



STEPPING THROUGH MY

SHADOW

A SHADOW EXERCISE

Oscar C. Pérez PhD



TENDING THE FIRES
MAKING SPIRIT MATTER △△▽▽

THE SHADOW

All things have their shadow side. The Yin Yang, the ancient symbol of Universal polarity has moved throughout the world as a visual understanding of this. Wherever there is light, there must be darkness. Wherever there is Love, Fear is also close at hand. Wherever there is Hero, there must be a Villain. Just like in the Yin Yang, everything that is light has an element of darkness within it. Likewise, everything that is dark has an element of light within it. The same is true for us. While we may value one side over the other, light versus dark, good versus not-so-good, we have to learn to honor both aspects of our self, and view them equally through the lens of compassion.

The Shadow is an incredibly powerful thing. While it is neither friend nor enemy, it is one of our greatest teachers. It is made up of everything that is obscured in us, everything that has been hidden away. Our Shadow holds our deepest fears and anxieties. It is the part of us that stores all of the aspects of our self that have been neglected, shoved down, and repressed.



in a character that is alluring or repulsive. And yet for some reason you can't seem to get that character out of your head.

PROJECTING SHADOWS

The Shadow was a subject of fascination for Carl G. Jung, one of the founders of modern psychology. Jung spent the better part of his life studying the Shadow: how it manifests in each one of us, and how it goes on to affect humanity on a greater scale. What he found is that the Shadow is something that holds infinite potential for our growth and development of personal power. It can be a source of the greatest power: a vehicle to obtain the greatest wisdom. It is through our relationship with the Shadow that we could one day save humanity from total self-destruction. And yet the Shadow can also be a source of the most horrifying evil. Without turning to face the Shadow it can grow out of control, take on an almost unstoppable energy of its own, and bring destruction down on us.

We are going to begin here by seeing one of the ways that the Shadow enters our world on a day-to-day basis. In order to do this, you must find a place where you can find some peace and quiet. Once you are there, quickly scan over your body: take a few deep breaths and focus on relaxing any place in your body that feels tension. When you are comfortable, calm and relaxed, you are going to think about three people in your life that for some reason you just don't like. They don't necessarily have to be people that have done anything bad to you, just people that you can't seem to find any empathy for. As a matter of fact, these are people that you are outright repulsed by. Write their names down.

Now that you have their names down, you are going to write down three characteristics of each person that you really don't like.



in a character that is alluring or repulsive. And yet for some reason you can't seem to get that character out of your head.

PROJECTING SHADOWS

The Shadow was a subject of fascination for Carl G. Jung, one of the founders of modern psychology. Jung spent the better part of his life studying the Shadow: how it manifests in each one of us, and how it goes on to affect humanity on a greater scale. What he found is that the Shadow is something that holds infinite potential for our growth and development of personal power. It can be a source of the greatest power: a vehicle to obtain the greatest wisdom. It is through our relationship with the Shadow that we could one day save humanity from total self-destruction. And yet the Shadow can also be a source of the most horrifying evil. Without turning to face the Shadow it can grow out of control, take on an almost unstoppable energy of its own, and bring destruction down on us.

We are going to begin here by seeing one of the ways that the Shadow enters our world on a day-to-day basis. In order to do this, you must find a place where you can find some peace and quiet. Once you are there, quickly scan over your body: take a few deep breaths and focus on relaxing any place in your body that feels tension. When you are comfortable, calm and relaxed, you are going to think about three people in your life that for some reason you just don't like. They don't necessarily have to be people that have done anything bad to you, just people that you can't seem to find any empathy for. As a matter of fact, these are people that you are outright repulsed by. Write their names down.

Now that you have their names down, you are going to write down three characteristics of each person that you really don't like.



Now we are going to do the same thing with someone that you really admire and respect. Choose 3 people in your life that you look up to, that you would aspire to be like. Write a few characteristics of each person that you really respect and admire.

Take each of your lists and write them down, side-by-side. In one column, write "People I Can't Stand." In the other, write "People I admire."

Now write down the characteristics of each. In one list you should have nine characteristics of people you can't stand, in the other you should have nine characteristics of people you admire.

Take some time to look at both of these lists and compare the two. Are the characteristics in the people you admire related to those you don't? Were the characteristics you noticed in the people you admire similar? What about the characteristics of the people that you can't stand? What seems familiar?

This is a Shadow exercise. The reason that you see these people the way that you do is because they are reflections of who you are at your deepest core. The people that you admire, those that you look up to and want to emulate, are the embodiment of what you know you can become. They are the ones that appear to embody your highest standards for yourself. At times these standards may seem huge in comparison to where you think you are. Sometimes they may seem overwhelming, impossible even. But what you are seeing in each of the people that you admire are the things that already exist in you. They are the things that inspire you to become the most elevated embodiment of yourself. You see these things projected onto someone else because you need examples of how you can live your life to grow into these character traits. When you see someone that embodies confidence, power, leadership, compassion and you admire them for it, what you are doing is acknowledging the same energy, the same characteristics that are alive and



flowing in you.

It is, for example, like the seedling looking up at the giant Redwood tree. The seedling already has within it all of the things that are necessary to grow into the majestic Redwood. It has all of the vital components. So do you. Know that your heroes, your role models, your mentors all reflect what is best in you. Yet, unless they are mythic or fictional characters, they are all just as human as you. They have flaws and make mistakes. They are not always living up to the great image you have of them.

The image that you see is a standard for yourself, one that seems to suit the person you look up to at the time and in the context where you see them. They can guide you by teaching you how they got to where they are, how they learned to embody what you want to be. They cannot tell you that you will become just like them. Your path is not theirs. Your path is unique. While you learn from them and incorporate their practices into your life you will find the aspects of you that you want growing, but you will also find other unexpected things about who you are.

The same is true for those people in your life that you have little appreciation for or that you have a difficult time being around. This is often more of a challenge to accept. When a person really stands out to us, either positively or negatively, it is because they are a reflection of us on some deep level. Many times, the people that we do not connect with are those that embody character traits we dislike in ourselves. They embody the aspects of our personality that we choose to avoid. When we see these things acted out by someone else, we quickly judge them and even feel revulsion for them.

EMBRACING THE SHADOW

When you can see these parts of you for what they are, wounded aspects of



flowing in you.

It is, for example, like the seedling looking up at the giant Redwood tree. The seedling already has within it all of the things that are necessary to grow into the majestic Redwood. It has all of the vital components. So do you. Know that your heroes, your role models, your mentors all reflect what is best in you. Yet, unless they are mythic or fictional characters, they are all just as human as you. They have flaws and make mistakes. They are not always living up to the great image you have of them.

The image that you see is a standard for yourself, one that seems to suit the person you look up to at the time and in the context where you see them. They can guide you by teaching you how they got to where they are, how they learned to embody what you want to be. They cannot tell you that you will become just like them. Your path is not theirs. Your path is unique. While you learn from them and incorporate their practices into your life you will find the aspects of you that you want growing, but you will also find other unexpected things about who you are.

The same is true for those people in your life that you have little appreciation for or that you have a difficult time being around. This is often more of a challenge to accept. When a person really stands out to us, either positively or negatively, it is because they are a reflection of us on some deep level. Many times, the people that we do not connect with are those that embody character traits we dislike in ourselves. They embody the aspects of our personality that we choose to avoid. When we see these things acted out by someone else, we quickly judge them and even feel revulsion for them.

EMBRACING THE SHADOW

When you can see these parts of you for what they are, wounded aspects of



yourself, you can begin the work of transforming them. The attachments you create with other people, or your image of other people, are deep-rooted in your unseen aspects of yourself. When you can release the judgments, resentments, and expectations you have of those people you have healed the part of you that carried that particular wound. You do this through Recapitulation. Through releasing the trapped emotions that have stagnated in your spirit and in your heart. This is the path to freedom.

stepping through my shadow

a new online group for
healing yourself and the collective

registration starts sept 10th



TENDING THE FIRES
MAKING SPIRIT MATTER



Oscar C. Pérez has spent his life studying different spiritual traditions and schools of psychology. For the last sixteen years, he has helped countless people through the darkest times of their lives. Oscar is guided by a deep understanding that we are all unique manifestations of the same essence, what in the Toltec tradition is called Centeotl, Tloque Nahuaque, Ipalmemohuani. His own apprenticeship with grief and gratitude has guided him to share the ceremonial teachings he has received to help others develop a tangible relationship with Life, with the Great Mystery. He has studied in both academic and ceremonial settings. His approach bridges these two perspectives. He received his PhD from Brown University in 2011, where he studied how storytelling and ritual transform the lives of individuals and communities.

about the author



