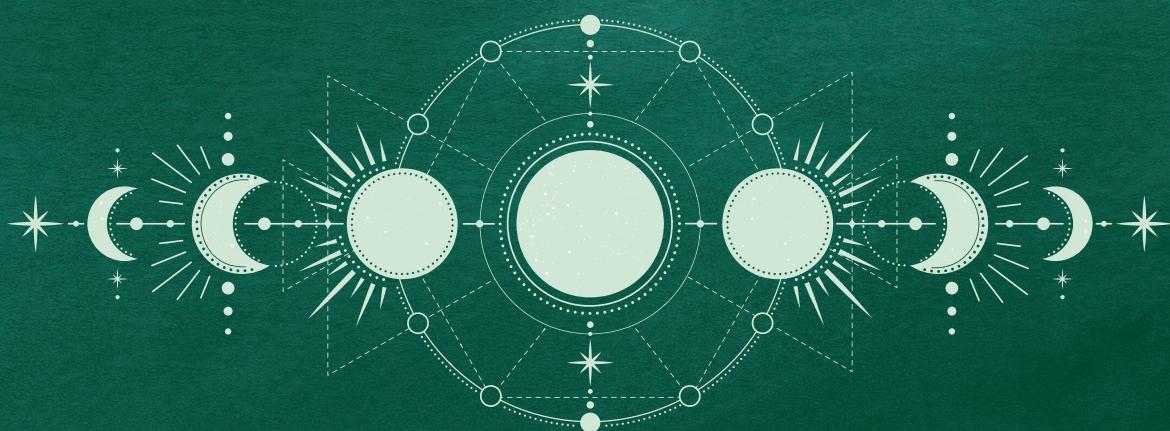


THE SHADOW WORK JOURNAL



BY DR. NICOLE LEPERA
THE HOLISTIC PSYCHOLOGIST



NOTE: THE SHADOW WORK JOURNAL WAS CREATED BY DR. NICOLE LEPERA AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

YOU ARE FREE TO PRINT COPIES, SHARE, OR USE HOWEVER YOU CHOOSE WITHOUT PERMISSION.

***MAY IT BE OF
COLLECTIVE BENEFIT***



MEET YOUR SHADOW

Your shadow self is the part of you that you have denied or repressed since childhood. When we are children, we get all sorts of messaging from people we love about what parts of ourselves are “good” and what parts of ourselves are “bad.” Many of us have felt validated when we heard praise from parent figures who said things like, “You’re such a good and polite kid for doing x, y, and z” or “Don’t be x,y, and z. Share your toys.”

When we are children, we don’t have discernment about what to take personally and what not to take personally. Everything is taken literally and directly. If someone we love very much (whom our survival depends on) tells us that we are *doing* something “bad” or “wrong,” we may come to believe we are *bad* or *wrong*. For example, we might express more of our caretaking side because we have learned that part of us *good*. We may also deny our own wants or desires, believing it is selfish to keep anything or want something just for ourselves.

All of this happens subconsciously, based on the messages we receive. Sometimes, these messages are more direct, especially for those of us who were punished for having certain needs or certain emotions. For many of us, being punished for wanting a lot of attention, for crying too much, or for being “dramatic” is the beginning of adopting a persona or false self to please people around us.

MEET YOUR SHADOW

Our shadow self doesn't only consist of the "negative" things about ourselves, it can also hold many positive traits that aren't socially rewarded or seen by others. Many of us are born into homes that put a lot of pressure on academic performance with hopes that this focus will result in more opportunities and a better life. Often our inherent abilities and talents that do not fit into this path are overlooked. Many of us who, as children, loved artistic expression like drawing or singing might have found these passions ignored or may have been told to "stop messing around" or "wasting time" when we expressed ourselves in those ways. Sadly, many of our shadow selves include creative talents that were not socially rewarded or were dismissed completely.

When we aren't aware of our shadow self, we tend to project it onto other people. We are quick to judge others and use labels (e.g. arrogant, entitled, greedy). You'll notice that the traits you project onto others tend to be patterns that you see in other people consistently. It may surprise some of you to hear that these traits are also within yourself, which is why you see them in others. Sometimes, we may even identify ourselves as "better" than those people, or we may virtue signal when we're around them to cope with the internal conflict of not accepting those aspects of ourselves. The truth is that *all* of us contain messy, broken, hurt, selfish, and jealous parts, and this doesn't make us "bad." The more we accept *all* parts of ourselves, the more we can accept *all* parts of others.

MEET YOUR SHADOW

We can be just as quick to project “good” traits onto others. We may even “hero worship,” or see some people as larger than life or perfect. The reality is, even the people we admire have flaws, insecurities, and qualities that cause them to feel shame. It’s also important to understand the “good” traits that we admire and see within others are *also* within ourselves, which is why we see them in others. It’s only through doing the inner work that we can begin to actually see the good we overlook.

Like our ego, our shadow self is ultimately looking to be integrated, or simply to be *seen*, acknowledged, and honored, so that we can become complete. In other words, so that we can be our whole, fully expressed, authentic Self. Many parts of us have been dismissed or subjectively seen as “bad” by people based on their opinions. In our shadow self lies the creative, beautiful parts of ourselves, as well as the parts we’re afraid of (e.g., the vengeful parts, the jealous parts, the fearful parts, and all of the sometimes scary thoughts that come with them). Meeting our shadow self is meeting our true humanity, and we can all learn to love it.

DO YOU FEEL SHAMEFUL OR GUILTY?

While some of you may be using these terms interchangeably, shame and guilt are two different feelings. Guilt is a feeling we have when we believe we have *done* something wrong, usually with our own actions or interactions. Shame is what we feel when we believe we are inherently wrong or worthless.

While both of these feelings have evolutionary (and social) value by indicating awareness of how we (and our actions) impact others and the world around us, shame erodes our sense of self and can often result in secretiveness around our desirable choices.

Begin to notice when you are feeling shame and practice separating yourself from your choices or actions. Reframe your thoughts to indicate that *you* are still worthy and loveable, even if you (or others) feel disappointed with your actions.

Ex: “I am lovable even when I make a mistake”

SHADOW WORK: MEET YOUR SHADOW

Spend some time exploring the following questions. Some of these answers might not come to you right away, and that's okay. You can always come back to this— The more open you are to this work, the clearer the answers will become.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME OF THE WORST TRAITS,
CHARACTERISTICS, OR BEHAVIORS A PERSON CAN HAVE?**

**WHAT TRAITS, CHARACTERISTICS, OR BEHAVIORS DON'T YOU LIKE
ABOUT YOURSELF?**

**WHAT TRAIT(S) DO YOU SEE IN PEOPLE THAT YOU NOTICE
YOURSELF ALWAYS FEELING ENVIOUS OF (OR WISH YOU HAD)?**

**WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF OR WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS YOUR
GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?**

**WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT MEANS
ABOUT YOU?**

**IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG AND FELT
BADLY ABOUT YOURSELF (STUPID, FOOLISH, OR EMBARRASSED),
WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT YOURSELF?
HOW DO YOU FEEL?**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT FAILURE OR MAKING MISTAKES?
HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FAIL OR MAKE A MISTAKE? DO YOU
ACCEPT FAILURE AND MISTAKES AS PART OF LIFE OR DO YOU FEEL
YOURSELF CONSUMED BY FEARS OF THEM?**

**WHAT TRAITS, CHARACTERISTICS, OR BEHAVIORS MAKE YOU FEEL
THE MOST INSECURE?**

**IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG WHEN
PEOPLE COMMENTED ON ASPECTS OF YOU THAT WERE “WRONG,”
“BAD,” “NEGATIVE,” OR THAT YOU SHOULD CHANGE, WHAT DID
THEY SAY? HOW DID YOU FEEL?**

DO YOU FIND YOURSELF STILL TRYING TO CHANGE THESE ASPECTS OF YOURSELF TODAY?

WHAT TRAITS, CHARACTERISTICS, OR BEHAVIOR DID YOUR PARENT FIGURES IDEALIZE, OR THINK AND SPEAK HIGHLY OF WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD? DID THEY IDEALIZE MONEY OR SUCCESS? WORK ETHIC? HAVING NICE MATERIAL THINGS? BEING “STRONG” OR “NOT WEAK”? HIGH ACHIEVEMENT OR GOOD GRADES? SELF - SACRIFICE OR BEING “SELFLESS”?

WHAT TRAITS, CHARACTERISTICS, OR BEHAVIORS DO YOU IDEALIZE? HOW DO YOU ATTEMPT TO MEET THESE IDEALIZED STANDARDS?

HOW EASILY DID YOU “FIT IN” GROWING UP OR HOW ACCEPTED OR REJECTED DID YOU FEEL BY YOUR PEERS OR FRIENDS? HOW DID YOU FEEL? WHY DID YOU IMAGINE YOU WERE BEING ACCEPTED OR REJECTED?



SHADOW WORK: WITNESS YOUR SHADOW IN ACTION

We can see our shadow through others and our daily interactions with them. Noticing the thoughts that come up when we are around friends, family, and strangers will allow us to discover parts of ourselves that we haven't yet seen. We can also notice what comes up when we consume information through social media, television, or movies. Doing this will cause a profound shift in our lives because most of us unconsciously take in information or interact with the world around us. It's through conscious reflection on these experiences that we gain a deeper awareness of their influence and meaning. The behavior we engage in often has an emotional payoff. Usually, our behavior is based on a desire to satisfy an unmet need. Typically, this motivation is unconscious, and we are not aware of why we do the things we do. In this exercise, we are going to work on becoming conscious of our unconscious motives.

I mostly consume content about _____ and the emotional payoff I get is feeling _____.

In my closest relationships, we usually are bonding over _____ and the emotional payoff is feeling _____.

When I post on social media, I'm usually posting things about _____ and the emotional payoff is feeling _____.

When I am alone, I usually think about _____ and the emotional payoff is feeling _____.

When I talk negatively about someone, I'm usually talking about _____ and the emotional payoff is feeling _____.

Now let's look at your answers. You'll probably notice a pattern. *Are you feeling justified, angry, morally superior, or "less than" others?*

None of these feelings are wrong or bad, we all have them.

CONGRATS!

YOU'VE JUST DONE SHADOW WORK



**Take a moment to congratulate yourself.
It can be so confronting to look at the parts
of us that are challenging or difficult.**

**You've gained so much self awareness just
from doing these simple practices.**

**Next, we're going to practice integrating our
shadow. Integrating our shadow means accepting
the parts of us we feel shameful around.**

**Through self acceptance we're more compassionate,
open, and curious towards ourselves and others.**

INTEGRATING MY SHADOW: AFFIRMATIONS FOR INTEGRATING MY SHADOW

Affirmations can help us rewire neural pathways. In order to practice affirmations it's important to bring our body into them. Sit in a space you feel comfortable in. Take a few deep breaths. As you say these affirmations out loud (or to yourself) FEEL what it would feel like in your body if these were true. The more you practice, the easier this will become.

IT'S SAFE FOR ME TO FEEL ANGRY. ANGER HELPS ME PROTECT MYSELF AND SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

I AM WORTHY AND LOVABLE EVEN WHEN I MAKE MISTAKES.

I CAN SLOW DOWN AND REMIND MYSELF TO TAKE DEEP BREATHS WHEN I'M OVERWHELMED

I HAVE A CHOICE IN HOW I RESPOND TO EVERYTHING AND I CHOOSE TO BE KIND TO ME

I AM SHOWING UP FOR THE YOUNGER VERSION OF ME WHO DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE SHOW UP FOR THEM

I FORGIVE MYSELF FOR WHAT I DID IN SURVIVAL MODE

ALL PARTS OF ME GOT ME TO WHERE I AM TODAY AND I'M PROUD OF ME

EVERYTHING I FEEL IS VALID, AND I TRUST MYSELF TO COPE WITH STRESSFUL EMOTIONS

I AM LEARNING, GROWING, AND EVOLVING EVERY DAY

I DIDN'T DESERVE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AND I AM AN ADULT WHO CAN CHOOSE TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES NOW

ACCEPTING MY SHADOW

These next couple of pages, you're going to be working on accepting your shadow self. Allow yourself to free-write whatever comes to mind without judgment. These prompts are going to guide you towards a more compassionate relationship with yourself. The compassion you show yourself will flow into every other relationship you have.

ONE WAY I AM GOING TO BE KINDER TO MYSELF IS:

SOMETHING I REALLY APPRECIATE ABOUT MYSELF IS:

SOMETHING OTHERS APPRECIATE IN ME IS:

**EVEN THOUGH MY CHILDHOOD WASN'T PERFECT,
IT DID TEACH THAT:**

**ONE KIND (ENCOURAGING) THING I WOULD SAY TO MY
YOUNGER SELF IS:**

**WHEN I FIND MYSELF IN A SHAME CYCLE, BEATING MYSELF UP, I AM
GOING TO STOP AND REMIND MYSELF:**

**WHEN I FIND MYSELF HURT BY SOMETHING SOMEONE SAID OR DID, I
WILL BE THERE FOR MYSELF BY DOING:**

I NO LONGER NEED TO BE PERFECT AND I'LL SHOW THIS
TO MYSELF BY:

I AM AWARE OF MY WOUNDS, AND ALSO AWARE OF MY GIFTS.
SOME OF MY GIFTS ARE:

I AM BECOMING WHOLE



Use this last page to write a letter to your 10 year old self. Let them know that you're there for them, you know what happened, and they're worthy/lovable exactly as they are. If you feel an urge to cry, let yourself. The final exercise in shadow work usually brings up a lot of emotions, so practice letting them come without judgement.

DEAR 10 YEAR OLD ME,