

Frequently Asked Questions about the Shadow Weekend

1. What is the Shadow Weekend?

The Shadow Weekend is a weekend retreat programs of Victories of the Heart NFP. The Shadow Weekend is considered “the next step” in advancing a man’s personal growth after he has completed either the BreakThrough or Wisdom Years retreats or has attended other comparable intensive men’s programs.

During the weekend, each man discovers his own particular “shadow” and comes to acknowledge and accept it consciously. However, the most remarkable outcome of the Shadow Weekend is finding and embracing his “Gold” that lies deeply buried beneath his “Shadow.” This is the true “gift” of the Shadow Weekend: finding all one’s sterling qualities: his “Divine Child.”

The Shadow Weekend is conceptually based on the psychological work of Carl Jung: “the Persona and the Shadow.” These two “archetypes” represent the dual nature of the individual: one his public face (“Persona”) and the other his hidden face (“Shadow”). The third “archetype” that emerges once the “Shadow Archetype” is consciously embraced is the “Divine Child Archetype” found at the intersection between the “Persona” and the “Shadow.”

2. Who is eligible to attend the Shadow Weekend?

Any man who has graduated from either the BreakThrough Weekend or the Wisdom Years Weekend is eligible to attend. In addition, any man who has attended other comparable intensive men’s programs is eligible to attend, though a pre-screening conversation would be requested. There is also the possibility of a man to attend who has been recommended by his therapist.

3. Why should I attend the Shadow Weekend?

By attending the Shadow Weekend, each man will discover the ongoing and “undiscovered” parts of himself. These parts persist and continue to unconsciously influence a man’s behavior and their interpersonal relationships. The discoveries made on the Shadow Weekend will allow each man to have more conscious control over his behavior; behavior that can be destructive to himself or to the significant people in his life. This new awareness will help the man become more whole, more integrated and much “safer” in his interpersonal relationships. It then allows the man to cherish his own unique qualities and be able to express himself more fully through these; not being clouded by his “shadow” in his daily interactions.

4. What are some of the benefits I can expect from my participation?

Most importantly, the participant will experience a certain and sudden release of new found energy: a new freeing up, a new internal explosion of resolve. There is also a new awareness of the many unknown and untapped inner resources that have been dormant within him; a sense that he is more conscious and better able to “manage” the negative (Shadow) aspects of himself that tyrannize him and the significant others in his life. Ultimately, the man becomes more whole and conscious of himself. He will be able to live more fully from his unique and competent self -- his inner “gold.”

5. What about confidentiality?

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of the Shadow Weekend. All men attending the weekend – participants and staff – are asked to sign a confidentiality agreement affirming that they will not disclose the statements or experiences of *another* man. Participants are always free to discuss *their own* feelings, insights, experiences, etc. with whomever they choose. The leadership team is obligated to maintain confidentiality except in the case of an imminent threat of harm to self or others. The agreement also contains an acknowledgement that the structure and components of the training are the property of Victories and may not be copied or used without written permission.

6. Where does the Shadow Weekend fit in with the other Victories programs?

The Shadow Weekend retreat is a natural 'next step' on a man's personal growth journey after attending The BreakThrough, Wisdom Years or equivalent program. A man will build upon the foundation of these programs with a mixture of personal and group exercises that will lead to a deeper understanding of the interplay and tension between 'Persona' and 'Shadow.' This is multiplied with the man's own appreciation of the restorative power of his "Divine Child." These understandings lead to a holistic acceptance, and this acceptance leads to integration, healing and a sense of wholeness.

7. Who is on Staff?

The Shadow weekend is co-facilitated by two senior leaders and staffed by 5-10 additional men. Everyone on the team has attended the Shadow Weekend and has returned to staff and contribute to this weekend program. The senior leaders have five years of training and experience with the processes used on the weekend and are alumni of the weekend themselves. Men on staff are chosen for leadership based on their own personal growth, their integrity and compassion, commitment to our work, and ability to function as part of a team. Although Victories of the Heart does not offer psychological or psychiatric services, our policy is to have at least one man on the team who is a licensed mental health professional.

8. What sets the Shadow Weekend apart from other weekend experiences?

As mentioned above, the Shadow Weekend is predicated on helping each man to go deeply into himself and to find the other "half" of himself. In contrast to the other two weekend retreats, the Shadow Weekend is a much more individual and silent journey into the inner shadow self. It is more personal, in that each man is on his own specific journey to discover his own unique "Shadow."

9. I am in a 12-step or similar program. Is this weekend experience right for me?

The Shadow Weekend is exactly right for any man who is in any 12-step program. This is because a man's 'Shadow' typically has a hidden agenda which makes recovery more difficult. Shadow work cannot but enhance the work in the 12-step program. It will help the man become more whole, more aware of his inner "ying and yang." The Shadow Weekend will only enhance growth and bring the man closer to discovering his real inner "gold." The Shadow Weekend is adjunctive to the work he is doing in the 12-step program.

10. I've heard there's nudity on this weekend. Is this true?

There is no nudity in the Shadow Weekend. At all times during the weekend men will be clothed.

11. What about post-weekend follow up meetings?

After attending the Shadow Weekend, there is a post weekend Celebration to honor all the participants on the following Thursday after the weekend. After this Victories' recognition the men take their "Shadow and Gold work" experience back to their own personal growth group to share and to infuse their respective groups with new found energy and focus. A one-day reunion for weekend participants is scheduled approximately 45 after the Shadow Weekend to reinforce and solidify the insights each man found on the weekend.

12. What is the weekend schedule?

The weekend begins on Friday evening at 7:00 pm and ends approximately at 2:30 pm on Sunday afternoon. Over the course of the weekend participants are lead through an eight (8) stage process that leads them to uncovering their own "Shadow." Each of the eight (8) stages consists of both large group and individual work. All the processes are structured to help each man, stage by stage, encounter his "Shadow," Understand it and finally to befriend it. Finally being able to depart discovering and embracing his own unique self – his "gold" that has been lying hidden beneath his "shadow."

13. What are some of the past participants comments about their Shadow Weekend experience?

“I got what I came for”, “100% effective”, “rich”, “aha!”, “powerful”, “enlightening”, “transformative”, “moving”, “revealing”, “clarifying”, “forceful”, “profound”, “overwhelming”, “intense”, “discovery”, “unsettling”, “momentous”, “moving”, “dark”, “wow”, “Ke-rang! Pow!”, “awesome”, “different”, “fulfilling”, “blessing”, “surprising”, “focus.”

These authentically expressed words reveal the magnitude of each man’s enthusiasm in being able to see, face, embrace and begin to own his own “shadow” and to claim his “divine child: gold”—the undiscovered parts of himself.

14. What is the ultimate outcome of the Shadow Weekend for the man?

Through the processes of the Shadow Weekend each man finds his “Shadow” as an essential and beneficial part of himself, not his enemy, and befriends “him.” This then allows each man to discover and lay claim to his “golden shadow” (his Divine Child Archetype) which has lain hidden deep with his shadows. Each man comes to experience his inner wholeness and obtains the tools to begin to construct a “management agreement” between himself—his “Persona” and his newly revealed “Shadows” so that he can become proficient in balancing all of his inner psychic forces. This allows his “golden shadow” to shine through. The ultimate outcome is each man’s personal empowerment through his increased larger awareness of his total self.

15. What is the symbol of the Shadow Weekend?

The Mandorla (see drawing) is a very ancient symbol of two overlapping circles: one white (“The Persona”) and the other black (“The Shadow”). Where these two circles overlap is an almond shaped area (mandorla) -- golden in color: therein lies the “gold” of the Shadow Weekend.

Robert A. Johnson, a Jungian Analyst says of the Mandorla:

“Our own healing proceeds from that overlaps of what we call good and evil, light and dark. It is not that the light element alone does the healing; the place where light and dark begin to touch is where miracles arise. This middle place is a mandorla.”