

ME AND MY SHADOW: Best Friends (Sort Of)

Raymond Huisman © 2015

You might remember that old popular song "Me And My Shadow". Dating back to 1927, it has been recorded many times, notably by Judy Garland in the 50's, with duets by Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. in the 60's and more recently by Robbie Williams and Jonathan Wilkes, and Michael Ball and Antonio Banderas as well. It's also the inspiration for the DreamWorks animated movie of the same name (see caption below). It's one of those songs that just... *never goes away.*

Why not? Because, just like our psychological shadow (a term from Jungian psychology referring to the dark side of our personality), this too... *never goes away.* At least, not until we throw some light onto this part of ourselves and bring it into conscious awareness.

"In Jungian psychology, the shadow or 'shadow aspect' may refer to (1) an unconscious aspect of the personality which the conscious ego does not identify in itself. Because one tends to reject or remain ignorant of the least desirable aspects of one's personality, the shadow is largely negative; or (2) the entirety of the unconscious, i.e., everything of which a person is not fully conscious. There are, however, positive aspects which may also remain hidden in one's shadow (especially in people with low self-esteem). Contrary to a Freudian definition of shadow, therefore, the Jungian shadow can include everything outside the light of consciousness, and may be positive or negative. 'Everyone carries a shadow,' Jung wrote, 'and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.' It may be (in part) one's link to more primitive animal instincts, which are superseded during early childhood by the conscious mind."

"According to Jung, the shadow, in being instinctive and irrational, is prone to psychological projection, in which a perceived personal inferiority is recognised as a perceived moral deficiency in someone else. Jung writes that if these projections remain hidden, 'The projection-making factor (the Shadow archetype) then has a free hand and can realize its object - if it has one - or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power.' These projections insulate and harm individuals by acting as a constantly thickening veil of illusion between the ego and the real world."

"Jung also believed that 'in spite of its function as a reservoir for human darkness - or perhaps because of this - the shadow is the seat of creativity.' So that for some, it may be, 'the dark side of his being, his sinister shadow...represents the true spirit of life as against the arid scholar.' "

(for more about the Shadow, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_%28psychology%29)

If we are to take counsel from Carl Jung, the great psychologist and father of modern depth psychology, it is crucial to our psychic health and overall sense of well-being that we integrate the shadow into our consciousness. So how can we become aware of this hidden part of ourselves? And more importantly, how can we face up to our own Shadow Self without identifying with this and running the risk of bringing out not the best in ourselves, but the worst in ourselves?

By becoming friends with your shadow. That way you are *in relationship* with that part of yourself, without actually becoming it - just as you don't become the other person in a partner relationship. Do you need to become an adept in Jungian psychology to do this? Not if you accept that you are inseparable - although quite distinct - from your shadow, and you learn to not only tolerate those things you feel uncomfortable about in yourself, but also to befriend them.

Do you need to become *best friends* with your Shadow Self? That depends on what's in it for both of you. If you want full access to "the seat of creativity" and "the true spirit of life" as Jung calls it, you might want to pick up a few tips from that old song "Me And My Shadow". Take a look at some of the lyrics below (from the alternative version of this song). Better yet, watch the YouTube video of Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. performing the original version. Although the original lyrics are somewhat gloomy ("Just me and my shadow, all alone and feeling blue"), Frank and Sammy give us a different take on things. This is old school popular music at its most light-hearted - and at the same time new school depth psychology at its most pragmatic.

When you can sing along happily with those last lines from the song, "Life is gonna be we-wow- whee, for my shadow and me", then you've learned the first lesson in making your shadow your friend. You have overcome your resistance to acknowledging that you even have a shadow in the first place. Like the song says, you're pretty much glued to each other, so there's no point anyways in trying to deny your shadow. It follows you wherever you go.

There is much you can learn about yourself from getting to know this other part of yourself. You may not like what you find there, but the whole point of doing this, as Carl Jung made clear, is to become more integrated as a person. Integration leads to wholeness, and wholeness leads to fulfillment.

But you don't need to do all of that in order to feel good about yourself right now. If you can sing those last lines from "Me And My Shadow" and feel just a little bit happy, if only for a few moments, then you and your shadow are well on your way to becoming friends. Best friends? *Sort of.* When you're stuck to each other like glue, then you might as well make the best of things. You'll become happier *and* more fulfilled by doing so - just like in the song.

ME AND MY SHADOW

(by Al Jolson / Dave Dreyer / Billy Rose. 1927)

Song excerpts:

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Like the wallpaper sticks to the wall
Like the seashore clings to the sea
Like you'll never get rid of your shadow
You'll never get rid of me.
Let all the others fight and fuss
Whatever happens, we've got us.

.....

We're closer than pages that stick in a book
We're closer than ripples that flow in a brook
Wherever you find him, you'll find me, just look.

.....

Me and my shadow
Not a soul can bust this team in two
We stick together like glue.

.....

They'll need a large crowbar to break us apart
We're alone but far from blue.

.....

Life is gonna be we-wow-whee!
For my shadow and me!

ME AND MY SHADOW - live recording by Frank Sinatra & Sammy Davis Jr.



For the original version of this song, performed by Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. - who also play each other's shadow(!) - see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-4uKgXRnpl>

For the alternative version by Sinatra and Davis, with printed lyrics, see:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5hXtGkzZ9k>

For a live duet by Robbie Williams and Jonathan Wilkes, with amended lyrics, see:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Zbj8bpWxzw>

ME AND MY SHADOW. Animated movie, directed by Alessandro Carloni



"Me & My Shadow reveals the once secret world of shadows and their human counterparts. Shadow Dan, our hero's shadow, yearns for a more exciting life but happens to be stuck with Daniel Grubb, a timid guy with an extreme aversion to adventure. When a crime in the shadow world puts both of their lives in danger, Shadow Dan is forced to take control of Daniel. They go on a madcap adventure to investigate the crime and stop the shadow villain from leading a rebellion where shadows take over the human world. During this adventure, Shadow Dan empowers Daniel to let go of his fears and embrace life. Through their adventure, they both learn that one cannot be whole without a true friend."

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1795621/?ref =ttpl pl tt>

Raymond Huisman is originally a trained and qualified psychotherapist. He currently works as a coach, trainer, supervisor and consultant. In addition to maintaining a private practice, he works in a variety of settings in the Netherlands and internationally. These include training centers, educational institutions and organizations in both public and private sectors.

He is the originator of Core-Oriented Coaching[®], an innovative and highly effective model he developed as a result of integrating diverse therapeutic and coaching modalities. He provides professional training in this and supervision for coaches, psychotherapists and other health care professionals to incorporate these principles and methods into their practice.

Raymond has been working in a professional capacity for more than 30 years with people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds, helping them to empower themselves, achieve their goals and live to their fullest potential.

He can be contacted via e-mail at: info@getitright.nl or by telephone at: +31 (0)33 448 14 18
For more articles and information about his various programs and services, visit the website:
www.getitright.nl
