

Shadow work with clients.

- **Client focused, not “other” focused.**

Most Tarot readings include some form of shadow work-helping a client to see what they are not understanding in a situation.

It can be common for people (you and I included) to want to blame our problems on other people, situations, society. Whilst there may be a lot of truth to this it is not helpful to focus our attention on areas outside of our control, and it can deepen the victim mentality.

I learnt this the hard way in my 20's. I asked my teacher why my parents don't love me (and they don't- I'm not being dramatic here). He told me we could deeply focus on why my parents didn't love me. But we may never understand this, and it may make no difference to the situation. Or we could focus on how I mend my emotional wound which may not improve my relationship with my parents but would improve my emotional wellbeing.

Even in an abusive relationship, where the victim does not deserve the abuse on any level, it is helpful to look at why they were attracted to this person, and why they enabled their partner to be abusive to them.

- Always look at what the client can do to navigate the situation, don't just focus on the “others” in the situation.

For most clients (because there is always an exception to the rule) I always include spreads that focus on my client- even if they are asking about their relationship, boss, or neighbour. Because focusing on my client helps with bringing the attention back to what is their role in this situation- and that is empowering. Some clients can find this annoying, or even condescending, “why are you reading for me- it's my husband that's having the affair”. Here the client's shadow is not wanting to focus on her emotional wounds and is projecting all the focus onto her husband. This may be because she is terrified of admitting her marriage is over, and her ego is protecting her from this truth. Or it may be that she has abandonment issues from childhood, or unresolved emotional wounds that she is trying to protect from bringing into the light.

So, tread gently. It is very easy to be confident when it's not your life, not your shadow. And remember your client may be unintentionally avoiding seeing the truth of a situation to protect whatever is hidden in their shadow.

You will know when you are dealing with stuck shadow work when your client only wants to talk about other people and avoids talking about themselves. This can be really hard to hold- I've had clients want probing readings into whether their partner is 100% committed (do they fancy anyone, are they on dating sites, are they messaging?) when

the client has already asked about several people they are messaging from a dating site. Just pointing out the double standards doesn't work-they will have made a reason for why they are doing this. If the client allows - start looking at why they don't trust their partner.

- **Look for the root cause, not the symptom.**

If you are doing a longer session, or several sessions, with a client then you can start to look at the root cause of the situation.

I had a client frustrated that they felt overwhelmed with work, they didn't have the bandwidth to progress their career any further. I looked at their current job- and sure enough the cards spoke of burnout, overwhelm, exhaustion. The card that was crossing was the 8 pentacles (order, structure, system). The card in her unconscious was the 5 of swords- which can be originality.

As we focused on what was causing her the overwhelm, she talked about her ADHD, and how detailed ordered tasks overwhelmed her (8 pentacles) but she loved and excelled at creative problem solving (5 swords).

The root problem was her neuro-diverse brain. The advice suggested she talked to her boss about this (King swords- which can suggest speaking to someone in authority) and she got extra clerical help. She has recently received a promotion. Shadow work can be finding the root issue and not being distracted by the symptom.

In relationships this can often go back to childhood (watch out for 6 cups, Emperor/Empress), abandonment issues, not getting over a past relationship etc.

Even if your client is the "innocent" party, it is helpful to understand what in their psyche has allowed them to be in this position. And very often the "guilty" party will book a reading- wanting to understand their compulsion to drink/gamble/have an affair.

I have a client who is having affairs, unhappy to be lying to her husband, but also not comfortable with ending the affairs. After several readings looking at her marriage, and her affairs the 4 of cups kept coming up as a key card, along with the queen of pentacles. The root cause was – and it seems so obvious, but it really wasn't to her-boredom. Her mother had been a stay-at-home mum, she was a stay at home mum, she needed more meaning than her teenage children and workaholic husband. It was like a light switched on- she started talking about painting and joining classes. She felt she *should* feel "complete" in her life and felt guilty about wanting more- so followed guilty pleasures. Their marriage may not survive if she continues to feel overlooked- but right now she feels released from feeling guilty over feeling bored.

I have even had clients just announce that they “see the problem” part way through a reading. Because the cards and reading can be key in helping them to understand something important that they just couldn’t see before.

- **Shadow work may not fit with every client.**

You might have to tread carefully- if a client is simply not open to understanding the root causes, they only want to know what is going on with other people, then there is a sweet point between “I need to include you in this reading to understand the dynamic” but not overly pushing so the client feels unsafe. I have clients I’ve read for for years that still don’t feel comfortable with me looking at root causes and shadow work. That’s fine- I’m not here to push anyone to do work they are not ready to do.

- **Know when to stop**

Whatever your client pushed into their shadow, was put there for a reason.

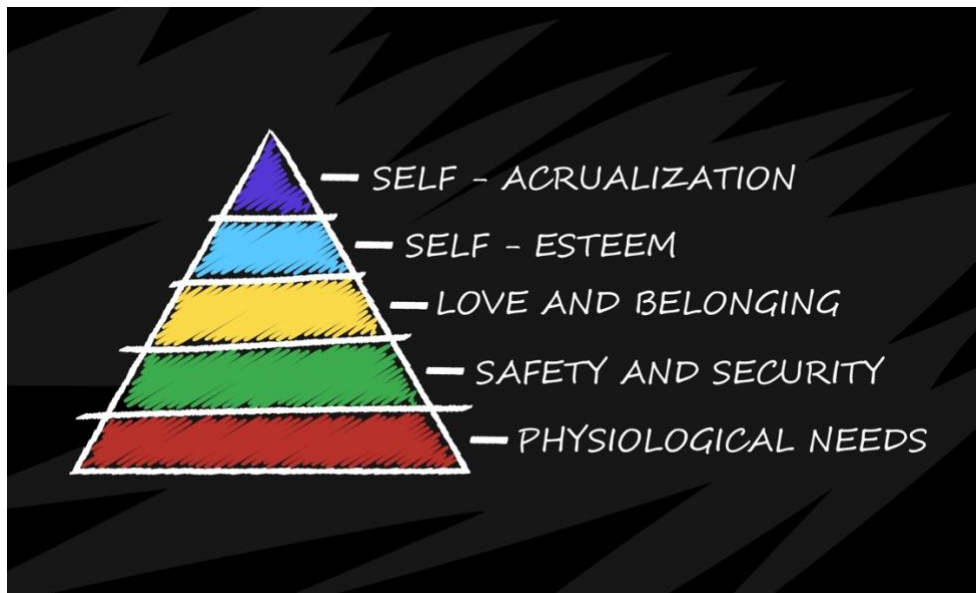
Sometimes we realise, or can feel from a client, that shadow work isn’t safe right now.

If a client has a parent who is at end of life it may be better to work on wounds with that parent when they have passed- it may be too much to process at this point.

If a client is in a domestic abuse situation (which could include parent or adult child as well as romantic) then please be very careful.

The most dangerous stage of a domestic abuse situation is the point leading up to, and the end. It can be hard to fathom just how dangerous preparing to leave, and leaving is. And just how stressful this is. Having done it myself- it is one of the hardest things I’ve ever had to do- masking my fear to appear normal whilst secretly moving clothes, certificates and money out of the house.

If you feel someone is in a very difficult or potentially dangerous situation focus on getting them through it- the understanding, shadow work, and accountability can come later. You cannot process shadow work in an unsafe situation. (This could also be due to financial stress, family worries, etc.)



I find Maslow's pyramid very helpful. If a client has come to me because they are being evicted, or they have had a cancer diagnosis then "shadow work" and understanding the root cause of their situation is unlikely to be appropriate- though sometimes it is. I have had clients ask, "why is this happening to me?" and mean it, wanting to own the situation. But most people just want to know "how do I navigate this right now."

When a client first comes to me, I am tuning in, considering where in the pyramid are they at this point.

- Are they in need financially, physically. Is a practical spread needed at this point.
- Are they safe? I am ultra cautious, knowing I don't want to offer either false security, or heighten their fear.
- Once you get to love and higher in the pyramid then shadow work can be really powerful, as long as the client is open to me moving the spreads in that direction.

I don't see the pyramid as only linear- you may be struggling to feel safe in your work, but full of self-esteem and deeply loved in your relationship. So do be in the place of page and play with this concept.

I used the pyramid as a resource to create a spread;



The layers of the pyramid match the vertical rows- with self-actualization at the top.

After shuffling and reflection I drew the centre cards from Judgement to Hierophant to reflect how each of these areas are in my life right now.

Then I lay the card to the left (sun) to represent a block in this area, and the card to the right (7 pentacles) to represent practical advice.

If we take security- I am working hard at building my business (8 pentacles) and although I am enjoying it, I do realise that once again work is eclipsing other areas of my life. I don't believe in my capabilities enough to leverage them to my advantage (4 pentacles) and self care and working creatively will support this (Empress).

I am fascinated by this spread- especially the Hanged man as the advice for self-actualization, which has to link to my work as a shaman.

Give it a go- see if it helps you, and if you had a self aware client it could be a fascinating spread to share with them.