

EMBRACING YOUR SHADOW IN THE RELATIONSHIP DANCE

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Until our childhood wounds are healed, most relationships are a shadow dance. The shadow is the part of us we don't like, don't want to recognize, and that doesn't fit our self-concepts.

If we see ourselves as loving and gentle, we don't want to own the part of us that gets angry and vengeful. If we consider ourselves to be strong, tough, and macho, we tend to not listen to any part of us that could feel like a victim or scared child.

Consequently, these disowned parts of us are put behind where we cannot easily see them. Nonetheless, other people see them all the time. The shadow shows up in slips of the tongue, in behaviors that feel alien to us, or in sarcastic humor, which frequently disguises anger.

***“Everything that irritates us about others
can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”***

—Carl Jung

Our partners act as mirrors enabling us to see ourselves more clearly.

***Whatever we overreact to or intensely dislike
in our partners and other people is
in some way within us.***

For example, perhaps you cannot stand your mate criticizing you. These criticisms could be triggering an old wound from childhood when your parents judged you all the time. But now that criticizing behavior is part of your shadow. Maybe you don't criticize your mate because that would be too threatening; instead you criticize your children or your employees. Or perhaps you mutter your judgments under your breath and keep them contained.

Another shadow figure is the misogynist—the woman hater. Misogynists resent women, abuse them, make them feel less than men, and look for opportunities to disapprove of them. Typically they have been deeply wounded by women. In my work, I have found:

Every woman hater is with a man hater.

We unconsciously attract partners who confirm our view of the world. Women and men haters are together to prove to themselves they are right. “All women will hurt and wound me.” “All men will violate and betray me.” “All men (or women) will control me.”

If others are vampiring us, or have done so in the past, then the vampire is a part of our shadow. How do you vampire others? Perhaps you are frequently needy. Your car often breaks down and you need someone to drive you. You are constantly ill and in need of care. You often have financial difficulties and want help. You need someone to cook and clean for you. In other words, in some way, you often have a crisis that requires help and energy from others.

Although it takes great courage to deal with your shadow, I have found that one of the more important ways to heal relationship problems is by owning, embracing and LOVING

our shadow parts.

PROCESSES

The first step in working with your shadow is to delineate it. In a journal, write each sentence below and complete it by listing the qualities that are called for. Be sure to write as many qualities as possible.

1. Qualities or characteristics I dislike the most about my
 - a. mate
 - b. previous mates
 - c. mother
 - d. father
 - e. my children (if you have any)
2. Qualities or characteristics I react very strongly to in other people are:

Add these qualities together to form a composite picture of the type of person that really bugs you. There may be two or more distinctly different types. This is what your shadow type or types are like.

We each have a shadow. It is just a part of you, not all of you. Each shadow aspect is one of your sub-personalities. As we recognize how we manifest some of the same qualities we dislike in others, what they protect in us, and even how we may secretly enjoy these negative characteristics in ourselves, we begin embracing and loving that part of us. As growth continues, we are able to transcend the polarities and accept and love all of who we are.

Now do some real research on yourself:

3. How do I manifest these qualities or characteristics and with which people in my life?
4. What wound in me does each shadow characteristic protect?

Get to know this part of yourself. Even though shadow work is painful, it can release a great deal of energy in you and enable you to access your real power. Gather your strength and courage, look at yourself, and heal through the wounds. Remember:

The truth shall set you free.

Those of us who desire to end violence have a great responsibility to embrace our shadow parts. The abuser/perpetrator that we see in the violence of gangs, physical and sexual abuse, and in governments is an expression of the collective shadow.

***Just as most victims have an abuser/perpetrator inside, most
abuser/perpetrators
have a "poor me" victim inside.***

As each one of us works with and gets to know our own abusive dark side, we bring light to the *collective shadow*, and in that way we are able to eliminate the atrocities in the world. As long as we claim to be all light, peace and holy, the collective shadow is doomed to be played out by others.

Conversely, many people are so used to seeing themselves as worthless, that they

actually have a difficult time seeing their magnificence, beauty, and wisdom. This shadow aspect reveals itself through qualities we appreciate in others. For us to notice admirable traits in others means we have them in us—just hidden to our eyes at the moment.

Remember! As we're willing to embrace the detested characteristic we see in the mirror of our partner, our mate is transformed right before our eyes into the God/Goddess we always wanted. And our heart radiates love in soft, pink energy waves with gentleness and the beauty of the rose.

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