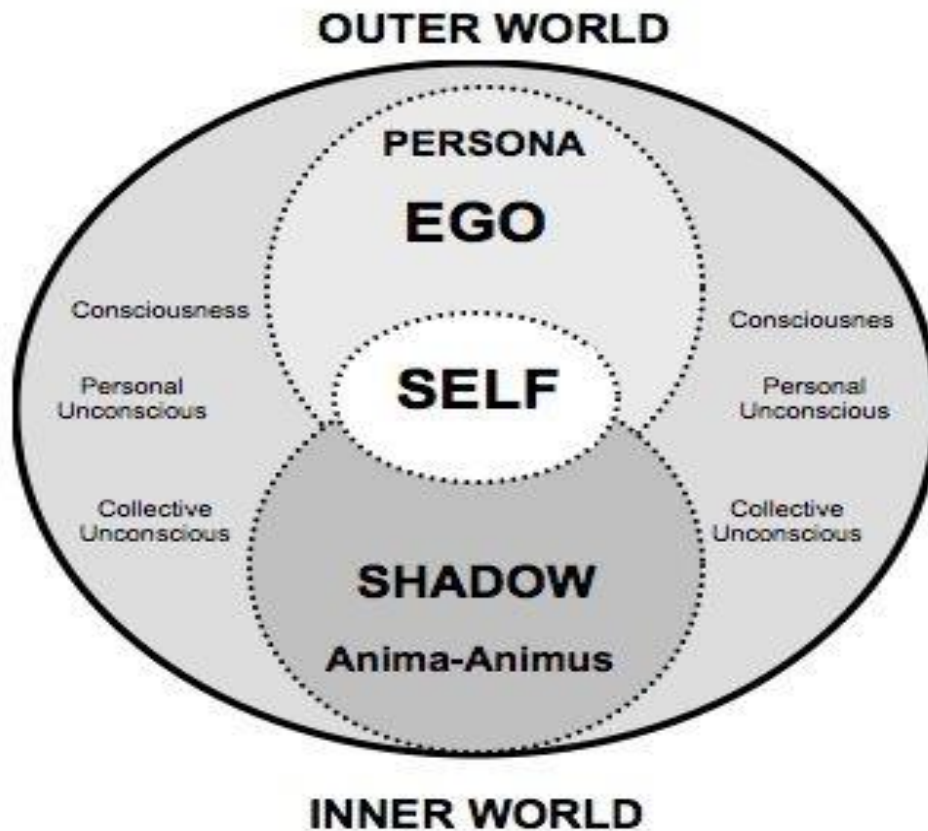


Working With The Shadow

Carl Jung may have died in 1961, but his work continues to be directly influential on our understanding of the human psyche, especially when it comes to transpersonal psychology. You may be thinking that is something you've never heard of and definitely don't fw. But transpersonal psychology just refers to all of the states of consciousness that exist beyond the personal level of our psyche. This means what exists in our personal unconscious, the collective unconscious, how we interact with cultural archetypes.

For the sake of our work here, *the shadow* is the part of our psyche that we consider negative and undesirable, but this part functions in part of a greater whole. Wanna nerd out? Simple version looks like this:



Complicated? Complication was Jung's jam, you aren't the only one. No stress, let's look at the basics of what this all means. According to Jung:

Ego: Jung's definition of refers to the story we tell about ourselves. The ego is how Jung defines the conscious mind, all of our thoughts, emotions, and memories that we have in awareness. It's our identity and our understanding of our storyline across time.

Persona: The persona is our outward, simplified expression of the ego. It's essentially our public expression of our personality, and our training to be obedient to expectations (ugh).

Shadow: The shadow is a purely emotional aspect of our personality, that lies in opposition to the ego. According to Jung, the shadow lies outside the conscious mind and has its own level of autonomy.

Anima-Amimus: Jung expressed that within our unconscious are qualities that are traditionally thought to belong to individuals of the gender opposite of our own. He felt it important to integrate the aspects of our personality that are of our anima or amimus in order to be fully whole and authentic. (Jung didn't write about individuals who existed outside of the gender binary, I would say that anyone who exists in a more gender fluid state has brought forth a deep and conscious awareness of their anima and amimus and live this truth within their everyday expression of ego through persona.)

Self: Jung referred to a person who has overcome the limitations of their persona, recognize their ego-consciousness and moved beyond it to embrace their shadow (as well as their anima/amimus balance) to be a person who has the capacity to reach their full potential (Jung referred to it as "the God within us"). Is that complicated? Just think of it as being your authentic self before life imposed so many weird rules and conformity notions on you that you couldn't even remember who you were born to be.

What's the point of working with the shadow? Jung stated '*Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.*' When we repress pain, repress our emotional self that balances our public-facing self, we cause continued harm to ourselves and others. When Jung said that integrating the shadow is vital to being our integrated, authentic self he was saying:

- 1) We are less likely to engage in destructive behaviors.
- 2) We have better boundaries with those around us.
- 3) Our relationships are better because we better understand and accept ourselves and others
- 4) Our communication skills improve
- 5) Our physical health improves because we are not carrying the types of psychic pain that create inflammatory damage in the body.

So how does one “do” shadow work? It’s self-reflection work, which means journaling, meditation, and other means of processing. (Jung also thought that using concepts of archetypes can be helpful to shadow work but that’s a worksheet of a different color.)

It’s really important to have some good grounding skills before starting shadow work in your mental health toolkit. Shadow work is difficult and really activating, so having ways to stay safe in your body are really important. If you find yourself feeling really overwhelmed, there is an emotional regulation skill called TIP outlined after the shadow work techniques in this packet that you can try.

Shadow Work Questions For Introspection

What kinds of emotions do you try to avoid?

What kinds of people do you try to avoid?

What dreams have you had that upset you the most? What happened within them?

If you could erase one memory what would it be?

What do you not like about yourself?

What makes you feel the most insecure?

What aspects of your life are most disconcerting to you?

What kinds of issues are you most likely to hold grudges about?

What have you held a grudge about the longest?

Which kinds of irrational fears are most likely to hold you back?

Which irrational fear has been the biggest barrier to you recently?

What are your bad habits?

What prevents you from “breaking” them?

What kinds of lies do you tell yourself?

In what ways are you regularly hypocritical?

What is the biggest promise you've made to yourself that you broke?

What relationships do you hold on to that are unhealthy?

In what other ways do you self-sabotage?

Shadow Work Meditation

One does not become enlightened
by imagining figures of light, but by
making the darkness conscious.

- Carl Jung

Take some deep abdominal breaths.

Feel into your uncomfortable emotion. Where is it in your body? What sensations are you experiencing?

Ask yourself “What are these emotions and sensations trying to teach me? What do I need to understand about this situation?”

Let your sensations and emotions move and shift. Notice what they do with curiosity instead of judgement.

Jot down any observations you made or insights you had.

TIP Skills

We think of the brain as sending information to the body, but in fact the body is also sending information to the brain on a continuous basis. Stephen Porges, the polyvagal theory guy, says that while the message stream from the brain to body is a one lane road, and the message stream from the body to the brain is a four lane road. TIP skills are designed to have the body use the four lanes of information to the brain in order to manage overwhelming emotions.

T-Temperature Change

I: Intense Exercise

P: Progressive Relaxation

T stands for temperature...meaning doing something to introduce a *temperature change* to the body. Some people use ice, either holding it in their hand to “shock” their system a bit or holding it on the place on their body that had been a self-injury spot for them in the past. Some people will dunk their heads in a bowl of ice water for a literally immersive effect. (It invokes the dive reflex in the body, slowing down the whole system to preserve energy which keeps the body alive when submerged in cold water (and slows down the body’s freak-out when in panic mode). Annd since people don’t respond well to ice, or they have medical conditions that make using ice dangerous so that option is no Bueno. A safer option for them would be to engage in a temperature change in the opposite direction, such as taking a warm/hot bath or shower

I stands for intense, meaning *intense exercise*. Short bursts of exercise that is good for getting the heart pumping and detoxing some of those stress hormones. Running around the block, doing jumping jacks, turning on a song and dancing around, whatever floats your boat and doesn’t cause any pain or exacerbates any injuries you have.

P stands for progressive, and in this case *progressive relaxation*. There is a ton of ways of doing progressive relaxation, but essentially you are mindfully focusing on one area of your body at a time and relaxing where you are tense. You can also tense up an area mindfully, and then relax it so you can really notice the difference between the two.

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