

Shadow work - the process I use for reducing internal toxicity and working towards peace of mind

This is my process to reduce internal toxicity and work towards peace of mind. At the time of writing, I feel inner peace and the urge to work on positive changes in the world, instead of seeking relief for problems I'm experiencing. I don't feel unhealthy cravings for sugar, sex, coffee, drugs or status right now. If you have any questions you are welcome to make a comment in the document or let me know.

There are three steps to this process. They are not strictly sequential but generally come after each other. It's ok if they bleed over into each other.

They are **awareness, acknowledgement and integration.**

We will learn about these steps in this guide. In the rest of this guide I will assume you are by yourself. Please read the full guide before starting the work.

Equipment

You will need:

- Journal
- Safe space that doesn't bother you (if you're sensitive to sounds it should be generally quiet, for instance)
- Comfortable seating is recommended (you will go between meditation and writing multiple times)
- Pillow to scream in if necessary in case your worry about neighbours hearing

Process

Take a few minutes to get into a relaxed state. Breathe deeply, extending your stomach. Close your eyes and settle in. Set an intention for the session. It can be to work on a particular trigger you have experienced. Or it can be something else, like jealousy, insecurity, shame or any other emotional challenge you experience in your daily life. When you have something that you want to work on, continue with the following steps.

Awareness

In this step we inquire into what is happening in us when we experience a trigger or strong negative emotion. We look at what the emotion looks like. What it is protecting us from. Who it is representing. We connect with it, befriend it, get curious about it. Gentle curiosity guides us.

Ask yourself questions like the following, and write down the questions in your journal. Take a moment to contemplate the answers. Really take time to explore this internal emotional space, especially if it's hard for you to feel, in general.

This step can easily take 10 - 20 minutes. Breathe deeply all throughout the exercise, and especially when you are experiencing strong reactions to the work.

"What does the feeling look like?"

"Where do I feel it in my body?"

"What shape does it have? Is it solid, fluid, something else?"

"How is it moving? Is it moving?"

With these questions we gently get to know this inner creature. We want to befriend it with love and compassion. Remember that the bad feelings are not your enemy, they are your friend. They are, in fact, you.

Write down your learnings in the journal. I like to use a different style of text depending on if I'm writing a question, answering the question or writing about some physical experience. It can look like this:

Example:

What does the feeling look like? It is shaped like a ball. It is slowly moving, almost pulsing. It is black and the surface is smooth like glass. There is something swirling inside, some energy. It is not evil. There is anger.

When I focus on this feeling I can feel a gentle cramp in my stomach area. At first it's concentrated in the centre of my gut but the more I focus on it the more it spreads out and loses intensity.

End example

Once you feel ready, it is time to understand the origin of this creature. We then ask ourselves questions like:

"Where do you come from?"

"What is the reason you are here?"

"What are you protecting me from?"

"When did I first feel like this in my life?"

With patience, these questions can lead us to memories from the past. It might be your childhood, it might be later than that. You might see a string of events which all share this emotion.

Generally the first thing that comes to mind is the right thing to focus on for you at this point in time.

Once something has come to mind and you feel an inclination to choose that event or situation to inquire into, go ahead and start to really dive into the details of that particular event or situation.

Visualise the scenario. Think about the people in it, the way it looked, the way you felt. Were you angry? Were you ashamed? Did you feel threatened? What did the room or space look like? Really picture all the smallest details you can. Write this down in your journal. Add as much detail as you like. The more you add, the more you help yourself in the rest of the process and the next time you do the work.

Once you feel ready, you can move to the next step.

Acknowledgement

In this step we understand the origin of the feeling. We go to the root of its reason to exist. We understand why it exists and what it has been protecting us from. We understand what we would have needed to feel protected but that we did not get at the time.

In short terms, we learn how we were failed by the outside world, and what we can do to fix that.

With the scenario from above in mind, ask yourself the following questions:

“What made me feel unsafe/ashamed/embarrassed/[other negative emotion] in this scenario?”

“How should I have been protected to safely go through the experience and learn but not get hurt?”

You can sit with this, contemplate and then write the questions and answers down in your journal. Try to really feel into your body and see what happens. Release can come in many forms. Sometimes in yawning, stretching, crying, movement and more.

The answers to the above questions will act as tools for you in order to help your inner younger version of yourself feel safe again.

The reality is that the triggers you experience which somehow limit you today are in fact defence mechanisms designed to help an innocent helpless person survive. These instincts are so strong that they will stay activated unless there is absolute safety. You can create this safety today, by helping your younger self from then.

Now try to visualize the scenario and give your younger self what he or she needed to feel safe. The parental figure you needed who wasn't there. Imagine the scenario with all of its details and really connect with your younger self, sending love and compassion. Make sure to tell him or her that it wasn't their fault. They are lovable. They are perfect the way they are. Ensure that you give all of the protection and support necessary to make them feel safe, and have them navigate the scenario in a safe way.

If you need to remove people then remove them. If you need to fly around the world on a magic carpet then do that. It is your world, you can do whatever you want in it. You are free to model whatever is necessary to make your younger self feel safe and loved effortlessly and unconditionally.

I invite you to contemplate all of this for as long as is necessary. Then it could be useful to write about your experience in your journal.

Integration

In this step we use what we have learned and we thank our younger self from having protected us. We assure the younger self that we are capable of handling whatever comes our way as we are adults now. We thank the younger self, we make sure to release any emotions that want to be released and we imagine hugging our younger self with deep love and compassion.

You will notice that the younger self wants to give away control to you. They want to be young and playful and free. They don't want to worry or be on their guard. All of that energy spent can now be released and given to you in the here and now.

It can be useful to contemplate and feel into this for some time and then to write down the experiences in your journal.

Finally

This process can be used to reduce the internal toxicity and reduce triggers in your life. It can be used to feel and live more free. Do it as often as you feel like. In my experience, it is useful to do it a few times a week until the need simply doesn't seem to be there anymore.

Where there used to be negative emotions and unrest there is now peace of mind.