

Actualize OS

10 WEEK TRAINING

WITH KEN WILBER



ACTUALIZE OS

TRANSCRIPT

ACTIVATION TWO



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SHADOW VISION

Susannah: Hello everyone. Welcome to Application 2 of the Optimization Training from Ken Wilber. Today's module is titled "Shadow Vision".

In this talk, Ken is going to explore the "shadow," a Jungian term to describe repressed or rejected parts of our psyche (but not always negative – we can create "shadow" material by repressing positive aspects of our being as well), which can hinder us from achieving our full potential as human beings.

Ken will explain in detail what the shadow is, and offer some practical ways of illuminating our shadow aspects to help us bring them online, from the dark to the light, from the hidden to the visible. Here's Ken:

Ken: Shadow is a generic term for what is often more technically called the personal unconscious. It means those aspects of our awareness that we have disowned, alienated, pushed out of awareness, repressed, denied, projected, and basically no longer assume responsibility for. They're not ours, so it's a way of denying aspects of ourselves that we find uncomfortable, problematic, maybe sinful, or we're punished for by our parents or upbringing, in some cases by our peer group.

But in all cases, it's material that is some important part of our own psyche, our own being, our own makeup that we are not acknowledging. We're not really allowing it's existence, we're pretending it's not there. In short, we're lying to ourselves about what is really the truth for us and the locus of that lie is the Shadow.

Shadow is something that particularly occurs because of evolution and development. In each case of evolution, or in each step of development, we find a common series of processes occurring. In development, as we move to a higher level, there has to be a differentiation from the previous level and a dis-identification with it so we can move to the next higher level.

Once at that higher level, we have to integrate it with a previous level. Something can go wrong in any of those areas. If we're starting and differentiating from a particular level, we can differentiate not enough. In which case part of our awareness remains fixated to the previous level when we should be moving beyond. We remain stuck and that creates a fixation, and that fixation creates an addiction to that component. We become addicted to what we should have let go of.

On the other hand, that differentiation, as we're trying to move to the higher level, can go too far and we don't just differentiate, we dissociate, we disown, we alienate. That creates an alienation of this so we are now dissociated from it. We don't have a fixation or addiction to the previous stage, we have an allergy, an avoidance of it. We are frightened of it, worried about it for some reason.

The simple fact is that development is differentiation, dis-identification, and then integration, and something can go wrong in each of those steps. In particular, we can remain fixated to the previous stage and that creates addiction. Or we can dissociate, alienate, and disown the previous stage and that creates an allergy. So addictions and allergies are the two primary things that can go wrong. They can go wrong at virtually every level, or structure, and they can go wrong at virtually every state.

In each case, you get a different type of dysfunction, of pathology -- something going wrong in a different way. These are all determined by the actual contour and landscape of the level or state where the problem occurs. So, if something occurs, we have the simple levels of food, sex, power, love, self-expression -- something can go wrong with any of those. We can create a food addiction, we can also create a food allergy. We can create a sex addiction, we can create a sex allergy, puritanical. We can create a power addiction, we can create a power allergy. We can create a love addiction, we can create a love allergy. We can create a self esteem addiction, we can create a self esteem allergy, and so on. Same happens to states and the rest of the levels or structures.

Because that can happen and continue happening, what it means in each case is that some important aspect of our consciousness is getting split off from our main self, our main center of consciousness. It's getting repressed, denied, disowned, alienated, or even when it's fixated to you, it's fixated there and not available to us up here. So whether it's a fixation or a disassociation, an important part of our awareness is split off. That becomes profoundly important in overall development, and it can bring development to a screeching halt at virtually any structure or any state.

Susannah: Ken, do we all have a shadow? Is having shadow elements in our psyche unavoidable? Do we all have some addictions and allergies in there? And if so, how do we deal with them in a healthy way?

Ken: Yeah. It's an important question, in particular if you look at things like the great meditating systems. Despite what's often thought, meditation is not an automatic cure for Shadow. In some cases it actually makes it worse. But to answer the first question as you surmised is, yes, everybody has some degree of Shadow. It's pretty much impossible to avoid. They do come in these two major flavors, of addiction or allergy, and those of course look a little different at each level. So a red addiction and a red allergy looks different from an amber addiction and an amber allergy, that would be different from an orange addiction, orange allergy, and so on -- and the same with states.

There's a fairly simple way to recognize Shadow material, and that is, if an item, event, a person, a thing, informs you, then that's probably just healthy information and healthy awareness. If it dramatically affects you, that's probably a Shadow element, because Shadow elements are what really get you riled up and bent out of shape. One of the most common forms of defenses against Shadow is to indeed dissociate it, to pretend it's not me, and then to project it onto somebody else.

If this other person already has some of this quality that I'm projecting, that just makes them a more likely candidate because they're a hook for the projection. They already have some of this quality so it's easy for me to dump all of mine on top of you. I've already denied it myself, so if we're talking about a tendency to be really controlling, and you have a little bit of a tendency to be controlling. So I look around and I know somebody has a real tendency to be controlling, and as I look within I know, "Well, it's certainly not me," but I know somebody is a controlling son of a bitch, "it must be you!"

So now it's your own moderate controlling tendencies plus all of my controlling tendencies are dumped on you, you are going to really upset me. How could you not? You're twice the controller than is actually out there. That would upset anybody! Of course most people - which is a real tip off to Shadow material -- most people are not overwhelmingly upset by what this person sees as Shadow. But this one person is just overwhelmingly upset, irritated, and annoyed, and just can't stand the person that's doing this.

It's their own qualities. The problem is, these qualities when re-owned and integrated into the personality, are an extremely important part of the psyche. They actually have a great deal of positive energy and an enormous bit to offer. But when we decide for whatever of these many reasons that something is terribly wrong with them and we push them outside of ourselves, then we are engaged in an eternal warfare with a person that we see having all these horrifying characteristics.

One of my favorite studies was a study of anti-homosexual zealots. These were men that spent a great deal of their life working to hurt the cause of homosexuality, to create laws against them, or to prevent any laws that gave them equal rights or any sort of privileges like the rest of humanity had. So these men spent a great deal of their life energy attacking gays. The funny part was that these men were tested, and when they were shown images of homosexual erotica, they were much more sexually aroused than the average straight male. In other words, they're projecting their Shadow impulses onto real gay men and trying to get rid of this hated Shadow by getting rid of gay men. That's pure projection, and it is so common, it's unbelievable.

Almost any person that has some horrid thing to say about somebody else or can't stand them, are almost always projecting. It jams the system up inordinately, it basically just can make a mess out of pretty much everything.

Susannah: Thank you Ken! It's very illuminating to consider that things we instinctively dislike in others are often things we don't like about ourselves and are just projecting outward.

Now let's take some time to focus specifically on the question of addiction. When we think of addiction usually it's something like a heroin addiction. But actually, the way you are using the term here, most of us probably have some sort of addiction to some thing, or some feeling or other stimulus. So what kind of addictions might we have? What's behind them and how do we find their root causes so we can move past them?

Ken: What we're talking about here is that there are numerous other types of addictions as you mentioned, and we use this term simply to drive home the power of Shadow material. When it is denied, and cut off, and projected, the point is that it's still part of our own personality. It's like cutting off one of our arms and legs and throwing it out there. We still maintain an extraordinary connection to it, by the simple reason it's ours. So we take it, we split it off, we disown it, we put it on somebody else, but there's that secret bond that pulls us to it. We are attracted to this. The anti-homosexual zealots are running after homosexuals to try and hurt their lives, but it's their own qualities, energies, and capacities that they've put onto these men. So they spend their time chasing them because they're chasing their own energy, their own qualities.

So, it has this addictive capacity. I'm addicted to what belongs to me, I want it back! I'm inevitably drawn to it, I'm sucked into it, I follow it, I obsess over it, I'm checking on it all the time. It might as well be heroin, given how much I'm taken with where it is and what's happening. What can I do about it, what's going on with it? So that addictive component is just the sheer power of my own qualities being projected on somebody else. When I deny ownership of that, then I'm pushing that quality out, but I'm not breaking the fact that quality is mine. It's connected to me inherently, there's a powerful energy that keeps me connected to my own quality.

Susannah: But what about addictions that are the result of avoiding some other Shadow issue, addictions to substances like alcohol, food, or coffee? How do we deal with real and painful addictions that are hindering us?

Ken: What you find with substance addictions is that the addictive substance is causing the release in the brain of a certain type of neurotransmitters, that provide a particular kind of high. A particular type of wonderful feeling, of almost yumminess. The same thing happens when you project qualities of your own onto somebody else. The closer you get to those qualities, the more your brain produces exactly the same kind of chemicals. This is what turns you on, is getting a hold of this, is doing something about it. It's trying to make it, on the one hand, go away, but what you're really doing is trying to get close to it, because it's you! So the closer you get to that, it's like two bodies positive and negative or north and south magnetic pole, coming together in an extraordinarily powerful force.

When that happens, it releases yummy-yummy chemicals in your brain, because you're getting that delicious coming together. That's the part of the addiction, it is a powerfully good feeling, and that's what keeps you drawn to it unconsciously. Consciously you're, "Oh, I hate it, oh I hate it!" but that in itself is producing a certain kind of chemical reaction.

The key to operating with projected Shadow material is to precisely reverse the steps and direction in which the repression, alienation, dissociation, and projection occurred. So what happens in the psyche with Shadow elements that are denied, repressed, and rejected: first, these qualities start out as a first-person quality, they're part of yourself. First-person is the person speaking, the "I", second-person is the person being spoken to, the "you" or "thou," or an "other" person, third-person is the person or thing being spoken about, that could be a "him, her, them, they," or in it's really pushed-away form it's just a pure "it."

When it starts out as an "I", it's part of your "I", the Shadow element quality, that's going to become an addiction. That starts out as part of an "I". Then through all of these different reasons that these qualities are denied - if it's in the anti-homosexual zealots, probably because their religious upbringing. There's always an embedded unconscious which is some total of our philosophical screens, our beliefs, our convictions, and we interpret the world through that. That of course includes the level of development we're at, the lines we're using, and so on.

So for any number of reasons that we've decided this quality is bad, we push it across the boundary of the "I", so it now appears as if it's an "other" person even. It's an "other" quality, it's a "you", it's a "thou", a second person. So that goes on the other side of the "I" boundary. "It's no longer me, it's you". If I push it just a little bit harder, I'll push it right outside the boundary onto another person. Then that quality can appear even in an "it" quality, it's so dissociated from me.

The way this is reversed is to reverse exactly those steps, and the process that we use for doing this we call "3-2-1" because it started out first-person, got moved to second-person, and then shoved out to third-person. We start -- and maybe this quality is some anger of yours -- so at night you're having dreams of monsters chasing you and devouring you, very unpleasant. So that's your anger projected, and now it's projected on another entity. That entity has the anger that's now aimed at you, and that's what happens when you project. You reverse the direction. So now this monster has anger coming at you, that's why you feel fear.

The first thing is to identify the "it" quality, the third-person, to find it. So we see the monster, that's identifying it.

So then we convert it back to a second-person. We actually can do this in imagination or we can do it using two chairs. We sit in one chair, and in the other chair we put the monster. Now we talk to it as it's a real second person, it's really there. "Why are you doing this to me? What do you want? What did I do wrong? How long have you been doing this? Why are you doing this?" et cetera. Actually get to know this thing, and if it asks you questions, answer them. Back and forth until you get a sense that you really kind of know who this person is. You can even ask them, "Why are you so angry?" And you might get nothing better than "Because I want to eat your face off."

So you go back and forth until then at some point where you feel you really do know this monster and you know the energy and emotion in it -- particularly the one that makes you uncomfortable -- then, you switch places. You become the monster, you identify with the monster. You make it an "I". So from third-person to second-person, back to first-person. Now you talk as if you have all of this anger aimed out here, and you start identifying with all of that anger aimed out here. You start re-identifying with this powerful emotion that you have projected.

The first thing you'll notice is it reverses direction so it's no longer threatening to you. If anything, you're the threatening one, you have the anger pointed outward. Now you're taking that anger back, and the more you do that, the more you re-identify with it, the more you re-own it. The less and less fear you have, and the more and more you will start to re-own that anger.

Now that anger is actually a very positive energy. If you look up the definition of aggression in the dictionary, it means "to move toward." It doesn't mean "to move against" -- that's hostility. You want the aggression, because that's your capacity to break down barriers, break boundaries, move forward. To accomplish something, to have a powerful capacity to move directly forward and make something happen.

If you see a male deer headed down toward a salt lick and there's a bramble bush in the way, it'll tend to lower it's head and strike it's hooves a couple times, snort, lower it's antlers, and charge into the bramble bush. We wouldn't say it's mad at the bush, but that is aggression. It's moving toward

it, to get that barrier out of the way. If it had projected its anger, it wouldn't have that available. All it would have is other animals angry at it and it would feel fear all the time. Taking back this anger allows us to use this aggression to move toward any of the goals that we have.

So we can see how a powerful positive energy gets flipped into a negative and frightening energy whenever we project it. That happens across the board with almost any type. Individuals can project any emotion or quality that they have, and this can be good stuff as well as bad. Many people project their positive qualities onto other people and they're constantly hero worshipping, when all they're doing is giving that person their greatness -- and so they're losing it. Of course they're attracted to it, they are addicted to it. They think this person is the greatest person in the world, but it's really only they're own Shadow, they're shadow-hugging.

This can occur all the way up the spectrum of level and structures, it can occur all the way through states. The Shadow is Kryptonite to Superman. It is one of the few things that will absolutely halt development right on the spot. It's taking away all of this positive energy you need for growth, development, and finding your own greatness. It's shoving it out and giving it away. It's a disaster in terms of growth and development.

Again, anything that is overtly horribly affecting us, as opposed to informing us, we are very likely dealing with some sort of Shadow element. The simplest thing to do is work with the 3-2-1 process. You can do this in the morning, with any element in the dream state that is either terribly frightening, upsetting, or difficult, or terribly attractive, alluring, appealing, and heroic. Just spend 5 minutes : identify it, face it, talk to it, be it. Very simple, that will reverse the steps that turned it into a dissociated Shadow to begin with.

Susannah: Thank you Ken. It's fascinating to think about how whatever addiction we may have becomes a part of our Shadow because that thing actually has value to us. And because of that we can deal with it, learn from it, and make it our own again, whether it's good or bad, as part of the healing process.

That being said, perhaps you could speak a bit about the Golden Shadow? What is that and how is it different from the dark, negative kind of psychic Shadow?

Ken: Whenever we lose track of our positives -- which is often just as common, even though we are known as a narcissistic generation and so on -- many people still have a great deal of trouble actually allowing for their own greatness. They don't and have not given themselves the deep permission to be great. Going from human to superhuman is learning to allow your greatness, and that greatness is there. The more you tap into states, and the more you get in touch with witnessing and non-dual, the more you're getting in touch with Spirit, and the more your greatness is going to show up - IF you're going to allow it.

If you're not allowing this greatness, then as that descends, you will flip it right out, project it on somebody else, and end up hero worshiping, and shadow-hugging, and addicted to that person. "Oh my God, they're great, they're wonderful. Look at this, look at that!" Both the positive and negative can occur.

It's really interesting if you look at Freud, because even though he's well known for phrases like, "ego" and "id," Freud never once used either of those terms when he wrote. In German, what he was literally writing was, instead of the ego, he wrote the "I". And instead of id, he wrote "the it." So that's exactly what he was tracing, how the "it" splits off from the "I". The third-person "it" splits from the first-person "I". His famous statement when asked, what does psychoanalysis do? he said -- the way it was translated incorrectly -- was "where id was, their ego shall be." Now what he wrote was, "where it was, there I shall become."

So all of that "it" that's out there is really part of your greatness that you're not putting inside your "I". It's just out there sucking energy off of you, giving away your greatness. If it's negative, the negative is being turned into a grizzly form that will make you fearful, frightened, worried, and upset, and so on. If it's something positive, then that will go out there and create superheroes and all the people that seem to have all this greatness that you would like to be able to have, somehow they have it, you don't. Guess what? They have it because you gave it to them! Let's just reverse that, take it back, and own up for your own greatness.

Susannah: So what's happening at that moment when we use the 3-2-1 process to make our projected parts our own again? Why does this make us more fully human?

Ken: First of all, if it's something like aggression, then when it's projected, it flips. The reason it flips is a way to sort of think of it is -- you have your finger pointed outward like you were pointing at somebody - and that is the aggression that you have to move toward them. Not in a hostile way, that's hostility. Aggression is simply to move toward, so you want to move toward. When you project that aggression, then the direction flips into negativity now aimed at you. These people are coming at you and they're mad, they're angry. So all of a sudden, your positive capacity has flipped into a negativity aimed right at you. So that's Kryptonite coming right down your throat.

It can be extremely spooky, much spookier than if it was just that person mad at you. The reason is, when you project your aggression, that comes from a source that already knows all about you. It's coming out of your mind, so it knows all the areas that you are really frightened of. It knows all the areas where you feel weak, all the areas that you can be gotten to. Whereas that person out there really doesn't know that at all. If they're getting mad at you, they're just getting mad and throwing, and blabbering, all that -- but your projection knows right where to go to get right to your heart.

It can be horrifying, and nothing will sap your capacity, your will, your enthusiasm, or your drive faster than an aggressive critic out there that actually knows all of your weak points. It's absolutely brutal. Re-owning that -- and the sooner the better -- will at least take that part out of it. So the next time you face somebody who actually is angry at you, you're not making it worse by adding your own aggression to it and whatever anger they have doesn't know you inside-out like the aggression you projected did. So they're just taking pot shots and you can almost rest assured 80-90% of what they're saying is their own projected Shadow.

Susannah: But what's the real power behind owning your own Shadow element? What's really possible?

Ken: First of all, it's taking your own consciousness and whenever you turned that consciousness into a Shadow component, whenever you disowned it, repressed it, alienated it, it's almost as if you literally subtracted that consciousness from yourself. Then when you project it, you're putting it out there.

It's kind of gimmicky, but sometimes I use this example, it's like you're born with \$100 worth of consciousness in your being. Let's say at level 1, at the oral stage, you get an oral fixation. Maybe \$5 of your \$100 gets stuck as an oral Shadow. So now you move into the second stage with \$95 and maybe you lose another \$5 there. Now you've moved into red and you've got \$90 and \$10 is running around ready to be projected or in the unconscious sending out symptoms, causing psychosomatic illnesses, doing God knows what. So here you are with your \$90 and you get into amber, and that's the traditional religious thing. But maybe that's a complete disaster and you lose \$15 there.

Now you're down to \$75, maybe you make it through orange, then you get to green and lose another \$10. So now, \$65. Maybe it takes \$70 of consciousness to make the monumental leap of gaining the second tier. You've only got \$65 -- you're not going to make it. All this other stuff is wandering around down there in the basement or projecting out there into heroes and demons, that is your consciousness! Your energy, parts of your greatness. And it's just not there for you, it's flat out gone, because you have sealed it off. You denied it's yours, pushed it from first, to second to third-person. It's gone from "I" to "it" and it's wandering around out there without any way to help you move forward or give you strength, courage, or add up to your greatness.

Susannah: Fascinating. Thank you Ken! Let's zoom out a bit now. Is there such a thing as a collective Shadow? If so, how do we see it, and how do we deal with it?

Ken: That of course is a huge topic and when we're talking about collective Shadows, and there are cultures that have particular types of Shadows. Probably it's a stereotype, but it's certainly well known and that would be the Puritan culture and its attitude toward sexuality which continues to

look like it's just a very negative sex-oriented culture. That meant that individuals being brought up in that culture are going to have in this part of their embedded unconscious, a filter that every time a sexual impulse comes up, is going to be screened out, denied, displaced, repressed, alienated or projected. There are all sorts of cultures that screen out qualities, and these can be positive as well as negative of course.

Depending on how you look at individuality, creativity, and freedom, you might look at Japan as screening out individuality. For Japan, in the culture at large, a standard saying they have is "the nail that stands out is hammered down." That limits the impulse of individuality and individual creativity. So the Japanese are known for taking something already invented and tinkering with it to make it better, but they have almost no Nobel Prizes, because they have no creativity. So that's a culture screening out what, at least in some ways, could be a positive characteristic.

So it can go positive, it can go negative and when that happens, everybody brought up in that culture is going to screen out those qualities.

Susannah: Interesting. Thank you very much for that! This whole discussion of collective shadow ties in with the basis of the course: as we wake up and take responsibility for our own greatness we also change the world at large. The idea of getting even 10% of people to a turquoise level of self-development could have a profound effect on the collective Shadow.

That being said, sometimes it's difficult to see where we could really get to. Whatever levels we've attained currently, you've said we can't really see the levels above us, only the levels we're on and those behind or below us. Is this blindness to our future levels also a Shadow element?

Ken: They're slightly two different things. Any particular given level cannot see the level above it or any of the levels above it. It can see the levels below it. So that's just a generic situation. If you have a Shadow element in a particular level, then that means even as the level starts to emerge in the next higher level, and that Shadow is embedded in it, it won't be able to see that element even as it continues to develop. So as long as it stays Shadow, then it will never be able to enter consciousness.

Susannah: We've already talked about the 3-2-1 practice in dealing with our Shadow. Are there any other practices we could use?

Ken: Yeah, one of the things I want to recommend is that the 3-2-1 process is a simple introductory, but very powerful and widely applicable practice, to get the main elements of Shadow returned to their owner so that consciousness is returned to where it belongs. Goes back in your bank account, you get the dollars back so your consciousness can grow, develop, and add indeed toward your superhuman-ness. It works very well, like I said you can do it just in the morning with the strongest negative and strongest positive element in the dream, and then often just right at

night before you go to sleep, take 5 minutes. One of the things you'll find is if you keep doing this 3-2-1 is that it is very simple to run through very quickly and it will still give a very powerful result.

So at night right before you go to sleep, run through both the most disturbing element or person during the day and the most attractive positive event during the day. Just run a quick 3-2-1 on them, spot them, face them, talk to them, be them. As you get that down as a simple habit, that will follow you through all the rest of your stages of growth, in both states and structures. If you do nothing else, that will help enormously.

Now in some cases, you can have a very serious psychological problem. Of course if that's the case then you might want to look for professional help and actually go through something like that. It's also the case that there are some simple books on various types of easily applied therapies that do work fairly well in covering Shadow elements. Two of the most accessible and easiest to use are Gestalt Therapy, and Transactional Analysis. Both of these work a little bit differently although interestingly, I first came upon the 3-2-1 process by examining very carefully what Fritz Perls was doing in Gestalt, and what Transactional Analysis was doing with analysis of games.

Both of those are very useful and if you want to go into it in more detail, then by all means do so. But at the very least, take up something like a 3-2-1 process just to stay in touch with Shadow, as you continue your growth and development, because you don't want Kryptonite being served for breakfast daily. And a Shadow will do that easily.

Susannah: Thanks so much Ken. This talk on the Shadow has been phenomenally insightful.

The Shadow is something that we all have to deal with in our own way. But if we look at our Shadow from the integral perspective you are describing, and if we use some of the practical methods to reclaim and reintegrate our own shadow elements, it will affect not only our own lives for the better, but the lives of everyone around us. Thank you.



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