

SHADOW WORK

In shadow work, we are bringing to light, the secrets we say only to ourselves. It is the often critical whispers from our subconscious, things which we don't want anyone else to know. This is based off the works of psychologist Carl Jung. When we push parts of ourselves into exile, an internal struggle is born. Only when we embrace the shadow, can we be whole.

This exercise brings up a lot, and requires courage to be vulnerable, honest and put yourself on the page. It may feel scary to put it 'out there' , but actually it already is out there because you embody all of your shadows everyday in your actions, body language, and subliminal thoughts, triggers, reactions and perceptions of external stimuli. So, the secret is already out, but here you get a chance to put it on the page and really look at what you've been telling yourself, evaluate these stories.

And when we look at these shadows, the practice here is to sit with them, give acceptance and compassion to yourself, and see where some of these self judgements may be unfair, twisted, or even inaccurate. Our traumas can be like little time capsules, where the judgement we feared in that time no longer exists.

For example the ridicule we might fear from an incident that happened 20 years ago in grade school is no longer a factor. Those children are now adults who would perceive the situation quite differently. And so, the fear of ridicule can be lovingly released (some inner child work may be needed, but this is the general point).

So, begin to reveal these shadows, and treat it like a purge of all the negative, icky feelings that have been trapped inside. This can be a very cathartic exercise, and if emotions come up, just allow the release; chances are it's much needed. Above all, this exercise must be done with self compassion. This is not to be done as a self harm exercise to further judge oneself. This is only for releasing toxic beliefs, and coming into greater acceptance of oneself as a whole person. When we are able to accept ourselves, and have compassion for the things we have or haven't done, thought, said or felt, then that makes way for self love. When we can accept and love ourselves, then we are better able to allow that love and acceptance from others, and then offer that back out into the world, and a beautiful cycle unfolds. So, let's begin in the dark:

Some things that I don't want anyone to know about me are:

Some things that I judge myself about are:

I feel ashamed about:

Things I haven't forgiven myself for:

Things I haven't forgiven others for:

Coping skills that I had then versus now:

Looking back, and being fair to yourself, you may see that you did the best you could with the skills you had at that time. Nobody taught us emotional intelligence, self love, or how to self soothe in school or at home. Much of what we have done comes from a place of emotional survival, not malice. So, give yourself the compassion that you would typically give others, and forgive yourself.

Things I'm secretly afraid of and why:

Things about myself that I feel are flawed and need to be fixed:

Judgements that others have said that I believe about myself (and are they at all true?):



Now take some time to sit with all of these shadows. You don't have to change anything, you can simply observe and accept. You can also look over what's written here and begin to evaluate it: Are these judgements really true? Are they fair judgements? Could I have changed since I believed this about myself? Are the judgements or punishments I feared still there, or are they gone and I can let that go?

Things that I can see more clearly now, or changes to how I feel about these shadows:

Complete this exercise with some self care of your choice (hot bath, meditation, sleep, self soothing, etc). This is deep work and it's important that you give yourself time to rest and integrate.