects\*. Select one prompt at a time, either every day or whenever you feel you need an idea prompt. The point is not to focus on depressing topics, but to start exploring your heavier emotions and get comfortable engaging with them. Why do they exist? Get curious. When you get the hang of it, you can start making your own prompts.

When was the last time I felt a lack of freedom?

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It hurts the most when people..

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In what situations do I feel out of control?

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In what situations do I feel the most powerless?

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What are the qualities I don't like about myself, and why?

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“This thing of darkness  
I acknowledge mine.”

- William Shakespeare

## Shadow Needs and Desires

Why do we go about getting things we want in underhanded ways? In our culture, it is frowned upon to express shadow needs (which are often ego needs). For example, the desire to be famous, rich, or beautiful. We're conditioned to want these things, but *simultaneously* conditioned to believe these things are vain. The problem? Every person on earth desires these things. Duh! As a result of the mixed messages, we end up pursuing these needs in a secretive/shameful way. Or, we repress, deny, or ignore these needs so they begin to express in a negative way (because remember rule #2 - No repressed aspects are without consequence - They will find a way to express). Being more light-hearted about needs that we're not so proud of is our gateway to getting these needs met in *healthy* ways. Now be honest!

I want people to see me as: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish I owned: \_\_\_\_\_

I want my partner/friends/family to be more: \_\_\_\_\_

I want to be known for my: \_\_\_\_\_

My "worst" quality is my need for: \_\_\_\_\_

How are you supposed to list shadow needs when they're unconscious? Well, there are some hints here. First, **your pet peeves are often direct reflections of your own shadow aspects\* in others.** This makes things easier - What ticks you off?!

When other people act \_\_\_\_\_, it irritates me or makes me uncomfortable.

When other people say \_\_\_\_\_, it irritates me or makes me uncomfortable.

When other people need \_\_\_\_\_, it irritates me or makes me uncomfortable.

When other people fear \_\_\_\_\_, it irritates me or makes me uncomfortable.

Another hint: **Look at your jealousy and envy.** Who do you want to be like? Who's your idol? What kind of person walks into a room and makes you feel super insecure, envious, or less-than? Is it a rich person? Then your ego desire is probably for money. An attractive person? Then your ego desire is to be attractive. Smart person? It's intelligence. Popular person? Status.

Ok, so here's another thing about ego needs: If you feel you already have it, it won't really pose a problem. For example, if your ego need is to be popular, and you already *feel* popular, let that be the end of it. But if you *don't* feel popular, it's important to be very honest with yourself about how you are *pursuing* that need. The more openly and honestly you can do it, the better. Remember, these needs don't make you evil. The only time they pose a problem is when we deny them or pursue them in inauthentic ways.

In addition, remember that shadow needs aren't your fault. A lot of times they are thrust upon us by culture and cemented into our psyche. This isn't something you should've or could've prevented. Work toward consciously releasing guilt and shame over these issues.

"Confronting your shadow is the first test of courage - a test sufficient to frighten off most. But if you can see your shadow and bear knowing it, a part of the problem has already been solved."

-Carl Jung



## PART IV: UNDERSTANDING SHADOW

### Why We Get Stuck (4 Reasons)

It's totally normal to feel like you're "stuck." As I've said, the process of emotional healing is anything but predictable. If you're feeling stuck, consider the following possibilities:

**The real issue is hiding behind something else.** Especially for those with very active minds, our logical brain can come up with all kinds of issues that we *think* we have. You might feel like your attempts to heal or measure your progress are lackluster. People often say, "I know what's wrong with me. I just can't seem to fix it!" In these cases, keep doing the work. Suspend your assumption that you know what the problem really is. Stay open to deeper layers of information.

**You are too insistent on finding a specific solution or answer.** In other words, you're feeling impatient and you just want to rush through and "know the answer" already. Again, this is the logical mind trying to take over an intuitive process. You are trying to skip the actual healing and learning process that needs to happen – without it, the progress you experience will feel fake and empty (because it is!) Trying to control, limit, or speed up your shadow work practice is missing the point. Recognize when you feel like you are pushing, forcing, or feeling any other "hard" energy and soften up a bit. When answers do come, they will be effortless.

**You are not emotionally ready to face something.** Sometimes, you might be especially resistant to a certain issue. It may be so uncomfortable to look at that you have multiple defense mechanisms in place to protect yourself from it. This is common with boredom - Most of us have a huge line of defense against it: TV, food, texting, sex, the internet, gossip, work, etc. With that kind of arsenal, we never have to face boredom.

If an issue is especially painful, be nurturing toward yourself, especially in cases of significant trauma, loss, abuse, etc. It is absolutely fine if you are not ready to think about, heal, or revisit a certain topic. Stay in a process that makes you feel safe and return to the painful issue when you feel stronger. You are not stunting your growth by waiting.

**You haven't adopted radical self-care.** Whoaaaaa boy. This is big. Even with piles of encouragement from friends, family, yoga teachers, spiritual gurus, whoever - it will *still* be challenging to fully embrace self-care at first. Why? Because doing what's right for you regardless of what the world asks of you is counter-cultural (especially for women). Even rebellious folks don't want to be rejected from society. And so most of us aren't fully aware of our unique needs from moment to moment. We're usually more focused on the external - what other people are doing, what chores need to get done, etc. So if we can't see our own emotional needs, what can't we do? **HEAL.** Successful shadow work also requires radical **self-acceptance** because we're not going to like everything we find in our shadow. Let's go into radical self-care for a moment:

### **Know What Fuels You**

I'm gonna be honest - We are really freakin bad at this. My first attempts at self-care were wayyy too perfectionist - I was so neurotic that I'd quickly turn "self-care" activities into stressful jobs :) Radical self-care is all about self-awareness. If you don't know yourself well, you can end up following routines and practices that don't truly fuel you. In other words, you go through the motions of self-care, but you don't actually benefit from it. It doesn't nourish you.

We know that extroverts are fueled by social activity, while introverts are drained by social activity. So this is a good place to start - If you're an introvert, making sure to refuel with alone time is absolutely essential. For extroverts, scheduling some form of socialization on a regular basis is important. Knowing this simple fact about yourself helps you practice **EFFECTIVE self-care.** **What other things do you know about yourself that can guide your self-care choices?** Self-care doesn't just have to consist of rest. It also includes hobbies and activities that keep you feeling fueled and inspired.

### **Make it Sustainable**

Whatever self-care practices you are hoping to introduce, make sure to choose things that are sustainable over time. Maintain your self-care practices regardless of whether you are "performing well" or hitting all of your goals (*unconditional* self-acceptance).

If you've been hard on yourself for a long time, you may be starting to realize that it **isn't very effective.** Being hard on yourself doesn't mean you'll achieve more, get rich, find love, or do anything else faster. In fact, self-loathing slows the progress of these things. So start brainstorming some self-care rituals you can easily implement. Don't make it another job! You might even notice positive side effects to these rituals like better relationships, better sleep, concentration, a cleaner diet, etc. Self-respect tends to leak out into other areas of your life, allowing for better decision-making across the board.

*"If you want to live an authentic, meaningful life, you need to master the art of disappointing others, hurting feelings, and living with the reality that some people just won't like you. It may not be easy, but it's essential if you want your life to reflect your deepest desires, values, & needs."* - Cheryl Richardson

Ok, so that's the end of my self-care tangent, and that concludes the 4 reasons why you might feel stuck. I also want to propose this idea to anyone who is feeling stuck in their emotional progress: **How do you *know* you're stuck?** Is it because you feel bad? You haven't hit the lottery yet or met the man/woman of your dreams? A lot of times, we just assume we're stuck because nothing outwardly amazing is happening. We don't feel radically transformed yet. But in truth, a lot of your progress and healing won't feel like anything amazing.

Have you ever been walking on a beach looking down at the sand? Each step feels heavy, like it takes effort to plod along. But eventually, you look up and everything looks different – You can't quite see the spot where you entered the beach, and you might even feel a little lost because your surroundings are so different. This is exactly how shadow work is. You make slow steps forward that seem arduous, maybe even pointless. Weeks, months, or years down the road, you stop and notice that the scenery of your life looks radically different - *better*. You've grown in more ways than you can count and everything is easier than it once was. Your old struggles seem silly in hindsight; your big accomplishments seem easy.

So every time you feel stuck, acknowledge that you aren't supposed to breeze through every issue; you wouldn't learn much if you did. Each experience, each thing that looks like a setback, is probing you to understand more.



## How to Tell When Something Has Been Integrated or Healed

**You are no longer triggered by things that used to trigger\* you.** This is the most obvious indicator that you've integrated something big. Things that once really bothered you have less of an effect – or no effect on you at all.

**You gain a sense of relief and lightness.** You'll know it when you feel it.

**You don't need willpower anymore.** This is an interesting one. Essentially, we need willpower when we're pushing against ourselves to do something we don't fully want to do. Oftentimes when you heal a certain aspect of yourself, you find that willpower isn't needed anymore – You can simply start practicing whatever healthy habit you wanted to incorporate.

**There is no 'emotional charge' to the topic.** Just like live wires have an electrical charge, unhealed emotions have an emotional charge. In other words, some kind of negative feeling gets jolted when you think/talk about that subject. When something is truly integrated, you will feel **neutral** in relation to that subject. This is distinctly different than feeling numb or empty, which feels negative. Neutrality is a positive indicator that something is healed.

I also want to note that there are sometimes physical symptoms - especially when something major has shifted. In my experience, I've had head pressure/headaches, ears popping, a loud ringing in the ears, and a vibration feeling throughout my whole body (yea..pretty crazy). I'll also feel unmistakably lighter and renewed for the next few days after a big healing. In the past, I assumed these odd symptoms were random. But I've found the same exact ones recurring after these big emotional shifts. I later learned that ear ringing/popping is a common symptom for mediums who regularly come in contact with new energies (spirits, ghosts.. whatever you believe them to be). Our ears also ring and pop on airplanes and when we climb mountains because the air's density becomes lighter. So the body may react the same when it releases something *internally* dense. In my case, I literally hear the new frequency my body is in through my ears, and I feel an actual vibration because my body is readjusting to the new norm - the new, lighter density. When I experienced these things for the first time, it definitely freaked me out and even felt paranormal. But there's no need to worry about physical symptoms - Be especially skeptical of any fear-based interpretations from other people (e.g. you have an illness! you are being contacted by demons! you aren't really healed! ah!) If you feel better, let any metaphysical symptoms you experience serve as confirmation of your progress. And if you don't experience anything unusual, that's fine too.

Of course, your experience may include different physical symptoms, the same ones as mine, or none at all. Just be sure to note what they are so you can get familiar with what is normal for your body.

## Signs that an Aspect Isn't Healed Yet

**You are regularly triggered by the same things.** Triggers are an easy way to gauge your state of healing on any issue. Are your reactions to your triggers the same? For example, an alcoholic knows he's healed when he attends an event at a bar and has no anxiety, no urge to drink. This is quite a feat. If you still feel limited or powerless to certain triggers, don't worry. There's just more to heal.

**You regularly experience the signature emotion\* associated with a specific shadow aspect.\*** Let's say that several different situations in your life evoke a sense of panic. Then panic is the signature emotion you are dealing with. You know because it's a familiar feeling that appears often in your emotional landscape. (For more on panic, check out this 4-step process: [What Should You Be Doing About Anxiety and Panic?](#))

**You still have strong desires for things that probably don't benefit you.** Imagine you're out at a party and even though you're not hungry, you have a strong urge to eat lots of sugary desserts. The next day, you wake up feeling sick and disappointed in yourself. But let's say you did a lot of shadow work to understand the aspect of you that wants to overindulge – What gives? Why are you still falling into old habits? In situations like this, the urge is telling you that you still *need* something from that habit or behavior. **You are still benefiting from it, probably in a way that you can't seem to access otherwise.** For example, overindulging in sugar may give you a distinct sense of satisfaction – at least in the moment. If this is a feeling that: a. you really want to experience and b. you can't seem to experience any other way, the sugar habit will be nearly impossible to kick. Satisfaction is still being repressed in you somehow. Thus sugar is your only outlet for relief. In these instances, you must find new outlets to experience the feelings you need to feel. Once you do, the addictive tendencies will start to subside. If you find yourself resisting new outlets for relief, ask yourself what it is about that emotion (e.g. satisfaction) that may make you feel guilty, undeserving, ashamed, etc.

Remember, these are just points to gauge what still needs your attention. Just because something isn't completely healed doesn't mean you haven't made progress. Usually, issues will crop up again and again so that you have many opportunities to process them fully. This can take a while, so don't get caught up on reaching some "finish line" that doesn't really exist. You will benefit from shadow work throughout the entire process. There is no distinct "end" or point of nirvana. If you aren't seeing the outward manifestations of progress in your life, you just need more time, self-support, and clarity. You may also need to get honest with yourself: Is there some reason why you are resisting the healing process or failing to make time for it?

## Recognizing + Responding to Shadow Aspects in Others

It can be confusing to determine whether someone else is acting from their shadow, or if *your* shadow is being triggered by them. If someone irritates you but seems to cause no harm otherwise, it has much more to do with *your* shadow. On the other hand, if someone else's behavior is clearly self-destructive or hurtful toward others, you are likely seeing *their* shadow.

As a rule of thumb: Do. Not. Push. People. When dealing with another person's shadow, it's critical to recognize that you are in the line of fire. It's not the time to lecture or criticize them unless you want the wrath of their pain. You are not speaking to that person's true identity when they are acting out. You're speaking to an aspect of them that is in pain/chaos - an aspect that is much less mature than their full self (Remember, fragmentation\* usually happens in childhood and goes unhealed throughout adulthood. Fragmented aspects do not mature until they are integrated.)

If it feels appropriate and the person trusts you, consider starting a non-confrontational conversation. Your words and tone should imply that you care and want to help – not that you are trying to fix them. (So, "Hey, I notice every time this topic comes up you seem distraught" rather than, "Why are you acting so weird about this again?") If you are feeling emotionally reactive, refrain from talking with them until you are calm.

Relationships can be especially difficult because everyone has different emotional issues. To complicate things further, we often don't know our own issues, let alone our friends', partners', and family's issues. The best-case scenario is to create an environment that encourages openness – a social setting that allows everyone to express how they feel without confrontation so that issues can be brought to the surface. Although it sounds like common sense, this is not the norm in our current society. We still have many hurdles to jump in human consciousness before openness is the norm in marriages, parent-child relations, and other identity-forming relationships. Much like with self-care, you'll have to be a renegade here and initiate honesty and vulnerability in most of your relationships. Recognize that not everyone is as comfortable with emotions and self-awareness as you are. Do what you can and if the person doesn't want your help, take a step back.

\*If this page struck a chord for you, I want you to check out [How to Be an Empath](#). "Don't let others reach up and pull you down. Instead, reach down and pull them up. And if you can't pull them up, do nothing. In other words, always be an uplifter, but never a commiserator."

*"Trying to impose our personal agenda on someone else's experience is the shadow side of love, while real love recognizes that life unfolds at its own pace." - Sharon Salzberg*

## How NOT to Do Shadow Work (6 Pitfalls)

Yes, shadow work is an intuitive process and you should make it your own. But because of the way culture conditions us to be ultra-productive, unnaturally stressed, and overworked, we can easily turn healing into struggle. Shadow work is a much more free-flowing process than what we're used to doing. Here are some ways your shadow work process can become corrupted:

1. **You go into it with a list of things about you that need to be "fixed."** Nope! Nope nope nope. In fact, strike "fix" from your vocabulary. Thanks :D
2. **You get too hung up on "self-actualizing," becoming more productive, likeable, etc.** Shadow work is not about becoming good enough. It's about realizing that you already are. You may catch yourself falling into this trap over and over. For many of us, trying to become good enough is literally an addiction. That's ok! Just notice it, step off the hamster wheel of achievement, and continue doing the shadow work. (You might also want to read my post on NAMI.org's blog, [Are You a Chronic Self-Abandoner?](#))
3. **You compare your progress to others.** This can be extreeeeeeeeemly misleading! You can't accurately compare yourself to how another person's progress *looks*. Deep down, we all know this. We all experience unique circumstances that lead us to different places. So don't create negative meanings and make assumptions about something you don't fully understand. If you feel compelled to compare yourself to others or threatened by others' progress, you may have a scarcity complex (there is not enough), a worthiness complex (I am not enough), or both. Give yourself time and compassion to work through these types of cultural conditioning. They are deeply ingrained in a lot of us.
4. **You try to logically work through an issue.** Shadow work is very much an intuitive, emotional process. If we could simply tell ourselves to behave better and feel better, we would have done it already. There must be *catharsis* - not just a logical understanding. For example, constantly telling yourself that smoking is bad for your health in a myriad of ways won't heal the wound of why you smoke. You already know right from wrong. You don't need to pile guilt onto yourself. The key is to *feel* better.
5. **You constantly call people out on their crap and gossip.** This is an easy trap to fall into when you start becoming more conscious. You can start to get a big head and feel like a sage compared to those who've never even heard of shadow work. But if you go down this path of judgment, you will be humbled. Life has a way of showing us our ignorance. You may realize that the people you judged actually have a lot to teach you. And if you really pay attention, you'll start to see how *you* behave in the same ways they do. Stay humble :)
6. **You try to get rid of your ego.** In the past, both religion and psychology taught that the human ego was evil. But your ego doesn't have to be evil or function in a destructive way. In fact, that's what happens when we deny ego desires. They don't go away. They are stuffed down into the subconscious, where they become shadow – This is when people start taking actions that hurt people. Ironically, the very thing we are trying to avoid by "getting rid of" ego can actually cause us to become crappier people. Nothing needs to be gotten rid of. To heal, you only need to welcome more in. All self-knowledge is beneficial.

## Putting It All Together: An Integration Lifestyle

### Honoring the Lifestyle

I can't speak for the caveman days, but I can say with certainty that human consciousness has been split for a very long time – split between conscious and subconscious. With such a vast reservoir of subconscious material in our collective culture, we can't expect to overcome our individual issues overnight. We are a mirror of our culture and vice versa. That's why shadow work must become a lifestyle if it's going to truly impact our personal lives and the state of the world. You might not care too much about the state of the world – or maybe you're fed up with other people's negligence – but it's undeniably connected to you and your wellbeing.

Shadow work is a lifestyle because you will not heal everything all at once (though it is possible to heal some things quickly). The human ego is fragile, to say the least. Think of how many years your wounds have been compounded and solidified over time. Think of the sheer amount of resistance you have to feeling those shitty feelings. It's going to take you longer to heal than you *think* it should. This is because healing\* isn't logical – it's emotional. We can't just understand something and then snap into a healed state. This is why when depressed people are told to "cheer up," it only makes them feel worse. **It's not a logical decision to feel better** - If it were, we'd all be thrilled all the time. Instead, it's pacing yourself and honoring when you're ready and able to feel better.

With that said, I also want to stress that every little healing, every little realization, every little self-care victory should be celebrated. It's these little wins that improve your mental health **in the moment**, even if you aren't completely healed of everything. Living in the moment and enjoying the progress you've already made is so important. Otherwise, we strive for a finish line that truly doesn't exist. \*\*If you struggle with this, make a habit of listing your progress, successes, and achievements daily - anything that reminds you of how far you've come.

### Practicing the Routine

Remember Pavlov's dogs? He rings the bell and they salivate. Similarly, we want to get to a point where each time negative emotion arises, we automatically begin self-care and self-inquiry. Negative emotion is like Pavlov's bell and the slobbery pooch is our response to our triggers.

Take pride in organizing your healing process. Be conscientious. Try certain things on a schedule. Mix and match processes in a way that feels the most exciting to you. Experiment. See what works, tweak the process, then implement changes. **Yes, shadow work is a highly intuitive, chaotic process. But that is why we must create structure, order, and safety in how we perform it.** We must create our own kind of scientific method for shadow work to fully serve us.

What healing routines or habits will you implement? Which of the processes in this book appeal to you? What **enjoyable** self-care practices will you carve out space for?



*Shadow Work isn't a one-off activity.  
It's a **lifestyle**, a routine, a philosophy.  
It necessitates **self-awareness** + erodes  
our resistance to emotional challenges.*





It's important to truly recognize the struggles you've endured throughout your life. Rather than self-PITY, which says, "I am powerless," we need to engage in self-COMPASSION, which says, "I've been through a lot. I'm strong." The difference in outcome is massive. Self-pity tells us we're weak and to give up, while compassion soothes and encourages us to pursue what we want, at our own pace, without judgment. Remember: You're not doing this because you're broken. You're doing it because you are recognizing your wholeness and bringing it forth into reality.

After operating for so long in a mode of self-repression, people-pleasing, going through the motions, and maybe even self-abuse, it's critical that you take time for healing\* and allow that process to unfold continuously. People often get frustrated and think, "I should be done with this. I already solved this problem." But we heal in layers, not in an instant. As the musician Trevor Hall efficiently phrased it, "You can't rush your healing." Healing is often a step that people want to skip – especially in the ultra-linear Western world, where we like to identify problems and find quick, direct solutions. We acknowledge the validity of masculine energy, but deny the value of feminine energy. This is why we are where we are as a society – emotionally stunted, constantly stressed, and not living as our full selves. To get where we want to be as self-empowered people, both types of energy are absolutely necessary.

We don't let go of pain all in one shot. We each have a lifetime of conditioning built up, in addition to our family lineage which endured plenty of trauma. This is all held in your psyche and your body making you denser. Such pain limits our capacity to make authentic choices. It limits our day-to-day enjoyment and complicates our lives more than necessary.

We let go of pain in spurts, slowly and deliberately when the timing is right. Once you heal something, you win. It can't creep back in and create more chaos. You live free of it forever, and you release it not only for yourself, but for all those who came before you and *couldn't*.

YOU are the one who breaks the tradition of pain.

YOUR ongoing evolution inspires others to evolve.

This is how a real revolution works. As Karl Marx said, "You have nothing to lose but your chains."

## Conclusion

So that's it, folks. Send yourself some gratitude for taking this huge step toward healing and growth. To review, let's look at the rules that were presented earlier in the book. These are your main guidelines. If all else fails, knowing these rules and learning to live by them will fundamentally change how you experience life + handle challenges.

**1. There is a split in human consciousness.** We each have conscious and unconscious aspects, light and dark. Unconscious aspects must be brought into the light to heal.

**2. No repressed aspects are without consequence.** We cannot ignore, mute, or push away aspects we don't like - They will find a way to express and influence our lives.

**3. You haven't done anything wrong.** Having shadow aspects does not make you weak or evil. It does not mean that you've made mistakes or failed.

**4. When something is rising up in you, it wants to be healed.** Experiencing negative emotion is not a bad sign; it's a sign your emotional system is functioning properly and alerting you of pain - just as our nervous systems alert us when we touch a hot stove.

**5. The only real requirements for emotional healing are presence, honesty, repetition, and a willingness to feel.** If you remember nothing else from this book, remember this rule. All else can be improvised when it comes down to it.

Of course, you won't finish reading this and magically snap into a state of total bliss. You will still be challenged, but you will be stronger with this knowledge. Shadow work is a process of refinement and growth. We're taking the way humans have looked at themselves [and reality] for centuries and saying, "Thanks, but we're ready to move on now." It takes time to facilitate this massive internal shift - both in ourselves and in the collective society.

**If you'd like more support, subscribe to the blog where I delve deeper into specific topics surrounding self-esteem, authenticity, healing, navigating relationships, de-conditioning, and examining cultural constructs (a fancy term for "the stuff we do and why").**

I'll leave you with my favorite quote that precisely sums up the purpose of this text, the blog, and the entire *Exist Better* movement...

“There can't be any  
large-scale revolution  
until there's a personal  
revolution. The most  
important kind of freedom  
is to be who you really are.”

-Jim Morrison

## GLOSSARY

Shadow work – the process of unknown psychological content becoming known; subconscious content becoming conscious; emotions are given permission to express rather than be suppressed

Shadow aspect - an aspect of the self that has been pushed into the subconscious, judged, denied, and/or distorted in a negative way

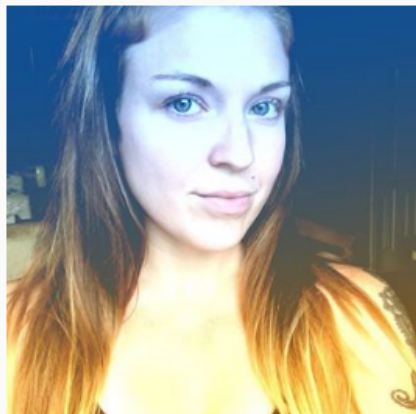
Fragmentation – the opposite of integration; when a traumatic experience causes a person to separate from an aspect of themselves, resulting in a lack of wholeness

Integration/Healing - the ongoing process of allowing yourself to feel heavy emotions and examine negative thoughts and beliefs; accepting shadow aspects with compassion and welcoming them into the light of consciousness

Trigger – an in-the-moment reminder of a past trauma or wound; something that elicits the same signature emotion as the original trauma (e.g. shame, sadness)

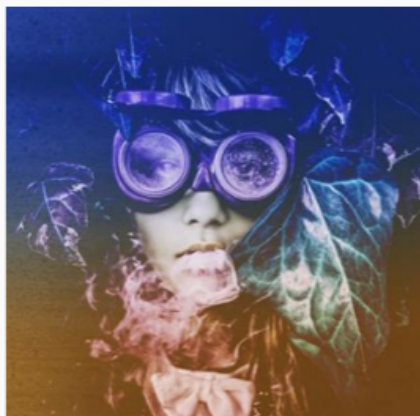
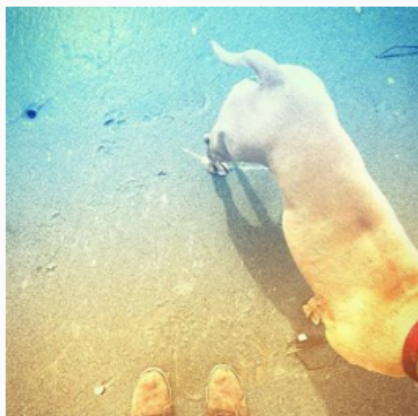
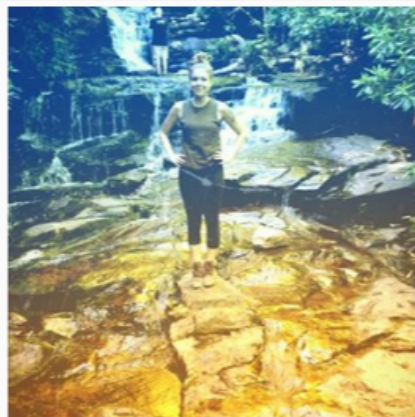
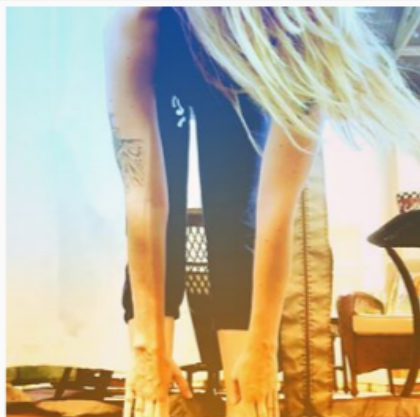
Root Issue – a troubling thought, feeling, or belief that recurs in different situations and at different times in our lives

Signature Emotion – an emotion that repeats regularly, often attached to certain kinds of situations; signature emotions are how you experience your root issues.



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"As artists and professionals, it is our obligation to enact our own **internal revolution**. In this uprising we **free** ourselves from the tyranny of consumer culture. We overthrow the programming of advertising, movies, video games, magazines, and TV by which we have been **hypnotized** from the cradle. We unplug ourselves from the grid by recognizing that we will never cure our **restlessness** by contributing our disposable income to the bottom line of **Bullshit Inc.**, but only by **doing our work**." - Steven Pressfield





# Exist Better



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*ExistBetter.co* is a place to learn emotional fluency and receive guidance in the process. I publish **down-to-earth** mental health talk and compile **practical** information to break free of limiting beliefs and cultural conditioning, **heal** heavy emotions, and come into your **power**.



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Thanks for reading :)

*Love & light & dark,  
Brianna*