

AWBW/Shadow Self Collage

What is Shadow Work?

If the shadow is everything about us that we are scared others will see, that we ourselves are scared to see, then shadow work is, in part, working with what we're afraid of within ourselves. Shadow work is turning to look at what you fear or are ashamed of. Chances are, you've probably worked or maybe even danced or played with your shadow. Check out Sharon's [blog post](#), to read more about Shadow Work!

Shadow Self Collage

There are countless ways to work (or play) with your shadow, but here are a few ideas to get you started (you can adapt them as you wish). Make sure to set some dedicated time for whichever you choose, and bring yourself to a calm, grounded state.



Shadow Self Collage Example

Materials:

- Scissors
- Glue
- Magazines or printed images
- Large sheet of paper
- Other art supplies (markers, crayons, oil pastels, paint, etc.)

Collage Steps:

1. Think about the aspects of yourself that you find challenging, scary, or uncomfortable - this could be an emotion, feeling, or personality trait.
2. Pick out images that resonate with the shadow aspects you reflected on.
3. Arrange the images on the paper in a way that feels cohesive and satisfying, and glue them on.
4. Take some time to look at what you've made, and see if there's anything you'd like to change or add.
5. All aspects of ourselves have a purpose. With that in mind, consider how your shadow may have served or supported you in some way. It can be helpful to look at the positive aspects of our shadow which can have a negative connotation.
6. Consider how your shadow has guided you, protected you, or helped you navigate through a challenging experience. How has your shadow played a role in your personal growth and understanding of yourself?
7. Reflect on your collage. What does your art say about your shadow? What might your shadow be saying through your art?

Journaling Questions:

- What emotion do you avoid the most? What does avoiding it look like? How does it feel when this emotion comes up?
- How do you think other people see you? How would you like others to see you?
- When are you most judgmental? Towards others, and to yourself?
- What makes you feel empty inside and what are some of the ways you fill up this space?
- What do you wish you could change about yourself?
- Describe yourself in your entirety - the good, the bad - all of it. How do you feel about what you wrote down?

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Internal Family System (IFS)

IFS is an evidence-based psychotherapy that believes individuals are made up of parts or sub-personalities, that are led by a core Self. These inner parts can be forced from their valuable states into extreme roles within us due to trauma. Healing can take place when we are able to access and take care of our wounded and protective inner parts. To learn more about IFS, click [here](#).

Parts Work/Internal Family System (IFS):

- Bring to mind the shadow aspects you'd like to explore. What does this shadow self look like? Notice all its characteristics and behaviors and how it presents - is it a person? An object? A shape?
- Once you've learned what your shadow self looks and feels like, tap into the part of yourself that is the most compassionate, accepting, and wise. This is the central self of you that can hold space for all the other parts.
- Begin a dialogue between the self and the shadow. Ask the shadow how it came to be, what it wants you to know about it, what it is scared of, what it needs.
- Allow the dialogue to flow organically, making sure to listen and acknowledge without judgment or a desire to change anything that the shadow shares.
- Explore the dynamic between the self and the shadow, letting the shadow know that it is safe and heard with you.
- Consider how you can cultivate a loving relationship with the shadow-self with regular check-ins through visualization, art, or writing.

Visualization/Meditation:

Sit in a comfortable position. If you like, you may close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to center yourself. If deep breathing doesn't work for you, please feel free to count, notice your breath, or do whatever works best for you. Allow your body to relax and release any tension. Imagine yourself in a safe and peaceful place in nature. Visualize a path unfolding in front of you. This path represents your journey towards your shadow self. As you walk down this path, allow your awareness to shift towards all the shadow aspects of your being. Acknowledge their presence without judgment, simply noticing them.

Imagine a wise, accepting, and compassionate guide appearing alongside you, representing your highest self. Converse with this guide, allowing yourself to express any fears or discomfort you have with your shadow aspects. Allow the guide to respond with wisdom, understanding, and reassurance. Absorb their support.

Visualize a clearing up ahead along the path, where you can sit and reflect. In this clearing, imagine a mirror or a body of water in front of you, which will reflect your shadow. Gaze into the reflection and extend compassion and acceptance towards all that you see. Offer love, understanding, and forgiveness. Ask for love, understanding, and forgiveness. Envision yourself embracing and integrating with your shadow aspects. See yourself becoming whole and balanced, as all parts of yourself merge together as one cohesive being.