Shadow Work Workbook

This free shadow work workbook brings four of our worksheets into one printable PDF: get to know yourself first, then look at the parts you tend to hide, explore them with journal prompts, and finish with self-compassion. It's for gentle self-reflection at your own pace, not therapy, and needs no email or sign-up.

What's inside

1. **Self-Awareness Worksheet.** A steady start: notice your patterns, moods and reactions before going deeper.
2. **Shadow Work Worksheet.** The core of the workbook: triggers, projections and the parts of you that tend to stay hidden.
3. **Shadow Work Journal Prompts.** Prompts to explore what came up, a few at a time rather than all at once.
4. **Self-Compassion Worksheet.** Finish here. Whatever you found, this helps you meet it with kindness instead of blame.

How to use it

- Pick a calm time and a private place. Shadow work is best done when you're not already overwhelmed.
- Do a little at a time. A few prompts in one sitting is plenty.
- If you feel shaky after a session, stop, do something grounding, and turn to the self-compassion pages.
- If old trauma comes up, pause the workbook and talk to a qualified therapist rather than pushing through alone.

If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at **findahelpline.com**. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.

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My Self-Awareness Worksheet

Six short exercises that build the core of self-awareness: a precise name for what you feel, the patterns you repeat, and an honest look at how you come across.

01 Where am I starting from?

How well do I understand why I feel and act the way I do?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all — Very well

One thing about myself I'd genuinely like to understand better:

02 Name what you're actually feeling

Vague feelings are hard to act on. Get specific: not 'bad', but 'overlooked', 'restless', 'let down', 'ashamed'. The exact word usually points at the real cause.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

03 Spot your patterns

Think of a reaction you've had more than once. Map it out, the loops you can't hold in your head become clear on paper.

The situation	What I did / felt	What it cost me, or what I wanted instead

04 The story vs the evidence

We narrate ourselves constantly, and the narration isn't always true. Pick one story you tell about who you are and weigh it fairly.

A story I tell about myself ('I'm the kind of person who...'):

What the actual evidence says, for and against:

05 How you come across

This is the half you can't see alone. Compare your guess to reality, and note one person honest enough to ask.

How I think I come across	How others might actually experience me

One person I trust enough to ask 'how do I come across?':

06 One thing to watch this week

Self-awareness grows by noticing in real time, not by deciding to be different. Pick one pattern and just watch it.

The single pattern I'll pay attention to this week, and what I'll watch for:

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Which feeling were you most surprised to find a precise word for?
- Looking at your patterns, what need do they seem to be trying to meet?
- What changes if you watch a pattern with curiosity instead of judging it?

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My Shadow Work Worksheet

Six prompts that take you from a single strong reaction down to the part underneath it, and back up to one kind, practical way to integrate it.

01 Where I'm starting from

How comfortable am I, right now, with the messier parts of myself?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very uneasy — Quite at peace

One trait in myself I'd rather other people didn't see...

02 Catch a strong reaction

Think of a recent moment you reacted more strongly than the situation seemed to deserve, irritation, envy, defensiveness, a flash of contempt. Describe it plainly.

What happened, and what I felt:

03 The mirror · what it points to

Often the thing that most irritates us in others is a trait we won't allow in ourselves. Sit with the reaction above.

What I judged or reacted to	Where that same thing lives, quietly, in me

04 Trace it back

Disowned parts usually got that way early. Try to find the first time you learned this part of you wasn't welcome.

When I was younger, I learned that being ___ meant ___:

Who taught me that, directly or just by example?

05 Listen to what it wants

Every disowned part is trying to do a job, protect you, get a need met, keep you safe or accepted. Speak to it like you would a younger version of yourself.

If this part of me could talk, what is it actually asking for?

06 The golden shadow

Not all of what we bury is dark. List a strength, desire or quality you've talked yourself out of, the ambition, boldness or creativity you decided 'isn't me'.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

07 One small way to let it back in

Integration is practical, not dramatic. Choose one healthy, specific outlet for this part this week.

The part I'm welcoming back	One small way I'll give it room this week
_____	_____
_____	_____

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- What changes when you treat this part as a messenger rather than an enemy?
- Whose voice were you using when you first decided this part of you was bad?
- What might you be free to do or feel if it no longer had to stay hidden?

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My Shadow Work Journal

Prompts that go from gentle to deeper. Work through one section per sitting, skip anything that feels like too much, and always finish with 'Coming back up'.

01 Check in before you start

How steady do I feel right now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not steady at all — Very steady

If I scored 3 or lower, I'll stay with the gentle prompts today, or stop and go to 'Coming back up'. Today I'll do:

02 When to stop and get more support

Stop and reach out if a prompt brings up memories of abuse or trauma, if you feel panicky, numb or unsafe, or if you still feel worse days later. These prompts are for self-reflection, not therapy. A GP or family doctor, or a therapist, can help with what a journal can't hold. If you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out now: call or text 988 in the US, call Samaritans on 116 123 in the UK and Ireland, or find a free helpline at findahelpline.com.

If this gets heavy, the person I'll talk to is:

Something that helps me feel calmer (a walk, music, a shower, a call):

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03 Start gentle: how you come across

Easy questions first. These get you used to being honest on paper before anything harder.

When do I feel most like myself, and when do I feel like I'm playing a part?

What do I most want people to think about me? What would I hate them to think?

Which compliment do I brush off, and which criticism stays with me for days?

04 What gets under your skin

Strong reactions are the easiest way in. Pick real, recent moments, not your whole life story.

Who annoyed me recently, more than the moment deserved? What exactly did they do or say?

What trait in other people do I judge fastest? Where might a small, quiet version of it live in me?

When did I last get defensive? What was I trying to protect?

05 Rules you learned growing up

A little deeper. Many hidden parts started as rules you picked up as a child. Look for the rule, not someone to blame.

Growing up, which feelings were fine to show at home, and which weren't?

What did I get praised for as a child? What got me told off, or ignored?

Finish the sentence 'Good people don't...', then ask: who taught me that?

06 The parts you keep hidden

Go slowly here. If a question hits something raw, skip it. You can come back another day, or bring it to a therapist.

What do I envy in someone else's life? What does that tell me about what I want?

What part of me do I keep apologising for, or trying to make smaller?

What would I do, say or wear if I knew no one would judge me?

07 The good you buried

Your shadow isn't only the difficult stuff. You may also have hidden strengths that once felt like too much, such as ambition, confidence or playfulness.

Who do I admire so much it feels slightly uncomfortable? What quality do they have that I don't let myself show?

What did I love doing, or want to be, before I decided it 'wasn't me'?

08 Coming back up (end every session here)

Don't stop on the hardest question. Finish here, even if you only answered one prompt today.

If a friend had written what I wrote today, what would I say to them?

One small, kind thing I'll do for myself in the next hour:

One prompt I want to come back to, and when:

09 More prompts for another day: relationships

Tick one off each time you use it. One prompt is plenty for a sitting.

- [ ] What do I need from people that I find hard to ask for?
- [ ] What do I do when I feel left out or ignored?
- [ ] Who brings out a version of me I don't like, and what happens in me around them?
- [ ] What do I pretend not to mind, just to keep the peace?
- [ ] Who do I compare myself to, and what am I really measuring?
- [ ] What pattern keeps repeating in my relationships?

10 More prompts for another day: self-worth

- [ ] What do I believe I have to do before I'm allowed to rest?
- [ ] Which mistake do I still punish myself for?
- [ ] What do I fear people would find out if they really knew me?
- [ ] When do I feel 'not enough', and whose voice does that sound like?
- [ ] What would change if I liked myself a little more?
- [ ] What do I secretly hope is true about me?

11 More prompts for another day: your younger self

These can stir up old memories. Go gently, and leave anything that feels like trauma for a therapist rather than a journal.

- [ ] What did my younger self need to hear more often?
- [ ] What was I afraid of as a child that I'm still a bit afraid of now?
- [ ] What did I stop doing because someone laughed at it?
- [ ] Which role did I play in my family (the helper, the funny one, the quiet one), and do I still play it?
- [ ] What part of me still feels young, and what does it want?
- [ ] What would I want my younger self to know about how things turned out?

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Which prompt was hardest to answer honestly, and what might that be telling you?
- Did anything surprise you about where a reaction came from?
- How do you feel now compared with when you started? If it's much worse, use your plan from section 2.

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My Self-Compassion Worksheet

Seven short steps to meet one hard moment the way you'd meet a good friend's, ending with an evening journal to keep it going.

01 What's hard right now?

Start with one specific moment. Name it plainly, then notice how you've been treating yourself about it.

What's happening that's hard? In a line or two:

What have I been saying to myself about it? (the exact words)

How harshly am I treating myself about this right now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very gently — Very harshly

02 A self-compassion break

Kristin Neff's three-step practice. Bring the moment to mind and let yourself feel a little of it. If it helps, put a hand on your heart as you write.

1. Mindfulness: 'This is a moment of suffering.' What am I feeling, said plainly, without making it bigger or smaller?

2. Common humanity: 'I'm not alone.' Who else might feel this way in a situation like mine?

3. Kindness: 'May I be kind to myself.' What do I need to hear right now?

03 The friend test

Imagine a close friend came to you with this exact problem. Notice the difference between how you'd treat them and how you've been treating yourself.

What I'd say to a friend

And the tone I'd use

What I've said to myself

And the tone I've used

What am I afraid would happen if I spoke to myself the way I'd speak to them?

04 What do I need right now?

Self-compassion isn't only soothing. Sometimes the kind thing is to rest, and sometimes it's to act. Tick what fits.

- [ ] Comfort: to go gently and let this be hard for a while.
- [ ] Rest, or an early night.
- [ ] To talk to someone I trust.
- [ ] To say no, or set a limit, to protect myself.
- [ ] To take one small step to change something.
- [ ] To forgive myself, and make amends if I can.

One kind thing I'll do for myself today:

05 A letter from a kind friend

Imagine a friend who is completely kind and accepting. They see all your strengths and all your flaws, and they understand what shaped you. Write to yourself from them, about this moment or a flaw you often judge yourself for.

Start with 'Dear [your name],' and write as they would:

06 How do I feel now?

Re-rate it. It doesn't need to drop to zero. A little more warmth is the win.

How harshly am I treating myself about this now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very gently — Very harshly

A phrase I want to remember next time:

07 Keep it going: an evening journal

Neff suggests trying this every evening for a week. Note one thing from the day you felt bad about, then take it through the three parts.

Mindfulness	Common humanity	Kindness
How I felt, said plainly	How it's part of being human	What I'd say to myself kindly

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- When did you last treat a friend with real kindness? What would it take to give yourself the same?
- What does your harshest inner voice say most often, and whose voice does it sound like?
- What are you afraid would happen if you stopped being so hard on yourself?
- What are you struggling with that many other people struggle with too?
- What would having your own back look like this week?

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