

Victories of the Heart

Shadow Weekend Testimonials

"I came to the Shadow Weekend harboring a deep fear that there was something secret, bad and brutal about me, shrouded in mystery and darkness. During the weekend, I found that my fear was about the mystery and darkness itself, that I had been hiding from secret parts of myself that were indeed angry, but also tender and yearning to be expressed – and I connected with those secret parts in a way that enhanced both my sense of self and my relationship with those I love."

"I came to the weekend, frankly, because I was very afraid of certain pieces of myself. The Shadow Weekend powerfully reminded me that other men contain and contend with these same issues of shame, fear, sadness and anger, and that in the midst of all of that darkness, there is a complementary 'light'. When combined with that darkness, it can produce some exquisite Gold - and I found that Gold that weekend."

"I came to the Shadow Weekend ready and wanting to face my "ugly" sides, aspects of my own self that I usually can only see as reflected in others. When I see someone behaving in a way that I totally reject and am repulsed by - they're offering me a peek at a part of me that in no way do I want to embrace- as long as it spells shame. It's easy to see these in others, they virtually jump out at me, and hard to own them in myself; but seeing them in a new light makes it possible to open up to surprising new possibilities. Sitting by the pond, writing in my journal that Saturday, I learned that even in the stinkiest, darkest, mud and slime there's life, hope, and new beginnings."

"I was excited with the prospect of being introduced to a part of me which I presumed was holding me back from my happy destiny with a spiritual freedom. I was certain that whatever part of me that was holding secrets or triggering loathsome reactionary behaviors needed breathing room and I trusted VOH to help me help myself. And so I surrendered with enthusiasm to the weekend and to whatever work was assigned. And I came to learn that my shadow needs my love and protection. Pretty powerful stuff."

"The shadow weekend made me aware of those parts of me which I hide, deny and repress and yet they present themselves to me everyday. I have learned to embrace my shadows and their influence on my behaviors and recognize that they are ever-present, and contribute in a big way to who I am as a whole person. Given how I am wired as a "guy" and one who likes to "fix" things, I have come to realize that shadows are not something that I can "fix." Rather I can choose how I will respond to them given the improved understanding and awareness that comes from having done this weekend. For me there was no way to escape a deeper understanding of the duality of existence – light and dark, good and bad, yin and yang – on a weekend like this. And I have carried that understanding with me ever since."

"The shadow weekend provided me to explore those parts of me that I hid, was ashamed of or did not like. These shadow items lowered my self esteem, led me to directly disliking myself and prevented me from loving myself. Through the shadow weekend and its work I was able to understand and embrace my shadow and understand that it is not all bad and is my ally that loves me and protects me. This embracing and understanding has led to more self acceptance, self love and self esteem."

“For me, the Breakthrough weekend and the Shadow weekend are a matched set, like bookends. In the Breakthrough weekend(s) I was able to accept that I had experienced trauma in my life and that I was a victim. This victim thing was something that I thought I was too tough and too cool to own. In the Shadow weekend(s) I found out that the strategies that I engaged in to manage and protect those victim parts of me turned out to be the very same behaviors that enabled the perpetrator parts in me. Whoa! That looked like a massive emotional shutdown sealed in anger; I was not being responsible for my own emotional well-being and development nor was I creating an environment where my family, friends or community could safely pursue theirs. I can't say that I have untied all the knots. After all, being human is a pretty messy business. But I have a lot more self awareness and compassion around my triggers, your triggers and our triggers. And that tends to lessen the fear and shame that I hold around them...it allows me to ground and to breath a little more deeply.”

“In a word, the Shadow Weekend brought me peace. The peace of self acceptance as the awareness that my hidden self was not reprehensible and a crippling source of shame. As I learned that I was not unique in the sense that I was different, broken or flawed and therefore compelled to isolate and hide for fear that others might discover this, I began to heal in the awareness that everyone carries a similar burden. Before the weekend was over, I celebrated the hidden gifts that were obscured by my shadow and drew emotionally into balance as the tension between light and dark, shadow, persona and authenticity lessened and moved toward harmony. That's not to say the tension no longer exists, but it no longer has me in the emotional choke hold it once did.”