



the human connection

I am a qualified Professional Integral Coach who partners with people to build long-term excellent competence and become more fulfilled in their lives.

Since becoming a full time Integral Coach I have coached leaders of global companies at executive and senior management level in a cross section of functions. Organizations I am, or have done work with are Toyota, British American Tobacco (SA), Microsoft Internationally, Woolworths, @ Home, Standard Bank, and KWV. In addition to coaching individual clients, I also coach teams and facilitate workshops on coaching and leadership practices.

As well as my formal business qualifications, I have completed my training as a Yoga Teacher. I am married and have two young boys. My passions are my work, which I regard as a vocation, spending time with friends and family, reading, ongoing learning, yoga, cooking, and more recently writing.

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What if you made friends with your shadow side?

Greed kills. A shocking statement, isn't it? In a workshop a couple of years ago it was one of the slogans given to me to explore about myself. I can tell you that I was mortally wounded and deeply offended. I thought "how dare this person say that to me", "I'm not greedy", "this guy doesn't know what I'm about", "who does he think he is", and a few expletives were added into the mix too! Yet, I have to say it has been the most useful aphorism ever given to me.

Let me explain.... Every time I am faced with choices, often about accepting work, I think about this statement and consider the reason I am taking on the work. It has stopped me over committing on numerous occasions and it has given me a lens to use on an ongoing basis. At times I have been in a fortunate position where prospective clients have contacted me for work and I didn't have the capacity to take on any new clients. Thanks to that little slogan I have been able to

say no *and* be generous enough to hand the work on. It isn't always easy for me and sometimes I cringe at this part of myself that I would far rather deny. Even writing this down has been difficult and I procrastinated consistently because it has meant admitting to something that could easily remain hidden, even to myself, never mind you the reader. I have realized through this experience that exploring the parts of ourselves that aren't wanted can be very useful and, yes, even enlightening.

In everyday language the shadow is all that we dislike about ourselves and/or wish others not to see. It is the repository of all we find shameful or harmful. In addition to existing at a personal level, it also exists at a cultural and archetypal level. At a cultural level in South Africa, given our history, most of us can identify apartheid as being our shadow, and we have others that are alive and unwell in our country – poverty, living conditions for the majority of citizens, rape of women and children, and many more. At an archetypal level, shadow figures are Hitler, Stalin, the Devil, and they abound in fairy tales.

There has been a lot of talk about the shadow and it is a word used in therapy, rather than in coaching. The reason I thought it would be worth exploring is because it plays such an important role in our everyday lives and unless we explore the shadow, we project it on to others unconsciously. So it impacts us intra- and interpersonally and can play havoc in our relationships with self and others, whether at home, play, or work.

We cannot eliminate our shadow and it is a fundamental part of us. An added dimension to the shadow, which is often overlooked is the positive shadow. This is made up of the gifts and potential that we often don't realise because we fear these as much as we fear the negative shadow. Think about any time you have admired someone and felt that you could never be like that person. That is your positive shadow peeking out - you can see something in another person only when it is also present within you.

Since we are bound to our shadow and we cannot disown it, the question then becomes what to do. All the books I've read and my own personal experience have made me realise that we can actually tap into our shadow to create an alchemical process that makes us more

awake, aware and alive so that we can use our full potential. In doing so we can start to acknowledge that even the darkness has a place. It can be useful as a teacher that serves us, instead of us becoming enslaved by it. To be open to looking within at the parts of ourselves (light and dark) that we could just as well ignore requires courage and a commitment to go on an inner journey and to do some excavation - to explore the exquisite potential and the darker part we would rather disown.

I'm not sure about you, but I have come to realise that I would far rather be conscious of my shadow than live in a fools' paradise, because then I am empowered and able to move into the light.

Over to you.....

Since I am not a therapist I considered carefully what exercise to offer that would be helpful and safe. This exercise is adapted from a Process Work Workshop I attended with Stephen Schuitervoerder, and it focuses on the positive shadow. It can be used at any stage or even as a daily practice to enable you to notice your gifts and potential.

Attractor Exercise

Think of any personal problem or challenge you are facing.

Put it aside and think of someone you know and deeply admire who you think can manage these problems really well (doesn't have to be someone you know and can even be a historical figure).

Write down a description of this person that allows them to do so.

Take a moment and become that person. See them and feel them in your body. Feel how they move, their internal rhythms, listen to the way they talk, how they hear, what they see and how they relate.

Write yourself a letter from that place that will be helpful at addressing your problem or challenge.

At the end, answer the following questions:

What emotions did I experience that I don't normally have access to?

What did I notice in my body?
How was my thinking changed?
What did I learn and how can I use this part of myself on an ongoing basis?

One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the dark conscious.

C.G.Jung