

Embracing the Gifts of Our Shadow

Compiled by Rev. Stephanie Seigh

“Greet your shadow; find ways to access the depths: journal, write and interpret dreams, identify and befriend your fears. Consider if or how they serve you and how they hold you back.” – Becky Thoroughgood, L.Ac.

The following passages and questions are an invitation to go deeper into the work of embracing our shadow. They are to be entered into gently, with a spirit of spaciousness and great compassion for our human condition. Contemplate and journal as you feel led.

(Passages in Times New Roman are from *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers* by Debbie Ford.)

Jung first gave us the term “shadow” to refer to those parts of our personality that have been rejected out of fear, ignorance, shame or lack of love. His basic notion of the shadow was simple: “the shadow is the person you would rather not be.”

According to Jung, “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... One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.”

What is your current understanding of the “shadow”?

“Imagine possessing the capacity to be in any life situation or circumstance without feeling diminished by it, regardless of how that situation looks or feels. Imagine intuitively knowing that every experience is always for you. Imagine not ever having to defend yourself when someone judges you, never becoming a victim or making anyone responsible for how you feel. Think about how much your life would be different!” - Dr. Gary Simmons

Can you imagine this life? How different would it be from your current experience?

World Within, World Without

“*The Dark Side of the Light Chasers* is about unmasking that aspect of ourselves which destroys our relationships, kills our spirit, and keeps us from fulfilling our dreams. It is what the psychologist Carl Jung called the shadow. It contains all the parts of ourselves that we have tried to hide or deny... We believe that if we look closely enough at what lies deep within us, we will find something horrible.”

“Instead of trying to suppress our shadows, we need to unconceal, own and embrace the very things we are most afraid of facing... The shadow holds the secret of change...the essence of who we are. They hold our most treasured gifts...It is by embracing all of who we are that we earn the freedom to choose what we do in this world... Our shadows exist to teach us, guide us, and give us the blessing of our entire selves... Your life will be transformed when you make peace with your shadow.”

“Perfect love is to feeling what perfect white is to color. Many think that white is the absence of color. It is not. It is the inclusion of all color. White is every other color that exists combined. So, too, is love not the absence of emotion (hatred, anger, lust, jealousy, coyness), but the summation of all feeling? It is the sum total. The aggregate amount. The everything.” – Neale Donald Walsch

“Love is inclusive: it accepts the full range of human emotion – the emotions we hide, the emotions we fear. Jung once said, ‘I’d rather be whole than good.’ How many of us have sold ourselves out in order to be good, to be liked, to be accepted?”

“As Deepak Chopra puts it, ‘We are not in the world, but the world is within us.’ Each of us possess every existing human quality. There is nothing we can see or conceive that we are not, and the purpose of our journey is to restore ourselves to this wholeness.”

“What you can’t *be* with won’t let you *be*.”

“Many of us have spent too much time chasing the light only to find more darkness. ‘One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light,’ said Jung, ‘but by making the darkness conscious.’”

What do you struggle “being” with? What aspects of yourself have you decided are unacceptable, or just too uncomfortable to look at or acknowledge?

Chasing Down the Shadow

“Our dark side acts as a storehouse for all these unacceptable aspects of ourselves – all the things we pretend not to be and all the aspects that embarrass us. These are the faces we don’t want to show the world and the faces we don’t want to show ourselves. Everything we hate, resist, or disown about ourselves takes on a life of its own, undermining our feelings of worthiness.”

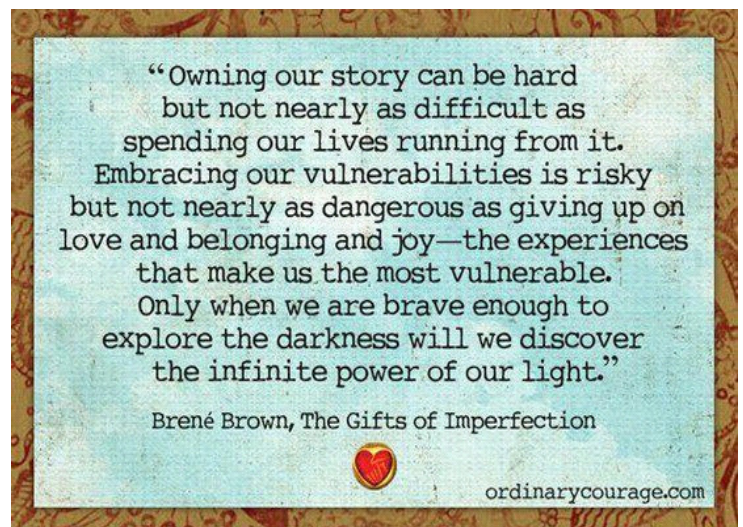
“Embracing an aspect of yourself means loving it – allowing it to coexist with all your other aspects, not making it more or less than any other part of yourself. It is not enough to say, ‘I know I am controlling.’ We must see what controlling has to teach us, what gift it brings, and then we must be able to view it with awe and compassion.

To be divine is to be whole and to be whole is to be everything: the positive and negative, the good and the bad, the holy man and the devil.”

How do you see wholeness? Is it being perfect?

Or an integration of all your parts, what you have decided is the good, the bad and the ugly?

Are you willing to embrace your vulnerabilities and discover the infinite power of your light?



“The reason for doing shadow work is to become whole. To end our suffering. To stop hiding ourselves from ourselves. Once we do this, we can stop hiding from the rest of the world. Our society nurtures the illusion that all the rewards go to the people who are perfect.

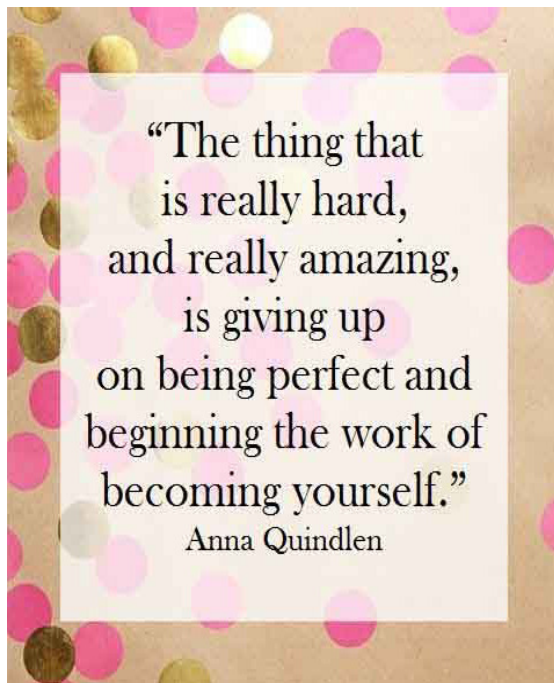
But many of us are finding out that trying to be perfect is costly. The consequences of emulating the ‘perfect person’ can eat away at us, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.”

Have you tried to be “perfect”? What has it gained you? What has it cost you?

“Within ourselves, we possess every trait and its polar opposite, every human emotion and impulse. We have to uncover, own, and embrace all of who we are, the good and bad, dark and light, strong and weak, and honest and dishonest...It is your birthright to be whole: to have it all.

It only takes a shift in your perception, an opening of your heart. When you can say ‘I am that’ to the deepest, darkest aspect of yourself, then you can reach true enlightenment. It’s not until we fully embrace the dark that we can embrace the light.”

There has to be a pony in here somewhere!



“The thing that
is really hard,
and really amazing,
is giving up
on being perfect and
beginning the work of
becoming yourself.”

Anna Quindlen

“Every aspect of ourselves has a gift. Every emotion and every trait we possess helps show us the way to enlightenment, to oneness. We all have a shadow that is part of our total reality. Our shadow is here to point out where we are incomplete. It is here to teach us love, compassion, and forgiveness, not just for others but also for ourselves. And when the shadow is embraced, it can heal us.

It is not just our denied ‘darkness’ that finds its way into the recesses of our shadow. There is a ‘light shadow,’ a place where we have buried our power, our competence, and our authenticity. The dark parts of our psyches are only dark when they are stuffed away and hidden. When we bring them into the light of our consciousness and find their sacred gifts, they transform us. Then we are free.”

Where is your “light shadow”? Where have you denied your power, competency or authenticity as a result of rejecting your “darkness”?

“Once the shadow is embraced,
it can be healed. When it is healed it becomes love.”