

## Personal Success: From the Inside Out Working with your shadow self

What does success mean to you? How do you know if you are ‘successful’? By whose standards are you judging or deciding what it means to be successful?

The definition of success by how many “things” we have is a much more common practice in our society. Most often this is associated with people’s worth as a person to themselves, their families, and their communities. The more commonly agreed upon definition of success is having a certain amount of money, a certain kind of clothes, a certain kind of education, a certain kind of haircut, a certain kind of skin color sometimes, a certain kind of gender. Such definitions often are associated with feeling better than or less than others. This “better than or less than” is just one set of beliefs that are given to us by our family, school, media, and culture at large.

Let me give you an example. You might recall the dog food commercial: “My dog’s better than your dog” or all the commercials praising fancy cars, certain clothes, lifestyles, all as “better than—” Being “better than” is a primary motivator for consumers in our economy!

Success is defined individually for each person. We all must come to know our own “success.” My definition of success has to do with true happiness, a soulful peace, inner contentment, *and outward rewards*. A large part of such success has to do with knowing one’s self, and I mean *truly* knowing one’s self. Until each person has an awareness of self and a beginning love and honor and compassion of one’s self, then true success is still out of reach.

I lean into a more metaphysical definition of success. In this definition, there are 7 components of true success, they are:

1. Access to Resources: These resources include money, emotional resources, spiritual resources, knowledge, skill, people, opportunity....virtually any resources.
2. Intimacy with our raw materials and tools: Briefly put, intimacy and relationship with the following parts of ourselves:
  - a. Tools:  
Desire, Imagination & Expectation
  - b. Raw Materials:  
Beliefs/Attitudes; Thoughts/Feelings/ and Decisions/Choices
3. Knowing the wonder of fun & happiness
4. Feeling Deserving (the most charged and most powered)
5. Knowing the wonder of power
6. Intimacy with talents
7. Access to spirituality

\*The metaphysical definition of success, tools and raw materials are from Lucid Living material ([www.lucidliving.net](http://www.lucidliving.net)) and Lazaris ([www.lazaris.com](http://www.lazaris.com))

Personal success is metaphysical; it is the knowing of one’s self, the honoring of our shadows and allies, the loving and honoring of all of our self.

The great psychiatrist and author, Carl Jung, referred to these marginalized parts of us as shadow selves. Jung believed that a human being is inwardly whole, but that most of us have lost touch with important parts of ourselves. I refer to these as the softer sides of our self; our inner child, mascot, higher self; our emotional selves; our spiritual selves. Jung goes on to say that through listening to the messages of our dreams and waking imagination, we can contact and reintegrate our different parts. The goal of life is individuation, the process of coming to know, giving expression to, and harmonizing the various components of the psyche. If we realize our uniqueness, we can undertake a process of individuation and tap into our true self. Jung stated that each human being has a specific nature and calling that

is uniquely his or her own, and unless these are fulfilled through a union of conscious and unconscious, the person can become sick. This speaks directly to the finding of our gifts and the living of our dreams! And of course, by “sick” I’m sure he was referring to “dis-ease,” the many diseases (dis-eases) that so many struggle with. (You know when you have ‘dis-ease’ when you are not at ease in the moment! Are you at ease most moments in each day? Or do you have some dis-ease?) The personal work of owning and honoring our shadow selves is central to our happiness and success.

Robert Johnson also speaks to the importance of owning our own shadows:

*“We all are born whole and, let us hope, will die whole. But somewhere early on our way, we eat one of the wonderful fruits of the tree of knowledge, things separate into good and evil, and we begin the shadow-making process; we divide our lives.*

*“In the cultural process we sort out our God-given characteristics into those that are acceptable to our society and those that have to be put away. This is wonderful and necessary, and there would be no civilized behavior without this sorting out of good and evil. But the refused and unacceptable characteristics do not go away; they only collect in the dark corners of our personality.”* (Robert A. Johnson, author of *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.)

Johnson observes that we devote the first half of our lives to the cultural process—gaining one’s skills, raising a family, earning a living. In the second half we work to restore the wholeness—making holy—of life. Theologians point out that the word “religion” stems from rejoining, reunion. To Johnson, the process of re-joining with our shadow side is a religious experience. In a sense, I like to use the term “spiritual.” When we join together in sweat lodges, go on vision quests, or delve into the mythopoetic side of the “men’s movement” we are delving into the spiritual dimension.

Johnson points out that no one can escape the dark side of life, but we can “pay out” that dark side intelligently. The dark side will come out, whether we want it to or not. To honor it is to prevent it from blowing up in our faces. An example is when we unwittingly take it out on other people. This shadow work is a large part of what many great healers do, and it is what we do in Truly Human Coaching.

Beliefs and choices that were made far before we were aware of them are always operating under the surface. Some of these are what the beliefs we have been given about success as well as the beliefs that our parents handed down about our self-worth, and there are a myriad of others. Until we have understanding of and relationship with the parts that we might be marginalizing, those shadows are going to keep showing up. If we are operating out of beliefs that are not congruent with the self, a true sense of happiness and success will not be achieved. To be successful means to be at peace with one’s self in the world in a way that feels right for each person.

I want to add a bit more about our work with our shadow selves. Here I am quoting from “Lazaris-Working with Your Shadow: An Imperative on the Spiritual Path 1995, NPN Publishing Inc.” (An excellent resource: [www.lazaris.com](http://www.lazaris.com))

*“The Shadow is made up of all the stuff that you have denied, that you discount, that you defend yourself against, that you distract yourself from—all the aspects of you that you pretend don’t exist—or (if they do exist) are “no big deal.” The Shadow is made up of all the stuff you learned to resist and that you refused to accept.*

*As a little kid you learned: You shouldn’t be so selfish, you shouldn’t be so greedy. You should do this, you shouldn’t do that, you shouldn’t do the other. You shouldn’t question so much, you shouldn’t you shouldn’t, you shouldn’t.*

*And as a good little boy or a good little girl trying to become “idealized,” ...trying to win favor, trying to survive... (laughter)...you did what you were told. And you shoved your selfishness and your greed and your self-centeredness behind you, pretending it did not exist. “In what hand? What are you talking about? Well, it doesn’t matter.” You discounted and you defended: “I am not, I am not, I am not.”*

*But you didn’t just stuff the dark stuff, the ugly stuff, the stuff that society says is bad and wrong and sinful and terrible and immoral and all that. You also denied the good stuff*

*because of the messages that you got: Don't be so curious, don't be so inquisitive, don't be so honest, don't be so in touch with your feelings, don't be so creative, don't daydream like that, don't be that inventive, don't ask questions.*

*And you got all of those messages not just from mothers and fathers and siblings and extended family, but also from society of television, a society of education, from a society of religion.*

*And all of these things—dark and light—got shoved behind you into what is called the shadow.” (pp. 7-8)*

Let me ask you, how can we know if we are “successful” if we are not sure what we truly want? We can have a lot of things, but if we're frustrated about things, situations, or people in our lives or we are mad at our self or marginalizing or putting parts of our self aside and they are showing up in different places, then how can we truly be happy or successful? Again, these frustrations, anxieties, fears, and more are really an aspect of ourselves—perhaps a shadow self, perhaps a value we have that has been discounted or rubbed against. Knowing these parts of ourselves helps us to make choice, to choose the success that is right for each of us. What are you choosing for you?

\*\*\*\*This article is taken from the book “Success is a State of Mind”, co-authored by myself, Les Brown and Deepak Chopra, scheduled for release this summer!