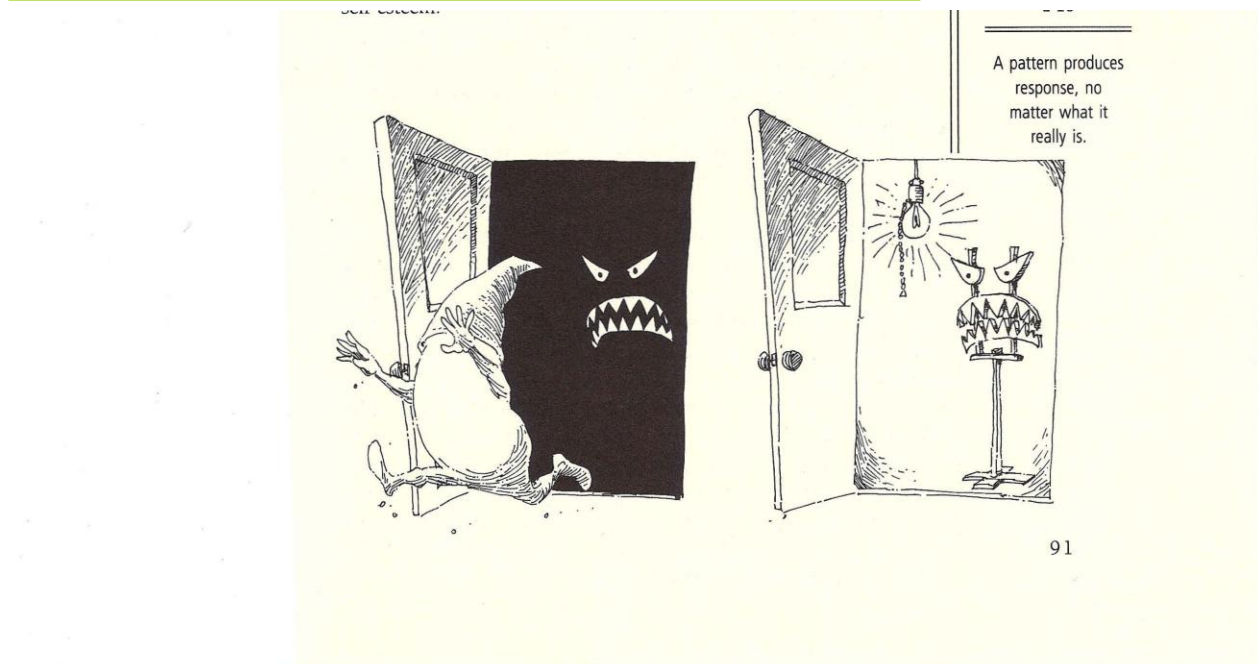


Noticing, Naming and Embracing the Shadow: Note: This content is from [Meeting the Shadow](#), The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature by Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams. All I can say here is "Remarkable!"

1/04 BCH Model Building References used as inputs to The INNERpath Model by BC Huselton.



What's a Shadow?

"Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions."

C.G. Jung

Everything of substance casts a shadow. The ego stands to the shadow as light to shade. This is the quality that makes us human. Much as we would like to deny it, we are imperfect. And perhaps it is in what we don't accept about ourselves – our aggression and shame, our guilt and pain – that we discover our humanity.

The shadow goes by many familiar names: the disowned self, the lower self, the dark twin or brother in bible and myth, the double, repressed self, alter ego, id. When we come to face-to-face with our darker side, we use metaphors to describe these shadow encounters: meeting our demons, wrestling with the devil, descent to the underworld, dark night of the soul, midlife crisis.

We all have a shadow. Or does our shadow have us? Carl Jung turned this question into a riddle when he asked: "How do you find a lion that has swallowed you? Because the shadow is by definition unconscious, it is not always possible to know whether or not we are under the sway of some compelling part of our shadow's contents.

Jung said that intuitively each of us understands what is meant by the term shadow, inferior personality, or alter ego. "And if he has forgotten," he joked about the average man, ' his memory can easily be refreshed by a Sunday sermon, his wife, or the tax collector.

In order to be capable of meeting the shadow in our daily lives – admitting to it, and thus breaking its often compulsive holds on us – we need first of all a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon:

The shadow concept flows out of discoveries made by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Paying due respect to his predecessor, Jung acknowledged Freud's breakthrough work as the most detailed and profound analysis of the split between the light and dark side of the human psyche. In 1917, in his essay "On the Psychology of the Unconscious," Jung speaks of the personal shadow as the other in us, the unconscious personality of the same sex, the reprehensible inferior, the other that embarrasses or shames us: "By shadow

I mean the 'negative' side of the personality, the sum of all of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficient developed functions and the content of the personal unconscious."

For Jung and his followers, psychotherapy offers a ritual for renewal in which the shadow personality can be brought to awareness and assimilated, thus reducing its inhibiting or destructive potential and releasing trapped, positive energy. Jung continues to be concerned with the related problems of personal destructive and collective evil throughout a long and distinguished career. His investigation showed that dealing with the shadow and evil is ultimately an "individual secret," equal to that of experiencing God, and so powerful an experience that it can transform the whole person.

The way to the self lies through him; behind the dark aspect that he represents there stands the aspect of wholeness, and only by making friends with the shadow do we gain the friendship of the self.

Introducing the Shadow:

The personal shadow develops naturally in every young child. As we identify with ideal personality characteristics such as politeness and generosity, which are reinforced in our environments, we shape what W. Brugh Joy calls the New Year's Resolution Self. At the same time, we bury in the shadow those qualities that don't fit our self-image, such as rudeness and selfishness. The ego and shadow, then, develop in tandem, creating each other out of the same life experience.

Many forces play a role in forming our shadow selves, ultimately determining what is permitted expression and what is not. Parents, siblings, teachers, clergy, and friends create a complex environment in which we learn what is kind, proper, moral behavioral, and what is mean-spirited, shameful, and sinful.

The shadow acts like a psychic immune system, defining what is self and what is not-self. For different people, in different families and cultures, what falls into ego and what falls into shadow can vary. For instance, some permit anger and aggression to be expressed; most do not. Some permit financial ambition, or artistic expression, or intellectual development, while some do not.

All the feelings and capacities that are rejected by ego and exiled into the shadow contribute to the hidden power of the dark side of human nature. However, not all of them are what we consider to be negative traits. The dark treasury includes our infantile parts, emotional attachments, neurotic symptoms, as well as our undeveloped talents and gifts. The shadow retains contact with the lost depths of the soul, with life and vitality – the superior, the universally human, yes, even the creative can be sensed there.

Disowning the Shadow:

We cannot look directly into this hidden domain. The shadow by nature is difficult to apprehend. It is dangerous, disorderly, and forever in hiding, as if the light of consciousness would steal its very life.

Prolific Jungian analyst James Hillman says: “ The unconscious cannot be conscious; the moon has its dark side, the sun goes down and cannot shine everywhere at once, and even God has two hands. Attention and focus require some things to be out of the field of vision, to remain in the dark. One cannot look both ways.

For this reason, we see the shadow mostly indirectly, in the distasteful traits and actions of other people, out there where it is safer to observe it. When we react intensely to a quality in an individual or group – such as laziness or stupidity, sensuality, or spirituality – and our reaction overtakes us with great loathing or admiration, this may be our own shadow showing. We project by attributing this quality to the other person in an unconscious effort to banish it from ourselves, to keep ourselves from seeing it from within.

Jungian analyst Marie-Louise van Franz suggests that projection is like shooting a magic arrow. If the receiver has a soft spot to receive the projection, it sticks. If we project our anger onto a dissatisfied mate, our seductive charms onto a good-looking stranger, or our spiritual attributes onto a guru, we hit the target and the holds. From then on the sender and the receiver are linked in a mysterious alliance, like falling in love, discovering a perfect hero, or perfect villain.

So the personal shadow contains underdeveloped, unexpressed potential of all kinds. It is that part of the unconscious that is complementary to the ego and represents those characteristics that the conscious personality does not wish to acknowledge and therefore neglects, forgets, and buries, only to discover them in uncomfortable confrontations with others.

Meeting the Shadow:

Although we cannot gaze directly, the shadow does appear in daily life. For example, we meet it in humor – such as dirty jokes or slapstick antics – which express our hidden, inferior, or feared emotions. When we observe closely that which strikes us a funny – such as slipping on a banana peel or referring to a taboo body part – we discover that the shadow is active. John Sanford points out that people who lack a sense of humor probably have a very repressed shadow. It’s usually the shadow self who laughs at jokes.

English psychoanalyst Molly Tuby suggests six other ways in which, even unknowingly, we meet the shadow everyday:

- In our exaggerated feeling about others (“I just can’t believe he would do that!”
“I don’t know how she could wear that outfit!”)
- In negative feedback from others who serve as our mirrors (“This is the third time you arrived late without calling me.”)
- In those interactions in which we continually have the same troubling effect on several different people (“Sam and I both feel that you have not been straightforward with us.”)
- Impulsive and inadvertent acts (“Oops, I didn’t mean to say that.”)
- In situations in which we are humiliated (“I’m so ashamed about how he treats me.”)

- In our exaggerated anger about other people's faults ("She just can't seem to do her work on time!" "Boy, he really let his weight get out of control!")

At moments like these, when we are possessed by strong feelings of shame or anger, or we find that our behavior is off the mark in some way, the shadow is erupting unexpectedly. Usually it receded just as quickly, because meeting the shadow can be a frightening and shocking experience to our self-image.

For this reason we may quickly shift into denial, hardly noticing the murderous fantasy, suicidal thought, or embarrassing envy that could reveal a bit of our own darkness. The late psychiatrist R.D. Laing poetically describes the mind's denial reflex:

**The range of what we think and do
is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice
that we fail to notice
there is little we can do
to change
until we notice
how failing to notice
shapes our thoughts and deeds**

If the denial holds, as Laing says, then we may not even notice that we fail to notice. For example, it's common to meet the shadow at midlife, when one's deeper needs and value tends to change direction, perhaps even making a 180 – turn. This calls for breaking old habits and cultivating dormant talents. If we don't stop to heed the call and continue to move in the same life direction, we will remain unaware of what midlife has to teach.

Depression too, can be a paralyzing confrontation with the dark side, a contemporary equivalent of the mystic's dark night of the soul. The inner demand for a descent into the underworld can be overridden by outer concerns, such as the need to work long hours, distractions by other people, or antidepressant drugs, which damp our feelings of despair. In this case, we fail to grasp the purpose of our melancholy.

Meeting the shadow calls for slowing the pace of life, listening to the body's cues, and allowing ourselves time to be alone in order to digest the cryptic messages from the hidden world.

Owning the Shadow:

The aim of meeting the shadow is to develop an ongoing relationship with it, to expand our sense of self by balancing the one-sidedness of our conscious attitudes with our unconscious depths,

Novelist Tom Robbins says, "The purpose in encountering the shadow is to be in the right place in the right way.' When we are in a proper relationship to it, the unconscious is not a demonical monster, as Jung points out. "It only becomes dangerous when our conscious attention to it is hopelessly wrong.'

A right relationship with the shadow offers us a great gift: to lead us back to our buried potentials. Through shadow-work, a term we coined to refer to the continuing effort to develop a creative relationship with the shadow, we can:

- achieve a more genuine self-acceptance, based on a more complete knowledge of who we are;
- defuse the negative emotions that erupt unexpectedly in our daily lives;
- feel more free of the guilt and shame associated with our negative feelings and actions;
- recognize the projections that color our opinion of others;

- heal our relationships through more honest self-examination and direct communication;
- and use the creative imagination via dreams, drawings, writings, and rituals to own the disowned self.

Perhaps...perhaps we can also, in this way, refrain from adding our personal darkness to the density of the collective shadow.

British Jungian analyst and astrologer Liz Greene points to the paradoxical nature of the shadow as both the container of darkness and the beacon pointing toward the light: “ It is the suffering, crippled side of the personality which is both the dark shadow that won’t change and also the redeemer that transforms one’s life and alters one’s values. The redeemer can get hidden treasure or win the princess or slay the dragon because he’s marked in some way - he’s abnormal. The shadow is both the awful thing that needs redemption, and suffering redeemer who can provide it.