

The Beauty of the Beast

You and Your Shadow

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Do you have a Shadow? As ridiculous as this question seems, it is equally ridiculous the lengths to which human beings will go in order **not** to acknowledge their shadow side. Of course, I am referring to your **'personality shadow'**, that part of you which haunts your every thought, your every feeling and has for millennia been deemed 'dangerous', 'bad' and outright 'evil' and therefore to be avoided at all costs. However, much like our physical shadow, our personality shadow is integral to our 'whole' being, as night is to day and death is to life. It is that part of us which makes us 'human' and despite our feeble attempts to deny, suppress, ignore, manipulate or disassociate from it, it never leaves our side. So what is it about our shadow that makes us want to deny and hide it at all costs?

Seeing Our Shadow

Being on the proverbial 'dark side' of our personality, our shadow side challenges us to live an honest and open life. It creates conflict and forces us to choose between opposing thoughts, feelings and situations. Unfortunately, we often fail to recognize the value of this dynamic phenomena and dismiss its value. Instead of recognizing that our shadow side, by cosmic design, is here to **"show us who we are by showing us who we are not"**, we fearfully relegate it to the workings of some 'external evil force' which must be controlled lest it takes control of us. Ironically, the more we try to control our shadow, the bigger it grows. As one colleague laments, 'the more you try to suppress it, the more it gets in your face'! Reflection upon this fact reveals that we need to rethink the nature and purpose of our shadow self. For me, I see **my shadow as simply another aspect of my 'light' that has become obscured due to my "judgment" of it and it's "inherent message"**.

The Lighter Side of Our Shadow

When you think about it, without light, there can be no shadow. And without shadow, we cannot appreciate light? The shadow is created when an object obstructs light. That 'object', in personality terms, is our judgment. As we judge certain emotions, thoughts and feelings as 'undesirable' or negative, a shadow is cast upon them. This shadow acts to obscure and hide both the messenger and the message, leaving us once again no further ahead in our growth. We must realize that being born of light, the shadow is an equally powerful teacher and rather than being avoided and shunned, needs to be accepted and included as an essential ingredient for our growth. When we choose acceptance, we are

not condoning that which the shadow is espousing but rather, **recognizing** its role as a teacher challenging us to choose our actions consciously with awareness and wisdom.

Within this context, the good news is that shadow feelings such as hate, anger, cynicism, sarcasm, jealousy, competition, greed, lust, self-pity, righteousness, and many others are here to stay! The not so good news is that by judging these, we do a disservice to ourselves. Instead, let's reframe our relationship to them and be open to the message they carry. Thus, we can proceed to the next step of reflection and integration of the gifts from our shadow by developing and drawing upon our transpersonal qualities such as trust, faith, integrity, and unconditional love. In effect, we ultimately remove the veil of darkness cast by our judgments and once gain, transform shadow into light.

Appreciating the Beauty of the Beast

Our world is in deep turmoil as the winds of change push us to grow and become more authentic, real and truthful in how we live life. Hiding is no longer an option. History has shown that attempts at suppressing, denying or hiding our shadow simply leads to acts of perversion, manipulation and pain. While recognizing that our shadow does **appear** to be dangerous, burdensome and even outright ugly, it is **'our'** shadow. By accepting this fact, we can transcend the conflict, the struggle and the loss of precious **life-force energies** which occurs when we are resisting and battling, rather than learning from, our shadow side. It is time to face up to our shadow with eyes of compassion and acceptance and become inclusive of its value. I see our shadow as a servant of the light, which has been cast in the onerous and unpopular role of the dark side. And as we go beyond our judgment and fear, we can come to ultimately appreciate the **'beauty of the beast'**!