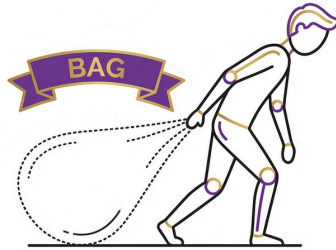


## **The Long Bag We Drag**

The poet Robert Bly famously described the shadow as “the long bag we drag behind us.” When we are small, he explains, we have a 360-degree personality. We are loud, messy, angry, joyful, and spontaneous. We are everything.

But soon, we learn that certain parts of us are not acceptable to our parents or society. “Don’t be so loud,” we are told. “Don’t be so selfish.” “Stop crying.”

So, we take those parts—the loudness, the selfishness, the tears—and we throw them into an invisible bag. We toss them over our shoulder and keep walking.



### UNDERSTANDING INVISIBLE BURDENS

---

By the time we are adults, the bag is miles long. It is heavy. We drag it everywhere, exhausted, wondering why life feels so hard.

Shadow work is the process of opening the bag.