

Shadow Work Handout

1. Create a safe moment

- Sit somewhere comfortable and quiet.
 - Remind yourself:
“I’m just observing. I don’t need to fix anything.”
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2. Notice a mild trigger (not your biggest one)

Think of a **recent situation** that caused a *small to moderate* emotional reaction.
Examples:

- You felt annoyed by someone’s comment
- You felt ignored, embarrassed, or defensive
- You judged someone a little harshly

Choose something **not overwhelming**.

3. Describe it neutrally (write or think)

Answer briefly:

- What happened?
- What did I feel in my body? (tight chest, heat, heaviness, etc.)
- What emotion came up? (anger, sadness, envy, shame)

No analysis yet—just facts.

4. Turn inward with curiosity

Ask yourself **one question at a time** (no rushing):

- *What about this situation bothered me the most?*
- *What did I need or want in that moment?*
- *What was I afraid of feeling or being seen as?*

If an answer doesn’t come, that’s okay. Silence counts.

5. Gently name the shadow part

Complete this sentence (even imperfectly):

“A part of me feels _____, and it’s trying to protect me from _____.”

Examples:

- “...feels angry, and it’s trying to protect me from being disrespected.”
- “...feels insecure, and it’s trying to protect me from rejection.”

This reframes the shadow as **protective, not broken**.

6. Offer compassion

Place a hand on your chest (optional) and say silently or out loud:

“I see you. Thank you for trying to protect me. You don’t have to work so hard right now.”

You’re not erasing the feeling—just softening your relationship to it.

Turning Self-Criticism into Curiosity

Purpose

This exercise helps you notice self-critical thoughts and gently transform them into shadow-work questions rooted in understanding, not judgment.

Guidelines

- Work with *mild to moderate* experiences
 - Pause anytime
 - Curiosity over criticism
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1 Notice the Self-Critical Thought

Write the thought exactly as it appears (no fixing or softening):

Self-critical thought:

Examples:

- “I’m too much.”
 - “I always mess this up.”
 - “I shouldn’t feel this way.”
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2 Name What Came Up

What emotion did you notice? (circle or write)

- Shame
- Fear
- Anger
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Other: _____

Optional: Where did you feel it in your body?

3 Shift from Identity to *Parts*

Rewrite the thought using **parts-based language**.

Instead of: "I am _____."

Try:

"A part of me feels _____."

Write it here:

4 Choose 1–2 Shadow-Work Questions

You do **not** need to answer everything.

Choose what feels accessible.

- What is this part trying to protect me from?
- When did this response first start helping me?
- What does this part fear would happen if it didn't react this way?
- What need or boundary might be underneath this feeling?
- Who or what taught me this belief about myself?

Reflections (optional):

5 Reframe with Understanding

Complete one sentence:

“This part of me learned this response because _____.”

6 Compassionate Acknowledgment

Silently or in writing:

“I see you.
Thank you for trying to protect me.
You don’t have to do this alone.”

Notice what changes, if anything. No outcome required.

Grounding Reminder

If emotions feel intense:

- Return to the exercise only if it feels safe.
 - Return to this exercise when you have the space to allow the emotions flow.
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Closing Thought

This response didn’t come from nowhere.
It came from experience.

Awareness is enough for today.

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