

Week 3: Blind Spots / Shadow

My Inner Beloved:

I stand before you with all my shadow—
all that I have created with this life—
and all moments that make my mouth wince.
Yet when I disrobe my shadow,
You do not wince.
You show the core of me—
shafts of unending love.
At times I resist what I see,
at times I run away from light.
I can easily blame you—
whoever *you* is in the moment—
and then I create something outside of me.
Yet when I stop judging *everything*,
new eyes form—
soft and clear—
and I rest in the true You that is my heart.
When I have the courage to see
all beliefs that have enslaved me,
they fall like scales around my feet,
and cycles of suffering cease.
When I slip inside
Your tenderness,
I become the spark of stardust,
the wisp of clouds,
the roll of thunder,
and the peaceful calm.
No matter where I roam,
all roads near or far,
I am pulled back
to your embrace,
for you are
My Inner Beloved.

Tina Karagulian

In art, adding shadow brings depth to a painting or drawing. We may see a balancing of the light and dark aspects of the subject, or feel an experience of entering into the depths of what is. The contemplative

process, is also where we go deep within, is about seeing more fully in each moment.

I remember during a dark night of the soul stretch of my life, I could not sing and I didn't want to hang paintings on my walls. I was entering inside of myself, into the shadow places. I loved color, yet up until that point in time, I often left out the earth tones or gray tones in my paintings. **I did not see the value of the shadow places.** I didn't see the beauty in them. However, as I had blank walls up for a while, I began to notice the depth of what a gray tone can give. I found myself resting in those places. I began to see them in nature, too.

My mind feared the shadow places in my emotional life at times, yet artistically, I was being shown a different perspective. Something was filling out, integrating, and making more sense within me. Why not in my emotional blind spots, too?

I remember that my heart was being triggered at times to let go of its burdens. I would meet others who would trigger those tender places in my heart, over and over again, until I made changes or healed. I had to remember that on a grander scale, whatever was being released at its root and healed was to free me. We cannot escape the body feeling some of the pain as old patterns are being released. As I prayed and asked for help, I felt an answer come that **I was not being asked to feel the entirety of the pain, yet did need to feel a portion of it at its root. I felt grace surrounding me as I released, healed, and grew.** Many times it still was very painful, and it took all I could muster to remain loving to others and myself as I was going through this deeply physical experience of release. Yet I was determined to stay open-hearted and loving. I could only stretch my heart as much as I could, and it took years and years of that heart unraveling process. The process had its own timing and rhythm.

During this shadow time, what was blind to me was that I had taken on roles or beliefs or ways of communicating with myself that limited me and prevented me from growing and creating. I learned that I was allowing for things or ways of being or patterns that have always hurt my heart or hurt my creativity, and I turned a blind eye to what would deplete my joy. I learned that I chose some unnecessary suffering and obligation in my life. I had to heal the places that I betrayed myself. **Patterns can seduce us. They can tangle our loving hearts in some way. These were not the strokes of**

shadow that offered balance. These were so wrong for my heart and creative process to thrive, and my body was making it very, very clear that it would hurt until I finally said no to it. To help me heal, my heart began to refine what were nos for me. A nugget that came to me from that time was this:

Do not judge yourself, someone else, or the process.

I began to notice that many times, the pain I felt was from my mind, judging what was releasing. Like a computer with a large database, the mind could only access what was stored there. However, this process and its answers in the shadowlands were *beyond* this database, and often I had to speak compassionately with my mind, teaching it to stop spinning and looking into the database. My mind needed to let go of what didn't work and allow the consciousness within me, my wise and loving Self, to take over.

I had to be gentle and tender and loving with myself as I was emerging from the shadows. I had to teach my mind to rest and relax, too, and to trust what could not be understood by only one aspect of my mind. **My first response was to love the part of me that needed attention.** I could not be compassionate with others until I had given care and tenderness to myself first. I was creating a pause and resting there, until I weaved enough self-love into me. Then, and only then, would I know how to respond with some sort of action in the outer world. **To rewire myself, to choose self-love as a first response, was a key shadow time growth process for me.**

During this shadow time, what was also blind to me was my innocent heart. My eyes grew more accustomed to the light in the dark. I found ways to help myself, tools to move about in this shadow world. Just like in art, I noticed that I could rest in the shadow places. Once I released each judgment and pattern, I noticed the shadow was not a place to fear. I learned to listen for my hell yes nuggets, the small and large choices or steps that led me to create in ways that truly satisfied my soul now. There was an integrating and balancing happening within me, so I could hold many more subtle aspects and movements and color in balance that fit me. From this place, I could offer something for my community, a process that I lived through and understood.

Meditation: Resting the Shadow

Journal Questions

- In your blind spots, are there patterns that are seducing you to betray yourself somehow? Identify what they are. Love on the parts of you that learned that to survive long ago. Be compassionate with yourself. It is courageous to love those parts of us that were seduced.
- Are you judging yourself, someone else, or a process as it is unfolding? Notice where you can relax any judgment and be more compassionate instead. Bring those judgments into your inner still space. Love on yourself instead. What do you notice?
- As you release something in you that you believed to be true, you may feel pain as it is releasing. Can you offer yourself kind words and compassion instead? What would you say to yourself? Notice moments when grace and kindness surround you. Notice and list what helps you release, heal, grow, and create anew.
- What if you looked at the hardest moments of your life with the same awe and curiosity, seeing the depth and wonder that you once may have missed? Write out some new awarenesses as you look at these moments of your life in a new way.
- Look at your art, your writing, your creativity, or your inner process, and allow yourself to see the shadow places with a new curiosity:
 - Can you allow your eyes to relax in the dark and soften to see things with more perspective? What do you see?
 - What truths did you learn from this time?
 - Notice what words want to hang out together?
 - Some of them may be uncomfortable to write or speak. Can you allow them to dance together, practice speaking them aloud for yourself and with others? How will some of your words stand alone, firm, unpolished yet accepting a moment that is what it is? Do your words want to soften and be more graceful?

- What do you feel? What feels like a new creative rhythm or way to live for you.
- What do you know? What are truths you have always known to be true for you and you are honoring them now. How are you no longer betraying a part of you that needs expression? Give specific steps to honoring your creative process.
- Notice what is balancing in a new way within you?
- What are the subtle aspects, movements, color, or words that want to come together?
- Can you let the form (the creative output or full you) inform you and teach you how it wants to come together? Witness and see what is showing itself, in this moment, this process, this creative project. Accept what is happening in this moment. What do you notice as you hold the process more loosely and lovingly?