

# DISCOVER YOUR SHADOW

Empowering Healing Through Understanding

## Feeling Through Life's Experiences

For all of us the first memory we have of becoming conscious of ourselves is realised through the discovery that we are centred and planted in a physical body. The sensations from the environment around us is experienced through each of our senses. Because of this, in Healing the Shadow, we believe the first archetype to come online is the Feeling Body archetype or Lover as it is otherwise known.

As babies, we are defenceless and boundaryless as we rely on others to sustain our bodies with food, water, warmth and connection, which establishes a sense of safety in the strange world we are beginning to experience.

Bonding becomes an integral component of this as it drives our behaviours to establish connections with those in our immediate tribe. The absence of connection results in our loud protests that instinctively seeks to rebalance the unsettling isolated state experienced to one of familiarity, community and the restored continuity of our basic needs being met.

This defenceless state remains until the sense of our personal self evolves and resulting boundaries are realised which differentiate where we begin and end, and others reside. From here stems the beginnings of our relationship with ourself and with others which has the potential to impact the development of our emotional, mental, physical and, in time, existential growth.

In life, life happens both the predictable and the mundane, and the unpredictable and unwelcomed. The latter have both the ability to impact us as individuals and as communities. Whether we label these as positive or negative experiences will be determined by many factors including the nature and duration of the event, our body's response to the situation, our ability to return to a regulated state and our perspective of the event itself, all of which can change over time.

Assuming that we are born whole, then life's more challenging events can have the ability to impact our wholeness as we attempt to return to our original state. Some of life's events can impact us individually and collectively in a painful manner to the extent that we experience wounding as a replacement state in which the body and

mind naturally attempts to compensate for the absence of a full return to a regulated safe state.

As we develop into our adulthood the other archetypes of Transformer (formerly known as Magician), Action Taker (formerly known as Warrior) and Heart Centred Leader (formerly known as Sovereign) develop too and can carry with them the array of wounds resulting from life's more challenging experiences, which are often left unresolved in a felt yet silent cloud of shame. The birth of these traumas can be painful for the body to carry and, more so, to be re-experienced by the unsuspecting carrier resulting in compensatory behaviours which aim to distance the body from re-triggering these unwelcomed memories and states.

Herein lies the challenge in life either to maintain a compensatory existence with its own inherent painful yet predictable states or to anticipate the body's inability to maintain this adaptive state for all time eternal recognising the ever deteriorating mental, emotional and physical impact on the individual and, potentially, those around them.

If we ourselves, as the walking wounded, do not discern a change in our own lives, then this has the potential to disrupt our bonds with those around us as the quality of our relationships with others are deteriorated and replaced with addictions to substances, experiences and states all of which seek to neutralise or avoid the pain that we carry. At best momentary relief is achieved and with it a return to maintain the compensatory strategies and practices at whatever cost so not to re-experience the tremors of a reconnection to the underlying wound and its pain.

To say that it takes courage to begin the journey into ourselves and into the vaults of our locked up traumas is an understatement, yet, it also a possibility. Healing the wounds that reside in our shadow, our unconscious realm is one that requires a conscious decision, albeit sometimes life's serendipitous events may lead us to the opportunity to explore and become familiar with these once again in an attempt to change the fate they carry for us. Carl Jung put this succinctly when he said "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate".

Shadow work offers up this possibility to explore what has become the unknown in each one of us, to rediscover that which we have placed at a safe distance inside us, that which we could no longer own. Through rediscovering these unclaimed parts of ourselves we have the ability to heal from our past traumas, to bring in support for the parts of us that are struggling and the parts of us compensating for the wounds which we have carried relentlessly.

Given that some of the originating wounds that we carry are in the Feeling Body archetype of our young selves, the need to create a safe and welcoming

environment in which to re-experience these parts of us, is paramount. Facilitated shadow work provides the possibility to create the space for this and be held safely whilst the unconscious is explored with a gentle intention to become familiar with it once more.

It takes a brave heart to do this, it also takes time and a commitment to look after and be gentle with ourselves during this period, such is the nature of wounds and healing. When we experience ourselves as wounded or broken it can be a disheartening time, and yet a humbling one. It carries the potential for change as the past and its events are acknowledged, and our selves from that time are supported and reintegrated into the present.

Could we ever reclaim our innocence as part of this, the part of us that existed prior to receiving the wound? In my experience a reconnection with the innocent inner child is possible and the re-experiencing of its qualities including purity, optimism, simplicity and vulnerability can be real and rewarding for those who choose to seek and reclaim it for themselves.

A resulting state for those that actualise and integrate their innocence is a state of wonder in which they have the possibility to experience their life a new or as T.S. Elliot puts it "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." Only through the eyes of a child, through innocence and wonder can we arrive at a state where the knowns in our lives appear as new experiences which are full of endless opportunities. Beginning the search for your disowned parts is the start of this journey into your inner world with the potential to heal.

*"I will love the light for it shows me the way; Yet I will love the darkness for it shows me the stars."* O G Mandino

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