

***Who Knows What
Mysteries and Secrets Lie
Hidden Within Us.....??***



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June 2016
Cohort #3
Pod 2

A Brief Exploration of Shadow

Introduction

In the past nine months, as part of our IFC training, we have touched on and explored the various characteristics of what we collectively refer to as shadow. At times, we've named it – loud and clear. At other times, it has been a subtle, unspoken presence, weaving its way through our discussions, sharings and processes.

So what is this thing we call “shadow”? The concept of shadow was first identified by Carl Jung who defined it as “that part of us that we hide, suppress or deny.” Other practitioners and teachers have refined that definition over the years, although it still boils down to the same basic premise: shadow represents those aspects of ourselves that we simply don't see or recognize. As a result, we're denied the full picture of who we are and we often impose self-limiting beliefs about our capabilities and our value as human beings. Having stated that, it's important to recognize that shadow not only encompasses those dark crevasses and corners of our personalities that we'd just as soon *not* look at and that we certainly don't want others to see; it also includes the hidden gold that others yearn for from us, but that we simply cannot recognize.

As the four of us worked together on identifying a topic for our pod presentation, we discovered shadows arising in us both individually and as a group. It took the collective wisdom of the pod and the courage of each individual to call out those shadows as they arose. Speaking for myself (JD), I found it challenging to remain open and fully present and aware when my shadows were identified and named by other members of the pod. The real learning piece for me in this exercise was the journey I took with my fellow pod members as we arrived at the end of the pod-2 process.

Each of us contributed to the current narrative. Kathie has included valuable research into projection and how it relates to shadow. Márcia references several pioneers who have incorporated aspects of shadow into their professional work. Jean-Sébastien provides tools that we can use to identify and engage in our own self-exploration of shadow. In the appendix, I have included one of many processes that can be used to facilitate a shadow process.

What is Projection?¹

The shadow shows up through the act of projection. When we fail to do the meticulous work of reclaiming the material in our own shadows, we are likely to engage in projecting that material onto others. Projection is a psychological phenomenon through which we cast an unclaimed (positive or negative personal aspect of ourselves out onto another person (or group of people). We then love or hate that quality or behavior in the other without realizing that this quality, this behavior we like or dislike in another, also lives in us.

¹ Excerpts from Understanding Shadow and Projection in Circles and Groups, by Meredith Jordon and Christina Baldwin

In circumstances where we project positive shadow material onto others, we may make another person larger-than-life and deny that person her humanness and authenticity. (*"You're so important to this group, and I'm just the newcomer."*) We may exaggerate the qualities of another person seeing how we want him to be rather than experiencing him as the person he actually is. In the process of projecting, we lose the complex truth about one another. And of course, once someone is on the projection pedestal, it's only a matter of time until they fall and are punished for being exactly like we are: flawed and imperfect. In the case of negative projection of shadow, we refuse to acknowledge in ourselves the very thing we are unable to tolerate in others. (*"Jody is so judgmental. I just can't stand how she labels people!"*) Jody actually may be judgmental, but so is the speaker. By projecting this disowned quality onto another person, we manage to keep the more difficult aspects of the self at a safe distance, and we require that someone else bear the burden of our intolerance.

At its most malignant, projection is the common root of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and all forms of hatred or injustice perpetrated by one person (or group of people) upon another. Whenever we make one person, a group or some thing *other*, we separate them from our shared humanity and become capable of hurting or destroying that *other* without feeling remorse. It is the great tragedy of humankind that we are capable of harming one another—men, women and children of all races and religions—because we refuse to come to terms with the projected shadow of intolerance that lives within each one of our souls.

As we learn to catch ourselves in the act of projection, we discover what piece of shadow work we are ready to do next. In projection, we see *out there* what we can't yet see *in here*. But once made conscious, projection helps us gather back parts of ourselves we didn't know we had lost until we began to see them in someone else. This is gratifying, if we've been projecting our beauty onto someone else and get to claim it for ourselves: this is challenging when we have to reclaim our judgments or negative attributes we would rather not see in ourselves.

Projection is often registered in the recipient with a feeling of unease, even when the projection is positive. Projection carries an energetic charge that comes out of the sender's unconscious, a sort of psychological imperative that the receiver must carry the projection, or else. Even a compliment that comes from shadow is confusing: it doesn't feel safe to take it or rebuff it because we intuit the energetic charge that might get set off. When we become aware of our projections and begin to clear them up, we reclaim the shadow traits that we put out on others. We also share the task of keeping the interpersonal field of the (group) circle free of personal material that has little to do with the (group) circle. This is how shadow-tending occurs. Periodically, in the life of any circle or group, if we can ask each other, "Anything need cleaning here?" or if tension arises someone suggests, "shadow check!" We learn how to help each other reclaim our full selves without major disruption... Meredith Jordan and Christina Baldwin offer the suggestion that when building a container of safety for a group or circle an agreement such as that below can be very useful:

- "We will listen to each other without casting judgment, and agree to call home our projections and assumptions."

Working with shadow²

Voice Dialog – Hal and Sidra Stone

Voice Dialog works with the disowned self (or selves), which are energy patterns that we have partially or totally excluded from our lives. A way to discover the disowned self is to find traits that you see in others that you do not wish to integrate in your life under any circumstances.

In Voice Dialog we identify the voices - owned and disowned - and then address them directly, both as an individual entity and as a part of the total personality. Each of these distinct energy patterns shows up in our bodies and awareness in a particular way. The idea is to engage with each voice separately and listen to what each one has to say, bringing awareness to them. It is important to remain nonjudgmental and to observe the changes in energy patterns.

Gempo Roshi used this method in his Zen teaching, creating the Big Mind, Big Heart process.

3-2-1 , in Integral Life Practice – Ken Wilber, Diane Hamilton

Working with shadow is one of the core components of Ken Wilber's Integral Life Practice and its main practice is the 3-2-1 process.

The potential outcome of this process is to free up energy, compassion and empathy for self and others, and to integrate repressed parts of the self. To Wilber, shadow represents that part of us that is rejected, denied, or hidden. When parts of our 1st person become unacceptable, first we then push it onto the 2nd person whereby we see that part in others and not in ourselves. When the threat becomes more intense, we push it to the 3rd person, where it becomes an it that we have no relation to.

In the 3-2-1 practice, this process is reversed and we bring back the repressed part back to 2nd person and then to 1st person.

It is also important to note that the shadow process can occur with positive traits too, Ken Wilber calls it the "Golden Shadow." The positive part is rejected and pushed into shadow and we are not able to own it because it doesn't fit our image of ourselves, so it shows up as admiration and attraction to people who have that quality.

² Embracing Our Selves – The Voice Dialog Manual, Hal & Sidra Stone;
Big Mind – Big Heart – Finding you Way, Dennis Gempo Merzel;
Everything is Workable, Diane Musho Hamilton;
Integral Life Practice, Ken Wilbur, et al;
Immunity to Change, Robert Keagan & Lisa Lahey

Immunity to Change – Robert Keagan and Lisa Lahey

The Immunity to Change doesn't work explicitly or directly with shadow, but it is also a process to bring into awareness our unconscious hidden commitment that prevents us from achieving the change we want to make.

Basically, the process helps us make object the commitments we are subject to, allowing us to see it and change it, if they are not serving us. We can say that we start being able to see and relate to this part of ourselves that is hidden and taking decisions and behaving in ways that seems to go against our conscious decisions. My sense is that in this process we are able to release energy and tap into new possibilities, as in other shadow uncovering processes.

Tips on Identifying Shadow in Ourselves

Our shadows hold us back, make us suffer and limit us in ways that we do not need to be limited. Living with them without facing them is the cowardly unpleasantness of daily life. Facing them is courage, working through them is determination, learning about what they are and how and why they arise is wisdom, and moving through and beyond them is liberation.

Here some practical tips for engaging in shadow or working through your shadows:

- Notice what makes you uncomfortable. Look what it is that disturbs you and why it does?
- Notice what you are afraid of and ask what it is about that thing that scares you?
- Notice what you are clinging to or making yourself dependent on. Question the assumptions behind the clinging?
- Notice what you are pushing away from you or hating or disliking and ask yourself why you are doing that. Why do you feel that way?

Ask questions to explore our shadows, they can be used to inquire into our shadow:

- What is the form of this thought/feeling pattern?
- How does it really, honestly make me feel?
- Is this shadow based on any assumptions about me?
- Why do I think this thought-pattern is true?
- Why do I hold on to it?
- Do I have any underlying motivations here that I'm not facing?
- Am I repressing this feeling? Am I denying it or projecting it onto others?
- Why do I resist this shadow?
- Is it related to an idealized self-image, a way I would like to be or people have told me I should be?
- Is it related to a self-image I'm trying to avoid, a way I would not want others to see me?
- How does this thought-pattern affect how I behave, think, feel?

- Does this shadow limit me in some way? What would life be like if I didn't hold on to this thought pattern?

Face your shadow and see what impressions, thoughts, feelings, or sensations come up in response.

- Why do I see you as a threat?
- Why do I hold on to you?
- Why do I refuse to own you as mine?
- Why do I resist you?
- Why am I afraid of you?
- What would life be like if I didn't hold onto you?
- Where did I develop the tendency to cling to you?

Observe whatever comes up. Notice any thoughts, feelings, sensations, or impressions that arise in response to the questions. Meet these arising with open curiosity and a kind and loving attitude rather than judgment.

APPENDIX

Shadow Facilitation Process

The intention of this process is to discover how limiting beliefs about ourselves and the world are formed, why they are often hidden in shadow, and how to empower ourselves toward greater self-awareness and a more functional outlook on life. Through this process, we are able to gain perspective on current issues affecting our lives by releasing old patterns of belief.

The Process

We'll use a fictional participant who we'll call "Sam". There is generally one facilitator, however the process is usually done in a circle made up of trusted individuals who will support the process.

"So, Sam, we can look at this issue in the present and then look deeper into past memories that may be the source of shadows around this issue. Through this process, we can likely identify clues and information about your judgments and feelings surrounding the current issue. Are you willing to go there with me?"

Step 1: First, we collect data on the event, situation or issue so that Sam and the facilitator are clear on the information.

Body-Emotional Connection

- a. ***"Ok, Sam, take a moment to tell us a little about the key elements of the situation you want to work with."***
 - i. ***Minimal data will suffice – we just need to gather enough to understand the basics (i.e., Sam lost his job, he had an affair, he's at life's crossroads, etc.). Limit "the story."***
- b. ***"Now, Sam, I invite you to close your eyes for a moment and think about what you've told us about _____."***
 - i. ***Repeat a few of his words – especially some that may hold a charge or energy.***

Note: From here and throughout the rest of the process, it's more effective to proceed with that participant's eyes close.

- c. ***"While you're thinking about this, become more aware of your body – how do you feel in your body as you think about _____?"***
 - i. ***Wait for & prompt him toward actually feeling the words and connect them to body sensations.***
- d. ***"What color is it? Where is it in your body? Does it have a sound? A smell? A shape?"***

Step 2: Invite Sam to revisit a time in his life when he experienced similar feelings and reactions.

Visioning a Memory

- a. ***“So, Sam – as you’re thinking about (the charge-ridden situation) and feeling (the body-emotional), are you aware of other times, places and situations that you’ve felt like this?”***
 - i. ***Allow Sam to find an earlier memory at this own pace.***
- b. ***“As you reflect on this earlier time, how old are you? Who was there? What was happening?”***
 - i. ***Allow him to tell the story from an earlier memory until it seems complete.***

Step 3: Help Sam discover the beliefs and stories he made up about himself and the world as a result of those earlier experiences.

Shadow Formation

- a. ***“Sam, as you reflect on that earlier time, what judgments or beliefs did your Younger Self form as a result of this situation? What judgments or beliefs did your Younger Self adopt about the world? About himself (Sam’s Younger Self)?”***

Support from Self and Mentor

Step 4: Sam is now ready to bring up the adult, mature, powerful man he is today to defend and embrace the earlier “self” that was impacted. He may also bring in a mentor if one presents itself to him.

- a. ***“Now Sam, I’d like for you to invite into this space a strong, balanced and supportive part of your Self – the Mature Masculine; the grounded, initiated man; and the warrior energy of that man.”***
 - i. ***Allow time from him to presence this energy as you will now be addressing this part of him.***
- b. ***“Now, take a moment & see if there is anyone else you feel you would like to have join you in this space; perhaps someone who represents a mentor-energy for you.”***
 - i. ***This mentor-energy could be a real or fictitious person, being or entity; someone he knows well or has never met. Be open to who or what shows up here.***
- c. ***“As I now address Sam, what observations do you have about this younger, <fearful, vulnerable, protective – whatever feeling that fits> part of Sam?”***
- d. ***“Do you understand – based on the situation – how this <feeling(s) identified above> part of Sam came to adopt these beliefs about himself and the world?”***
- e. ***“Can you find it in your heart to accept this <feeling(s)> part of Sam, despite his having adopted these beliefs about himself and the world?”***

- f. *"Are you willing to utterly and completely forgive this <feeling(s)> part of Sam for any harm these beliefs may have had?"*
 - i. Allow Sam to fully integrate the forgiveness.
- g. *"Is there anything that your mentor would like to say or add in this time and space?"*
 - i. Allow time for the mentor to impart any words, wisdom or healing that may be there.

Step5: Sam becomes aware of the costs of the old ways and the gifts of the new way of being.

Empowerment Towards a New Way of Being

- a. *"So, these beliefs that the world is <from previous responses above> and that you are <above>, do these beliefs still serve your best interest?"*
- b. *"What are some of the potential costs or impacts of you continuing to hold these beliefs about yourself?"*
 - i. Remind him of the judgments if necessary
- c. *"What are some of the potential costs or impacts of you continuing to hold these beliefs about the world?"*
 - i. Remind him of the judgments if necessary
- d. *"How would you feel if you could replace some of these limiting beliefs with empowering ones?"*
- e. *"What affirmation statements are you ready to make about yourself and the world?"*
 - i. Likely will be opposite or contrary to the limiting beliefs identified earlier.

Step 6: Lead out.

Bring the Process to Full Completion

- a. We can now close the process with Sam making his affirmation statements again, either to himself in a mirror, to the group, or both.