



The 3-2-1 Shadow Process

First, choose what you want to work with. It is usually easiest to begin with a “difficult person” to whom you are attracted or by whom you are repelled or disturbed (for example, a lover, boss, or parent.) Alternatively, pick a dream image or a body sensation that distracts you or otherwise causes you to fixate on it. Keep in mind that the disturbance may be a positive or negative one.

You can recognize the shadow in two ways. Shadow material either:

Makes you negatively hypersensitive, easily triggered, reactive, irritated, angry, hurt, or upset. Or it may keep coming up as an emotional tone or mood that pervades your life.

OR

Makes you positively hypersensitive, easily infatuated, possessive, obsessed, overly attracted, or perhaps it becomes an ongoing idealization that structures your motivations or mood.

Next, follow the 3 steps of the process:

3 – Face It

Observe the disturbance very closely, and then, using a journal to write in or an empty chair to talk to, describe the person, situation, image, or sensation in vivid detail using 3rd person pronouns such as “he,” “him,” “she,” “her,” “they,” “their,” “it,” “its,” etc. This is your opportunity to explore your experience of the disturbance fully, particularly what it is that bothers you about it. Don’t minimize the disturbance—take the opportunity to describe it as fully and in as much detail as possible.

2 – Talk to It

Enter into a simulated dialogue with this object of awareness using 2nd person pronouns (“you” and “yours”). This is your opportunity to enter into a relationship with the disturbance, so talk directly to the person, situation, image, or sensation in your awareness. You may start by asking questions such as, “Who/what are you? Where do you come from? What do you want from me? What do you need to tell me? What gift are you bringing me?” Then allow the disturbance to respond back to you. Imagine realistically what they would say and actually write it down or vocalize it. Allow yourself to be surprised by what emerges in the dialogue.

1 – Be It

Now, writing or speaking in 1st person, using the pronouns “I,” “me,” and “mine,” be the person, situation, image, or sensation that you have been exploring. See the world, including yourself, entirely from the perspective of that disturbance and allow yourself to discover not only your similarities, but how you really are one and the same. Finally, make a statement of identification: “I am _____” or “_____ is me.” This, by its nature, will almost always feel very discordant or “wrong.” (After all, it’s exactly what your psyche has been busy denying!) But try it on for size, since it contains at least a kernel of truth.

This last step (the 1 of the 3-2-1) often has a second part, in which you complete the process of fully re-owning the shadow. Don't just see the world from that perspective momentarily, but actually feel this previously excluded feeling or drive until it resonates clearly as your own. Then you can engage it and integrate it.

To complete the process, let the previously excluded reality register not just abstractly but on multiple levels of your being. This engenders a shift in awareness, emotion, and subtle energy that frees up the energy and attention that was taken up by your denial. You'll know that the process has worked because you'll actually feel lighter, freer, more peaceful and open, and sometimes even high or giddy. It makes a new kind of participation in life possible.

1 MINUTE MODULE

The 3-2-1 Shadow Process

You can do the 3-2-1 process any time you need it. Two particularly useful times are right when you wake up in the morning and just before going to bed at night. Once you know 3-2-1, it only takes a minute to do the process for anything that might be disturbing you.

Morning: First thing in the morning (before getting out of bed) review your last dream and identify any person or object with an emotional charge. *Face* that person or object by holding it in mind. Then *talk* to that person or object (or resonate with it, just feeling what it would be like to be face to face). Finally, *be* that person or object by taking its perspective. For the sake of this exercise, there is no need to write anything out—you can go through the whole process right in your own mind.

Evening: Last thing before going to bed, choose a person who either disturbed or attracted you during the day. In your mind, *face* him or her, *talk* to him or her, and then *be* him or her (as described above).

Again, you can do the 3-2-1 process quietly by yourself, any time you need it, day or night.

Potential Outcomes of Practicing the 3-2-1 Shadow Process

- A re-integration of split off parts of self
- An energetic boundary is dissolved and energy is freed up
- Compassion or empathy arises
- Other insights may emerge such as identifying the original source of the projection
- Creative strategies or actions come into awareness
- The situation or person is no longer irritating, compelling, devastating or distracting

Wilber, Ken, Terry Patten, Adam Leonard, and Marco Morelli. Integral Life Practice. 2008. pp. 48-58