

## BEFRIENDING OUR SHADOW

The Jungian archetype of the Shadow includes all that we abhor about ourselves and all the wonderful potential that we doubt or deny we have. We project these negativities onto others as strong dislike and project our positive potential as admiration. We can re-member and restore these capacities to our psyches. We explore our dark side as a source of creativity and untapped potential. How does our dark side manifest, go into hiding, and emerge to hurt or liberate us? What is evil and how do we protect ourselves from it? What is the shadow in our family, relationships, religion, and in the world? We learn ways to make friends with our shadow both positive and negative so that our lost life can be restored and renewed. Inner foes become allies; dark angles within us become archways of light.

*To befriend the positive PERSONAL shadow, use this triple A approach:*

- *Affirm* that you have the quality you admire or envy in someone else. This can be a simple declaration or affirmation such as: "I am more and more courageous."
- *Act* as if you have that quality by making choices that demonstrate it.
- *Announce* it: Tell everybody you know that you are making these changes and ask for their support.

These are three *steps* we take. They are usually followed by *shifts* in our personality; we begin to act in wiser, more loving, and more healing ways with no further need for effort. This is the grace dimension, the spiritual assistance to our work.

*To befriend the negative PERSONAL shadow, here are five A's:*

- *Acknowledge* that you have all the attributes humans can have, that you contain both sides of every human coin. Acknowledge that you have the specific negative traits you see in others that evoke a strong reaction of repulsion in you. The urge to observe coexists with its opposite impulse to expose.

- *Allow* yourself to hold and cradle these as parts of yourself.

Acknowledge that they may have gone underground for a legitimate purpose and are now ready to be turned inside out and become something more creative and empowering in your life.

- *Admit* to yourself and to one other person the fact of these shadow discoveries about yourself.

- *Make amends* to those who may have been hurt by your denial of your own shadow: "I saw this in you and it is in me. I have blamed you for what I am ashamed of in myself." Make amends to anyone you have hurt by any underhanded ways your shadow has impacted him/her.

- Become *aware* of the kernel of value in your negative shadow characteristic and then treat it as you did the positive shadow above: affirm it as true of yourself, act as if it were true, announce your discovery and program to others who can assist us in following up on it.

As you do this work, do not scold yourself as a critical parent for all your deficits. Have a good talk with yourself as a kindly adult: "I have been controlling and that is wrong of me, but there is a kernel of positive value in that controlling. It is my capacity for getting things done, for organizing, even for leadership. I will now concentrate on and release those wonderful attributes. I will find my positive shadow in my negative shadow!" This is working with what is rather than attempting to eliminate what is, and thereby working against psychic truth. Shadow embracing reverses self-alienation and connects us to our own rainbow reality.

To see your dark side, to see what you are really up to while not shaming yourself for it reconnects you to your true self and reveals its spacious grandeur. Such vision is a form of mindfulness. Turning against the external tyrant is useless. You have to see him in your own mirror: "This face is mine. I accept the fact that there is something dark in every one of my motivations. And I still see the light in me too." Jung, toward the end of his life, wrote: "I am astonished, disappointed, and pleased with myself. I am depressed and rapturous. I am all this at once and cannot add up the sum."  
 From: *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side*

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