

SHADOW + LIGHT



WEEK 5



JOURNEY
TO SELF-MASTERY

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receive the blessings of your life

Remember at the beginning of the course when we said that your Shadow contains not only your deepest fears but also your greatest strengths, gifts, and hidden talents?

Well, this week we are celebrating the Light within the Dark.

The intention of this course is to help you **radically, systematically "un-shame" the parts of yourself that you've deemed as a shameful.**

Hopefully you have begun to **dismantle some of the tension and judgment around your Shadow Aspects:** your anger, your critical mind, your restlessness, your selfishness, and all behavioral patterns that numb you from feeling uncomfortable sensations. You know by now that judging your bouts of rage, self-pity, etc. only further represses them further into your unconscious, where they fester.

This process of deep self-acceptance and wholeness is based on the premise that all states of being can be helpful or unhelpful, depending on the context and the dosage of that emotional energy. Remember, a little bit of anger can actually be a positive spark that spurs you into action and motivates you to change...but up the dosage of that anger and now you're on fire, fuming, and screaming things you don't mean.

Instead, you can embrace these states in the context of being: **a pattern interrupt which shifts the energy from self-judgment and shame to one of openness and playfulness.**

But we are complicated bunnies, and our **internalized shame is exacerbated by all the messaging we've received growing up** (which is why we looked at these deep-rooted stories and your "Shoulds" & "Shouldn'ts" in Weeks 2 & 3).

Often, our desire to move forward in lives or feel deeply at peace with ourselves is being sabotaged by these deep unconscious programs. For example:

Do you throw away compliments?

If someone says, "I love your shirt!" do you respond with something like, "Oh, I got it at Marshall's for \$5."

There's an amazing Amy Schumer sketch where a group of friends see each other and increasingly self-deprecate when given a compliment ("Your hair looks great!" "No I look like a golden retriever's dingleberry")....until the last woman accepts the compliment and the others dramatically kill themselves.

One of the reasons why I believe many of us are so bad at receiving compliments is because we're bad at **receiving in general.**

If you also find receiving kind words a bit awkward, it's likely that you **consciously enjoy receiving compliments, but a deeper unconscious part of you believes that you really don't deserve them.**

Ouch.

This type of inner conflict reveals the **disconnect between your conscious and unconscious mind**...and is precisely why Shadow Integration is so powerful.

The Shadow Story of **"I'm not good enough"** will slap away every kind word, but can so easily recall that insult some kid lodged at you in sixth grade.

REWIRING THE NEGATIVITY BIAS

This is similar to a Negativity Bias, which is the psychological tendency to focus on the bad (*now I've got that weird old song that goes "you've got to accentuate the positive!" stuck in my head*).

Studies show that the brain's cerebral cortex creates much more electrical activity in response to negative stimuli than positive stimuli: thus, psychologists often say that we are "hardwired for negativity."

*me if i hear you
negative self-talking*



deleting old programs

Is it possible to rewire your tendency from emphasizing the negative to the positive?

Yes, thank goodness. Research has shown that meditation practices literally reshape the brain (*heck yes for neuroplasticity!*). Plus, I'm living proof. The trick, though, is that this rewiring requires effort, since it's literally easier for your brain to latch on to the negative.

If we return to the metaphor that the unconscious mind is like a computer program, then certain equations are built in to how this underground part of your mind comes to conclusions. For example, I have a deeply rooted story that "I should be nice."

Being Nice = Being Liked

And ooh, how I desperately want to be liked. My unconscious engine runs on being liked as fuel. How many times have not spoken up, said my truth, or risked being brave in order to remain "nice," and therefore liked? So, so many times.

How does this affect my ability to receive compliments, accept praise for my work, or open to the energetic flow of abundance?

Because many of these unconscious programs are linked in detrimental ways: if I desperately, deeply want to be liked, then being arrogant is a surefire way to be unlikeable. Since my unconscious has calculated that being liked supersedes feeling good about myself (at the risk of feeling or appearing haughty) I'll block a compliment aimed at me with an compliment to the sender.

Them: "You're such a great yoga teacher!"

Me, without hesitation: "Oh well you're the one doing the practice. I'm just giving instructions."

Consider This: perhaps your inability to willfully experience the sensation of receiving a compliment, no matter how mundane, will open a door to receiving other good things in your life.

the sensation of receiving

If you find yourself getting stuck in your ability to accept a compliment, or fully **believe someone when they say they love you, or receive a promotion at work** (As I have done! That's how deep my money story used to run!) then we can begin to rewire this pattern by getting out of your head and into the body.

Dive into the felt experience of receiving a compliment: what makes you want to escape such a moment? You don't have to analyze this: **all you have to do is feel.**

Tingling in the belly? A twinge behind your eyes? A muscle contraction somewhere?

It doesn't matter how this physical sensation manifests: breathe into it, just like you would breathe into a Warrior II position.



Breathing into the sensations that arise when you feel uncomfortable is basic mindfulness training. *It's also a gateway to releasing the unconscious energy blocks that prevent you from receiving.*

Essentially, the more you can be present for your own experience in the moment, the more you open yourself up to the fullness of who you are.

Instead of immediately reacting to uncomfortable sensations (which typically ignite a behavior pattern, such as making an off-handed comment to deny a compliment, craving food or another numbing action, or unconsciously refusing to believe that someone loves you when they say they do) *you can breathe, be present, and respond with mindfulness.*

the cupful of blessings mudra

If you discover an unconscious program that might be preventing you from receiving goodness in your life, it's not going to help to mentally berate yourself.

Instead, shift your energy. Practice the yogic/meditation techniques we explore throughout this course, which have been designed and studied for thousands of years to help us mere mortals overcome our own mental barriers. Breathe.

To anchor in the physical practice of working with receiving, this week I invite you to practice a mudra for opening your energy field:

In the yoga tradition, a mudra is a hand gesture known as an energetic seals: it can enhance, calm, or direct one's prana (life-force energy). We use our hands all the time to communicate (especially if you're Italian like me). **A mudra is an inner communication, one that reroutes your typical thought patterns — which is why it can be a potent tool for shifting your energy.**



To practice this mudra, simply turn your palms upward and hover your hands in front of your heart (you can follow along with me in the short video in this module).

As you hold the hand position, imagine all the good things you already enjoy in your life: friendships, delicious foods you savor, gorgeous sunsets, a roof over your head, a comfy bed, a car that runs, fulfilling work, etc...

...imagine all those divine blessings, those gifts of good fortune, dropping down into your open palms...

...now imagine all your future blessings raining down into your hands: closer relationships, enhanced abundance, moments of laughter, experiences to cherish...

...do this for at least 5 minutes, until you sink into the sensations of gratitude that arise from this practice.

This is known as the "cupful of blessings" mudra, or Guruprasad Mudra, because it invites an openness into the energy field. Your hands literally form a cup, and the power of your awareness moves from that of worry to that of celebration.

write a love letter to your golden shadow

Just as we wrote a Love Letter to one of your Shadow Aspects in Week 4, this week we're focusing on a quality your conscious mind deems "positive," yet one you still repress or don't fully embody.

How can you determine this hidden treasure buried within your unconscious? Just as you looked to your judgments of others in Week 1 to see what's unhealed in your Shadow, you can now look to what you admire in others as well.

What you admire in others will reveal to you the hidden strengths and gifts you also possess, but perhaps don't readily embrace or identify with (the same adage goes both ways, good and bad: you spot it because you got it!)

Do you admire someone's ability to speak honestly and compassionately? Are you inspired by those whom pursue their passions, even if it goes against the grain? Do you look up to someone's resilience in the face of adversity? Whatever you admire in others is a reflection of your own gifts as well. This is what Carl Jung referred to as "The Golden Shadow."

The writing exercise will be the same as Week 4, only inverted to celebrate an aspect of your Light:

1. **Choose a Golden Shadow Aspect** you don't fully embrace within yourself: *trusting your intuition, altruism, living from the heart, leading with confidence, etc.*
2. **Take out a piece of paper** and write at the top: **Dear {Golden Shadow Aspect you've chosen}**.
3. On the next line, begin by writing, **"Thank you..."** and fill in the rest.

What has this Golden Shadow aspect taught you? How has this inner power shone forth in your life for the better?

4. **Write at least 2 specific examples** of how this Golden Shadow Aspect has helped you.
5. **Notice**, as you write, what potential emotional, mental, physical, or energetic shifts occur.

*Do you sense a softening around your chest?
Are the muscles in your face and shoulders loosening their grip?
Is there a feeling of warmth in your body?*

Write down any of these sensations at the bottom of your letter or on a separate page.

3 Times a Charm

Just as with the Love Letter to your Shadow Aspect, I encourage you to write this letter to your Golden Shadow Aspect three times.

Remember, your unconscious holds a strong grip to this quality (in this case, a grip of aversion or denial). That's precisely why you're able to celebrate this quality in others but not yourself.

The act of writing these letters more than once will dredge up new buried insights, just like the process of Automatic Writing can open the floodgates within you.

