



The Shadow Effect

By Dr. Deb Sandella

Twenty-five years ago, Debbie Ford sat on the bathroom floor trying to figure out who she was. Strung out on drugs, she sought to numb her shame and self-loathing. Starting with pans of Sarah Lee brownies and liters of Coca-Cola, she turned to pot and downers, and, finally, psychedelics and cocaine.

Today Ford is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*, the creator of a new movie *The Shadow Effect*, and co-author with Deepak Chopra and Marianne Williamson of the book *The Shadow Effect*. She says of the journey, “It’s easy to love yourself when you feel good, you look good, and everybody’s doing what you want. Real love is when you reclaim a part of yourself you hated, or make peace with your body. You find compassion for the part of you that can be so hurt and angry and judgmental.”

Carl Jung first identified the “shadow” as the dark side of each human being that contains repressed weaknesses and shortcomings. He suggested everyone has a shadow and “the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is....It forms an

unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions.” Further, we have layers of shadow. Our unique personal shadows are closest to the surface, while the deeper shadows are those commonly shared by all humanity,

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which Jung called the *collective unconscious*.

Personal shadows develop during childhood when those around us unknowingly say things that cause us to feel bad or wrong. We instinctively hide this perceived “badness” hoping to attract greater approval and love. What is hidden, however, remains in the shadows of the mind, leaking out in our words and actions without discernment. Whatever lurks in the shadows has uncensored power. Ford suggests, “Most of us have become who we are as a result of what we don’t like. We unconsciously decide we don’t like the passivity of our mothers, so we become aggressive. We don’t like the irresponsibility of our brothers, so we unconsciously become responsible. We don’t create

ourselves by picking good qualities we admire. Rather, we focus on the bad qualities we want to avoid.”

In her seventeen years of facilitating shadow work, this is one thing Ford has learned: “If you don’t deal with the shadow, the shadow will deal with you.” She notes, “People don’t understand that not being able to lose those extra pounds or not being able to keep a job or save money is a result of their shadow. Your shadow is always dealing with you. Ask the questions: ‘Where am I unable to express fully, set good boundaries, say no, ask for more, or get the support I need? What haven’t I been able to manifest? Where are my relationships not as intimate or nourishing as I’d like?’”

The Personal Shadow

The movie *The Shadow Effect* makes a comparison between hiding one’s shadow and holding a large beach ball underwater. Imagine the energy used to keep a large ball consistently submerged. The ball continuously slips away and pops to the surface with a splash. Similarly, think of the energy consumed by hiding one’s weaknesses beneath awareness. Consider the great energy and power unleashed by admitting our shortcomings to self and others. Ford enthusiastically shares, “I embraced my greedy-self. I

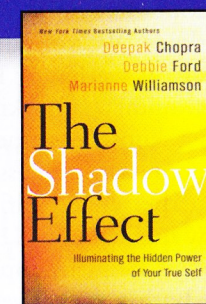
embraced my angry-self. I embraced my intolerant-self. I embraced my racist-self. I embraced my close-minded self. I embraced my stupid-self, and all the parts I hated. And each time, a miracle happened, truly a miracle. A new relationship, a new opportunity, new feelings emerged where I felt strong and confident and authentic. I was able to share on a different level with people because I wasn’t ashamed of who I was in any way, shape, or form.”

The Projected Shadow

When light shines from behind on a sunny day, we project a shadow that follows us everywhere. Similarly, the inner shadow has a dark projection. According to Jung, the instinctive and irrational nature of the shadow projects inner shame out into the world as criticism of others. For example, Eliot Spitzer, the ex-governor of New York, furiously condemned prostitution and later ruined his career through sexual liaisons with prostitutes. Projection in lesser degrees shows up in all our lives. We blame others rather than owning our weaknesses and create a “them or us” relationship. Ford makes the point, “The pervading darkness over humanity is the fantasy that there are good people and bad people. When we see the flaws of people with perfect personas, whether they’re gurus, spiritual

teachers, or celebrities like Tiger Woods, we begin to understand everyone is walking around with some shame, and ignored shame turns into shadow.” She enthusiastically suggests, “Just like John Bradshaw taught us—we gotta deal with our shame. As we heal the thinking that there are good people terrorized by bad people, we heal shame. We can break open our finger-pointing society and become an evolved nation by doing our shadow work.”

Ford credits her transformation to listening to a tape by Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer that suggests we are a “microcosm of the macrocosm.” She kept asking herself, “What does this mean? How can I not be in the world, but the world be within me? Why would such a smart man say such a stupid thing?” Then one day while riding the train, a child spilled milk on his



To order *The Shadow Effect* by Deepak Chopra, Debbie Ford, and Marianne Williamson, visit scienceofmind.com or call DeVors & Company at 800-382-6121.

mother, who began screaming at him. Ford got really angry thinking how horrible this mother was, when suddenly, an inner voice spoke: "If your child spilled milk on you on the way to work, you'd be going off like a banshee, too." That moment changed her life. "I

The shadow is an amazing friend—the kind of friend who tells the truth.

realized it wasn't this woman inside me, rather it was the capacity for her behavior within me." She goes on to explain, "Who we are is known because of contrast. We wouldn't know goodness or greatness without having witnessed evil or darkness. We wouldn't discern courage if we hadn't known fear. We wouldn't seek kindness if we didn't know meanness. We wouldn't appreciate selflessness if we hadn't experienced selfishness. This is how humans learn. Having this awareness helps us appreciate both sides, both perspectives, both polarities."

Everyone has some regret or shame about who they are. Ford suggests the healing comes

from realizing, "The shadow is an amazing friend—the kind of friend who tells the truth. We all have friends who say whatever we want. And there are those friends who have the courage to say, 'You have food in your teeth,' or, 'That hairstyle doesn't really serve you anymore,' or, 'You keep talking bad about that person, and I think it's just a disowned part of yourself.' That's a true friend, and that's the shadow."

Debbie Ford says she is happy and successful today because of an enormous amount of shame, which has been a transforming force in her life. She passionately shares, "Shadow work is a deep journey into a new kind of love, an authentic way of connecting with people in a truly intimate way. This kind of intimacy is what heals everything; it feeds the internal hunger we attempt to satisfy with food, alcohol, and other bad habits. Shadow work fills that emptiness."

Interactive Shadow Activity

The Shadow Effect movie includes an "interactive version," which has eight shadow-processing activities. Ford guided this writer through one of these exercises to identify a current shadow. The dialogue is described below so readers can use it to discover and transform their personal shadows into light.

Debbie Ford (DF): You start by closing your eyes and sensing the quality you like best about yourself right now.

Dr. Deb (DD): Hmm...the quality that flashed this minute is tenacity.

DF: So you like your tenaciousness.

DD: Yes.

DF: Where are you tenacious?

DD: Personally, I'm tenacious in being honest and ethical, and in maintaining an equitable relationship with my husband. In my work, I'm tenacious in continuing to pursue my passion regardless of

others' opinions.

DF: So that's fabulous, right? You really like that part of you?

DD: I like that, yeah. *(laughing)*

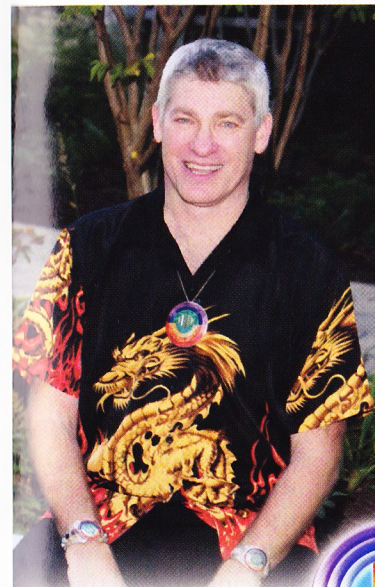
DF: Good shadow laugh. Your unconscious is saying, yes, that's true. Close your eyes again and sense the negative opposite of being tenacious.

DD: Hmm...probably wimpy.

DF: What kind of a person is wimpy?

DD: Hmm...I guess people who remain in a victim position feeling there's nothing they can do but suffer.

DF: Good. So a victim is some-



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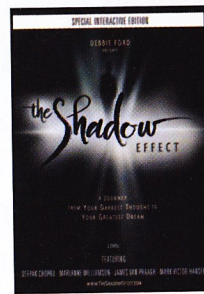
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thing everybody can relate to, right? So as you reject the victim-wimpy part of you, you try hard to be tenacious. What could be good about loving your wimpy-victim-self?

DD: Well, it would give me more balance because the cost of needing to be tenacious means I need to be strong. Feeling like I always need to be in charge of my life can be taxing. The greatest benefit of accepting the wimpy-victim part of me is an allowing of more attention to my inner needs, thus, taking better care of myself. And, to feel more compassionate with those I've perceived as being stuck in suffering.

DF: Hmm...that's so beautiful. When did you reject that part of you, the victim? When did you decide that she couldn't have any space inside of you? How old were you?

DD: I would say when my sister was born when I was three,



To find out more about Debbie Ford's work and The Shadow Effect, visit shadoweffect.com.

and my brother when I was five. Suddenly, my mother was overwhelmed, and I needed to be tenacious. I became strong for everyone.

DF: That's amazing! What a difference to shift from looking after everybody in the outer world, to looking out for this part of you in the inner world—you'd be able to really nurture yourself. Ultimately, this process is the work of the heart warrior. It opens your heart. It makes you feel tender. There are probably times where you have been victimized, and because you avoid it, you haven't been able to support yourself.

DD: That's true.

DF: Yeah, so you've probably been hard on yourself even when what you really needed was great compassion for that part of you. We've all been victimized at some time, right? In this model we're both victims and victimizers, and the healing is really the same. But if we don't allow this for ourselves, we can just get stuck in "victim," so we never really acknowledge all the people we have victimized by being the victim. Or we can get stuck in tenacity and not acknowledge the inner-tenderness longing for protection.

DD: Wow...thanks for that. Interestingly, embracing my victim self, I feel stronger because I'm attending to my own vulnerability. Isn't that amazing! •