

Shadow

Adapted from *Soul to Soul: Fourteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing*
by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins
UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Small Group Ministry
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Chalice Lighting

[N]one of us ever really walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey or the causes of the lines around another's eyes. Therefore, let us be gentle with one another. Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge. Let our open, outstretched hands reach and touch that we may walk along together for a little while in friendship and in trust.

-- Elizabeth Tarbox

Sharing Silence 3 minutes

On Our Hearts 20 minutes

Covenant and Ground Rules

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group;
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit;
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others;
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others;
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart;
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice;
- to ask questions gently and only if necessary;
- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

- Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins, *Heart to Heart* (adapted)

Readings

Each of us has a self that we present to the world, a set of traits which we have accepted or chosen, developed or learned. Many of these traits we were required to develop by our parents and society – we learned a certain level of neatness, a particular kind of manners, perseverance, sex roles, aggressiveness, nurturing, and so on...All of this makes up a unique personality...but our public persona is only one part of ourselves.

The other part resides in the unconscious, and it consists of all of the traits we have not developed, including ones we would not like to express. This is the shadow side of ourselves, and it is just as important as the persona we present to the world. Our shadow might contain the artistic side we were not allowed to develop, the dreaminess we consider to be at odds with success, the love of nature which we have repressed since childhood, the

anger which was not acceptable in our family...Our shadow, like our public persona, has its strengths and weaknesses, the mirror opposites of the face we present to the world...Understanding the nature and development of our shadow is an important part of healthy self-acceptance as well as healthy self-control.

-- Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins

The Shadow is the landfill of the self. Yet it is also a sort of vault: It holds great, unrealized potentialities within you.

-- Joseph Campbell

A soulful life is never without shadow, and some of the soul's power comes from its shadow qualities. If we want to live from our depths—soulfully—then we will have to give up all pretenses of innocence.

-- Thomas Moore

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

-- Carl Jung

Questions for consideration

1. Is there a situation in which you consistently overreact? Could it be that something is hooking into your shadow?
2. Think of costumes you've worn over the years or costumes you've seen others wear. What costume would you wear, if you dared, to an imaginary Shadow Ball? What does that say about you?
3. Imagine a time in your life when you no longer have the pressures of family or paid work. Imagine what your life might look like if you let some of the undeveloped aspects of your personality that have been relegated to the shadow emerge. If you have been an academic, you may try something artistic and creative. If you could just fool around all day, what would that look like? Describe what might be included in such a life.
4. What are a few qualities that absolutely do not describe you, that describe a person who is the opposite of who you are? These are descriptions you would deny if someone said they described you.

Sharing 60 minutes

Closing Activity / Reflecting On Our Time Together

Closing Words

Break not the circle of enabling love
where people grow, forgiven and forgiving,
break not that circle, make it wider still,
till it includes, embraces all the living.

- #323 Break Not the Circle, *Singing the Living Tradition*