

SHADOW + LIGHT



WEEK 1



JOURNEY TO SELF-MASTERY

MELISSA CARROLL, ERYT500
& ASHLEY SWEET, LMHC

WWW.THEYOGAWRITER.COM
WWW.ASHLEYDSWEET.COM

welcome!

We're thrilled you're about to embark on this life-changing journey. This is an adventure to the very core of your Self, and will lead you to acknowledge, accept, and embrace ALL that you are — your light as well as your dark.

Through our time-tested Shadow Integration process, you will free yourself of limiting beliefs, quiet your inner critic, and peel back the layers of judgment and self-sabotage to uncover your shadow. This journey ultimately leads to self-acceptance, forgiveness, and inner power. Our unique Shadow Integration process is designed to help you make peace with the fractured pieces of yourself, to become whole.

"Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

~ Carl Jung

"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."

~ Debbie Ford, *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*

"It is the shadow that holds the clues...The shadow holds the secret of change, change can affect you on a cellular level, change that can effect your very DNA."

~ Lazaris (author & spiritual teacher)

what is the shadow self?

When you stand in the sunlight, you create a shadow: it's connected to you, but you rarely (if ever) notice it.

The Shadow Self is the part of yourself you've ignored, judged, shamed, and neglected. The Shadow contains the qualities you don't want to admit to: your violent and vile thoughts, your resentments and jealousies, your self-pity and self-loathing, your rage and your pride, your ignorance and your arrogance. . .

. . .any qualities you can't easily own up to get shut away in the shadows of your psyche, where you can't see them — but where they can wreak the most havoc. These repressed states show up in our lives as judgments and projections of others, as relationship patterns, and as unconscious self-sabotaging behavior.

As the saying goes, better the devil you know than the devil you don't.

We often consider the Shadow to be purely negative, though you also push away some of your greatest strengths and gifts in your Shadow Side. Your fear of being seen or your fear of failure, for example, may shut away your creativity, your quirky talents, or your ability to share your story with the world.

On the collective level, we are influenced by the beliefs systems and experiences of our family lines, our culture, and the human species as a whole. This influence is not merely theory: the fascinating science of epigenetics proves how interwoven we are as a species, and how the past is written in our chromosomes from the moment we are born (more on on the next page).

This is why Shadow Integration is so powerful — when you de-condition yourself from the traumas and stories of the past, you create **deep ancestral healing**.

This side of yourself is ready to be healed, forgiven, accepted, and integrated into your fullest self. YOU are ready to be healed, forgiven, accepted, and integrated.

In fact, it's in these aspects of yourself that **you will uncover your greatest power**. Your unique genius is hidden within the dark folds of your shadow side.

Your gifts, your dharma, and your capacity to serve the world lie buried in the dark.

Now, it's time to bring ALL that you are into the light.

We are your guides on this incredible journey to the deepest core of yourself. We've been there ourselves and we've held space for our students. We have the maps and the tools and the resources packed and ready to go. However, YOU are the one who must embark on the journey inward to your true Self.

This is why we boldly state this journey will lead you toward self-mastery: when you venture into the hidden aspects of yourself, you gain profound insights and radical inner power that will transform your life. Self-forgiveness and self-acceptance are super powers. We're so excited to be on this journey with you!

*in gratitude,
Melissa & Ashley*



carl jung + consciousness

Carl Jung originally developed the psychological concept of the Shadow. He distinguished the human psyche into three primary structures:

The Conscious: The side of yourself you identify with and reveal to the world. It's the accumulation of your thoughts, emotional patterns, judgments, behaviors, preferences, ambitions, and aversions.

The conscious mind contains your ego and your persona. Put simply, when you use the pronoun "I" or "me", you're referring to your ego. Your persona is the personality you express throughout the course of daily life: it often refers to the acceptable, public side of yourself you wish to show (polite, intelligent, upstanding, etc.). Originally, the word "persona" meant "mask."

If a stranger asked you to describe yourself, all of the details you would reveal are lodged in the Conscious Mind. We refer to this as the Light Side, since it's the aspects of yourself that are clearly open in the light of day.

The Personal Unconscious: The hidden, unknown side of yourself. This is the accumulation of thoughts, emotions, and preferences, judgments, ambitions, and aversions that you've repressed, and therefore likely forgotten they exist as part of you at all.

The Shadow Self includes the personal unconscious, particularly the qualities you ignore, avoid, shame, or disown. The process of ignoring, avoiding, and disowning these aspects of yourself only pushes them deeper into the darkness, out of sight (but alas, not out of mind!). Because of this, you've likely developed a case of "amnesia" and simply do not admit to possessing these traits at all.

For example: if someone was called a fool by their father at a young age, they may deeply loathe and unconsciously repress any 'foolish' qualities, which might include silliness, playfulness, making quick decisions, or making mistakes. As the person grows up, this could manifest in a very pragmatic personality. They might take life grimly seriously, and take pride in being a realist, without any hint of joy or spontaneity. In Shadow Integration, first the individual would have to admit that they have the potential to be foolish. They would have to accept foolishness as one ingredient in the intricate recipe of humanity. Then, instead of perceiving foolishness as purely negative, they would have to find the "light" in this shadow aspect. In fact, they need to uncover the potential treasures they miss out on when they deny this part of themselves — the freedom to take a risk, be vulnerable, or make a mistake without feeling like a worthless failure, for example.

A layer of judgment needs to be removed in order to heal and integrate these long-lost aspects of the self. (The time-tested processes we've specifically designed in Shadow + Light take you on this supportive yet powerful journey to peel away the judgment and uncover the treasures within your forgotten aspects.)

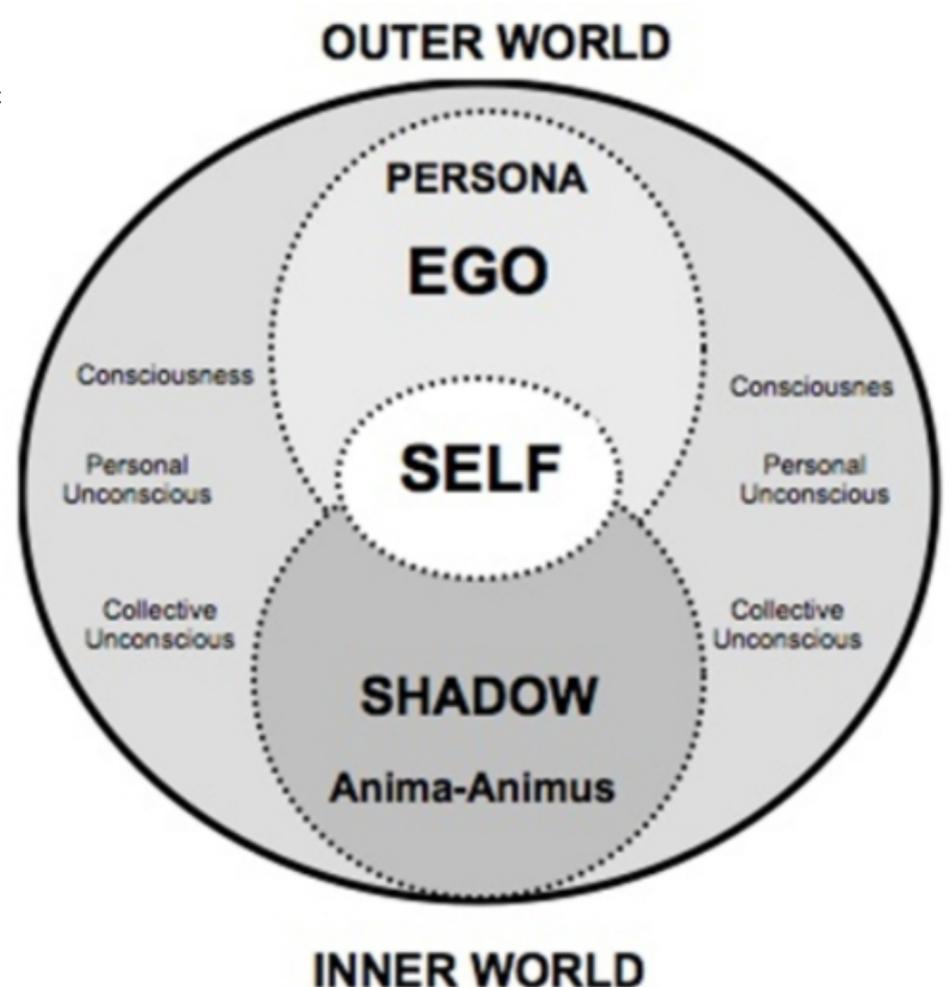
The Collective Unconscious: The hidden, conditioned aspects of the psyche that are woven with the greater fabric of the human species.

Certain characteristics and predispositions are inherited and shared with other members of a given family, society, race, culture, and species.

These latent components are conditioned in us from our family lines and the larger cultures in which our ancestors lived. The power structures, conditioned beliefs, and events of the past are stamped in us.

Jung said, "The form of the world into which [a person] is born is already inborn in him, as a virtual image."

In yoga, these latent impressions are known as **samskaras**, which are like riverbeds deeply grooved within us, and which influence our unconscious beliefs and behaviors. In parallel to Jung's theory and epigenetics, the yogis believe we are born with certain samskaras from previous lifetimes. We can either reinforce these samskaras, further forging synaptic connections in the brain with our thought patterns, decisions, and behaviors – or we can carve new patterns when we make conscious choices.



epigenetics + myths

Epigenetics proves this theory: we're not born a blank slate, but are already imprinted with the genetic influence of our ancestors. We inherit not only eye color or a predisposition to certain diseases, but also fear, nightmares, stress, and depression.

The fascinating science of epigenetic inheritance — in which genetic information is passed down from generation to generation — substantiates Jung's notion of the Collective Unconscious. The biochemical residue of trauma, war, oppression, famine, and other events transfers along family lines.

A groundbreaking 2013 study revealed that Holocaust survivors and their children possessed a specific gene associated with depression and PTSD. The children of Holocaust survivors had altered stress hormones, which would make them more vulnerable to stress and predisposed to anxiety disorders.

Psychologist Natan Kellerman discussed these findings with a poet's tongue and a scientist's insight:

"The Holocaust left its visible and invisible marks not only on the survivors, but also on their children. Instead of numbers tattooed on their forearms, however, they may have been marked epigenetically with a chemical coating upon their chromosomes, which would represent a kind of biological memory of what the parents experienced. As a result, some suffer from a general vulnerability to stress while others are more resilient. Previous research assumed that such transmission was caused by environmental factors, such as the parents' childrearing behavior. New research, however, indicates that these transgenerational effects may have been also (epi) genetically transmitted to their children. Integrating both hereditary and environmental factors, epigenetics adds a new and more comprehensive psychobiological dimension to the explanation of transgenerational transmission of trauma."*

When we uncover our Shadow Self and unwrap the judgment and shame around it, we interrupt the ancestral patterns of trauma and can truly rewrite our own destiny.

Rewriting your story is a large piece of Shadow Integration, because we are a narrative species. From cave walls to Shakespeare to Netflix, we use stories to make meaning of our human experience.

Stories teach us what we are supposed to **believe**, how we are supposed to **behave**, and who we are supposed to **be**. Our stories become our cultural myths, lodged in the unconscious where they go unexamined in the shadows (and again, that's where they can cause all kinds of wacky mischief).

The very stories, these cultural myths, are also passed down from generation to generation.

For example, when a baby is born in an American hospital it's often customary to wrap the newborn in a pink or blue blanket. Pink signifies a girl and blue signifies a boy. While that may seem innocent enough on the surface, the reality is that we've assigned a gender to a color, and immediately codify that gender/color upon the child the moment they leave the womb. This paradigm easily morphs into colors/objects/behaviors that are "girly" or "boyish." As the infant grows up, adults often will say things like, "He's all boy!" or "What a sweet little girl." Cultural myths are ingrained in us from the very beginning.

Think about what Disney Princesses signal to young kids in terms of gender roles, romantic relationships, and definitions of beauty.

Or how our modern culture of stress and 'busy-ness' is reinforced by a coffee-chugging, goal-oriented mythos that values productivity over joy.

These myths are the key to understanding your conditioning — and the key to de-conditioning yourself.

Note: The mind will want to label everything as "good/bad," "pleasant/unpleasant," or "worthy/unworthy" (the mind is excellent at such categorizations). Instead, we'll consider things as being "helpful" or "unhelpful" throughout this process of Shadow + Light.



spiritual bypassing

Spiritual bypassing occurs when we ignore or de-value the full range of emotions and reactions we possess.

In spiritual circles this is a dangerous sentiment that can often lead people to believe they should only feel happy or peaceful, and therefore they judge and shame themselves when they experience all of what it means to be human, regardless of whether the mind labels an emotional energy as positive or negative.

A Personal Note from Melissa:

For many years I struggled with my concept of myself as a yoga teacher because I would feel anger or sorrow or judgment. I would mentally slap myself with thoughts like: "You're not supposed to think that, Melissa! You're a yoga teacher, you should know better." My ego and persona were highly attached to the image of the yoga teacher, which I interpreted as healthy, nice, always smiling and basking in the glow of serenity.

Well, the reality was that I wasn't always a bliss bunny sitting on a lotus leaf.

Sometimes I felt like shit. Sometimes I got road rage. Sometimes I wallowed in despair. Sometimes I ate Wendy's fries at 3am (shhhh, don't tell!).

On top of that, I felt guilty for feeling so awful — especially when I believed I should feel grateful or peaceful or joyful.

Dukkha on dukkha, the Buddhists would say. **Suffering on suffering**. A guilt and sadness layer cake.

Spiritual bypassing only widens the chasm between our conscious and unconscious minds, fracturing our sense of self between what the ego/persona deems as acceptable and worthy, and what the unconscious/shadow self ACTUALLY wants, thinks, and feels.

Ultimately, when we stamp a smiley face on more complex emotional states, we repress our fullness. We say we're fine when our relationship is crumbling, when the stress of our job is overwhelming, when deep down we know we need to rest but we feel compelled to keep going until we burn out.

Furthermore, we set ourselves up for feeling guilty when we do secretly feel anything other than what we believe we're "supposed to." Dukkha upon dukkha.

The underlying message of that is, "These parts of me aren't good enough, so I'll shove them away and hope they just disappear." You know by now they don't disappear (that's likely one of the reasons why you invested in this course.)

And the DEEPER, more DANGEROUS message beneath that unconscious thought is usually, "I'm not good enough."

Our deeply rooted sense of unworthiness is often at the very heart of much of our suffering.

Luckily, to quote Tara Brach, "the trance of unworthiness can be broken."

You're not inherently bad. You are, indeed, enough.

Through Shadow Integration you realize you are not a sinner, nor are you a saint.

You're not perfect and you're not a fraud.

You're YOU: a complex, creative, weird, wondrous being that can express the full spectrum of humanity, from the depths of darkness to the most radiant brilliance & light.

the inner critic

Hello, inner critic! Welcome to the party. We saved you a seat — not right up front, but don't worry, we won't kick you out (you'll just cause more trouble if we lock you out, and we're here to make peace).

We know you're trying to help. You think you keep it real, you think you keep things in check. We appreciate you. You provide discernment and information, theoretically to make us better. We have a request, though:

When you start going on one of your tried-and-true diatribes (the old "not good enough" story, or the "this won't work because remember the past? I have lots of examples to show you from the past again" story, or "I'll never be like __that person__ story") we're going to need a safe word.

"Cancel" works. Or "Wait." Or "Pause." We're going to need to you to pause your diatribe so we can create space to really consider if said thought pattern is true and necessary and helpful in the moment. We're going to question your authority. Is this true? Always true? Is this necessary? Helpful? If it ain't, we're going to drop it for the moment, ok?

how the shadow shows up

Now that we've got some background on the Shadow, consciousness, and myths, how do you figure out what your particular Shadow Self contains? It's hidden and mysterious, so this should be tricky, right?

Luckily, no.

The Shadow is giving us clues ALL THE TIME, because we are so deeply governed by our unconscious desires and drivers.

2 ways to spot your shadow:

1. Your judgments. What agitates you in other people? What really grinds your gears?

Is it when someone brags about themselves, fishing for compliments? Or a friend who's never on time?

Look to these people and scenarios that "get to you," because they have a very special gift: they are revealing to you your own unhealed aspects. In psychology this is known as projection.

For example, let's say you're seriously annoyed by people who act arrogantly (filtered through your perception of what arrogance looks like, of course). Maybe this is because you suffer from insecurity and you have a hard time accepting compliments. You would NEVER brag about yourself in public, in great fear that you'd come across as being portrayed as arrogant. You've denied arrogance within yourself, so it gets projected outward as a judgment against others.

You're not aware of this projection process. That's why it's unconscious!

Not everyone is as affected by the arrogant person as you, though, so you know you've got some work to do. It doesn't mean arrogance is suddenly right and somehow you're wrong. It does mean that you've disowned arrogance within yourself.

And so, through this line of inquiry, the arrogant person is now your teacher. They can show you how being so insecure isn't always the healthiest option, either. It doesn't mean you have to suddenly condone arrogant behavior, but you can use the person you're judging as a mirror for your own inner examination.

This is just the first step: awareness of your judgments and projections in others. As the course continues we'll work with some of these qualities to integrate them into your whole Self in a supportive way.

2. Your advice. We are masters of disguise. Your Shadow Self is likely so well hidden that you can't observe it within you, so it shows up as projection in others: both as judgment and encouragement. Both avenues hold keys to your own inner wisdom, which will unlock these hidden aspects of yourself.

What do you tell other people to do all the time? Listen to your own advice. Or, as Debbie Ford says, "Attend your own lectures." Do you talk about the benefits of yoga or meditation, though you rarely carve out time to practice yourself? Do you encourage friends to follow their hearts, but you're still listening solely to your head? Do you share inspiring quotes about rest and self-care, but still secretly push yourself to strive more, accomplish more, 'succeed' more?

This week you will observe these two patterns: what situations and people do you judge, and what advice do you typically offer others? (Full Homework listed on Page 6)

An Important Note:

These conditioned beliefs didn't become ingrained in you overnight — it often takes time to unravel and free yourself from the patterns the stories have created.

However, the **good news** is that the more heartfelt energy you put forth into de-conditioning yourself, the more quickly you'll see your thought patterns and reactions shift, which will form new neural pathways in the brain and ultimately lead to more positive outcomes in your life.

That's because our thoughts influence our behaviors, and our behaviors shape our lives.

Shadow Work is revolutionary, because instead of judging ourselves, blaming others, or engaging in harmful numbing patterns, we confront the reality of who we are with love, compassion, and acceptance.

ahimsa + automatic writing

One key ingredient on this Shadow + Light journey is ahimsa, which means non-harming in Sanskrit. It's the foundation of the 8-limbed path of yoga. Compassion is the first step, and the essential step we must return to again and again along the journey. Every other technique must be practiced in the light of compassion, for ourselves and others.

It does no good to engage in Shadow Integration practices if you're beating yourself up for "not being good enough" the whole time. That only drives more shame and guilt into the Shadow, and we're trying to slowly and gently unpack your Shadow contents. If you're feeling stuck, out of whack, or down (all natural states of being that don't make you flawed or terrible, by the way), Ashley has created a potent Emergency Self-Care Kit, which is included as part of this week's homework.

free the mind

The practice of automatic writing is simple yet profound. Known as "Morning Pages" or "Automatic Writing," this journaling practice allows you to dump out the chatter of the mind, so you can externalize all the inner noise and create some much-needed space.

Set a timer for 10 minutes, and sit comfortably with your back straight. Notice your breath for a few moments. Soften the muscles in your face and across your shoulders. Have a pen and paper ready to go (we highly recommend handwriting: the effect is not the same on a computer screen).

Take at least 5 deep breaths to anchor yourself into the present. Then, bring your pen to the page and just begin writing. Your mind/inner narrator/inner critic will likely jump in, overanalyzing the practice and wondering if you'll write anything "good" or "worthwhile." But that's not the point. You're simply writing out whatever thoughts are in your mind: even if they seem silly or strange or wrong.

Let the stream of consciousness flow! As soon as the mind interjects with a judgment, opinion, or attempt to revise, we have stopped practicing automatic writing. We must stay in the stream, regardless of grammar, sentence structure, or even sense. This is an excellent way to refresh the busy mind.

Much like a surreal dream state, you can let go of logic and give your analytical side a rest.

The act of writing automatically on the page clears out mental clutter, revs your creative engine, and opens the inner dialogue with more awareness and centeredness — you may even discover new material pouring forth that can give you insight into your Shadow Side.

**In Shadow Work, we embrace our fullness.
We bridge our conscious, egoic awareness
(our clear, obvious desires and issues) with our deeper subconscious
(the hidden desires and issues that drive our lives).**

WEEK 1 ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Complete the Self-Care Kit

2. Observe your judgments in others and the advice you always tend to give others.

Vulnerability BONUS points for sharing some of your judgments/advice in the Facebook group!

3. Practice automatic writing for at least 10 minutes every day.

4. Journaling Questions:

What aspects of myself have I been shunning and shutting away?

What do I want to transform within myself throughout this journey?

What could block me from doing the work to transform myself?