

# Shadow Breathing, Shadow Boxing, Shadow Being.

Your shadow is an extension of you and resembles you; but is not, never was, and never will be you. Your shadow breathes as you breathe, moves with every move you make and, in some ways, mirrors the nuances of your personality. Today, you will begin to carefully watch your breathing and thoughts, like your transparent, fluid and human-like shadow, this separate piece of you.

To begin this exercise, you must first begin by lying on your back on your bed, in the grass or on a soft blanket (as though you are joining your shadow). You will plan to join your shadow for 10 minutes and work your way up to 20-30 minutes per day. Please make sure to set a timer.

## *Shadow Breath*

Begin by feeling the fullness of your body from the top of your head, down to your toes. Next, I'd like you to begin paying attention to each breath that you take. Each rise and fall. It is helpful to breathe into your belly and feel it gently expand and contract, like a balloon.

## *Shadow Boxes*

Now, as you watch each breath you will likely become distracted often. Each time that you do, I'd like you to put the thought, each distraction, in a box. You have several boxes to choose from. Each has a label. They are:

- "Past" box
- "Future" box
- "Anger" box
- "Fear" box
- "Love" box
- "Planning" box
- "Judgement" box

There is no need to memorize these labels and you are free to come up with your own. You can also place all thoughts into one big box, a "thinking" box.

As soon as you've placed the thought in a box, you will return to paying attention to your breathing, in and out. You will repeat this process continuously for the allotted time frame.

## *Shadow Being*

The more you practice this process, the more natural it will become. The silence of your mind that happens between thoughts is extremely beneficial for healing as it calms the sympathetic nervous system, thus reducing excess cortisol production and the fight or flight response that is common when a person is dealing with ongoing health issues. Becoming adept at recognizing thoughts as just that, will also help you to be able to spend more time in the calming, nurturing space between thoughts, that place of present being. The labeling of thoughts is also a wonderful step towards your ability to choose your thoughts wisely, instead of having your thoughts choose you. For example, when a "fear" thought arises, you can examine it and decide whether or not it is a useful thought. Is it protecting you or harming you by keeping you further from what you desire? This skill is, by far, the most transformative one that I know of.

