FREE PRINTABLE

Shadow Work Journal Prompts

36 prompts for beginners + trigger log, inner critic, letter & aftercare



10 pages | US Letter | print at home

printablelane.com | free for personal and classroom use

Shadow Work Journal Prompts 1 to 12

Go slowly: 1 prompt per session is plenty, and you can skip any prompt.

GENTLE START

prompts 1 to 6

1. What does “shadow work” mean to me, in my own words, before I begin?
2. Which feeling is hardest for me to admit I have: anger, envy, sadness, fear or something else?
3. How am I different with strangers than with the people closest to me?
4. Finish this sentence 3 times: “I would hate for people to think I am...”
5. What do I hope to understand about myself by the time I finish these prompts?
6. What will I do to feel calm and settled after each journaling session?

TRIGGERS & REACTIONS

prompts 7 to 12

7. Describe a recent moment when my reaction felt bigger than the situation. What happened just before it?
8. Where in my body did I feel that reaction, and what did it feel like?
9. In that moment, what story did I tell myself about the other person, and about me?
10. Which small everyday things (being interrupted, waiting, being left out) irritate me most?
11. When I feel criticized, what do I usually do first: defend, go quiet, joke or apologize?
12. If my strongest reaction this week could speak, what would it say it needs?

Shadow Work Journal Prompts 13 to 24

Be curious, not harsh. You are noticing patterns, not putting yourself on trial.

THE INNER CRITIC

prompts 13 to 18

13. Which phrases does my inner critic repeat most often? Write them word for word.
14. Whose voice does my inner critic sound like, if it sounds like anyone?
15. What might my inner critic be trying to protect me from?
16. When does the critic get loudest: in the morning, before big events, or around certain people?
17. What would happen if I did the thing my critic warns me about, just a little?
18. What would a fair, steady coach say about the same situation?

MIRRORS IN OTHERS

prompts 19 to 24

19. Which trait in other people annoys me fastest? Where might a small version of it live in me?
20. Who do I judge without knowing them well, and what exactly do I judge?
21. Which behavior do I criticize in others but quietly allow in myself?
22. Who do I envy a little, and what does that envy say I want?
23. What do I secretly admire in someone I find difficult?
24. Which kinds of people do I avoid, and what feeling do they stir up in me?

Shadow Work Journal Prompts 25 to 36

Hidden parts can hold strengths too. End each session with something kind.

OLD RULES I LEARNED

prompts 25 to 30

25 What were the unspoken rules about feelings in the home I grew up in?

26 Which emotions were welcome there, and which were hushed or brushed aside?

27 What did I learn I had to be (helpful, quiet, strong, funny) to fit in?

28 Which of those old rules still shapes my choices today?

29 Which rule would I like to soften, and what would the gentler version say?

30 Which family or cultural message do I want to keep because it truly fits me?

HIDDEN STRENGTHS

prompts 31 to 36

31 Which quality was I told was “too much” that could also be a strength?

32 When has my stubbornness, sensitivity or anger helped me or someone else?

33 What talent or wish did I put away because it seemed silly or impractical?

34 Which trait do I admire in others but rarely claim for myself?

35 How could a part of me I usually hide be used in a healthy way?

36 Write 3 sentences of thanks to a part of myself I have struggled to accept.

These prompts are not a replacement for professional support.
If a prompt feels overwhelming, stop, use page 10 and come back another day.
If you are struggling, please talk to someone you trust or a counselor.

Trigger Log

When a reaction feels bigger than the moment, write it down and get curious.

Week of _____ *Rate how strong it felt from 0 (calm) to 10 (very strong).*

What happened *date + place*	What I felt *and where in my body*	The story I told myself *about them and about me*	What I needed *then, or now*
Strength: ___ / 10			
Strength: ___ / 10			
Strength: ___ / 10			

A pattern I notice across these moments: _____

Inner Critic Reframe

Hear the critic out, check the facts, then choose fairer words.

Date _____ My critic's nickname (optional) _____

My inner critic says:

1 Where might I have learned this?

2 What is it trying to protect me from?

3 Is it completely true? Look at the facts.

Facts that support it	Facts that do not fit it

4 A fairer, kinder way to say it:

1 small step I will take anyway: _____

Mirrors & Patterns

What we react to in others can point to something in ourselves.

Traits that bother me in others	Where might I do this, even a little?
•	
•	
•	
•	

Traits I admire in others	How could I grow this in me?
•	
•	
•	
•	

A pattern that keeps repeating

the same kind of argument, friendship, job problem or feeling

What usually starts it:

How I usually respond:

What I could try next time:

Old Rules, New Choices

Sort the rules you grew up with: keep them, soften them or let them go.

A rule I learned	Keep · Soften · Let go	My new version
e.g. Don't make a fuss.	K S L	*I can ask for what I need, calmly.*
	K S L	
	K S L	
	K S L	
	K S L	
	K S L	

K = keep, S = soften, L = let go. Circle 1 letter per rule.

Values that matter to me now

circle up to 5, or add your own

honesty · kindness · freedom · family · creativity · courage

rest · fairness · learning · loyalty · humor · faith

health · adventure · independence · calm · growth · connection

My top 3: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

1 old rule I will notice this week: _____

A Letter to a Hidden Part of Me

Write to a feeling or trait you usually push away, with patience.

Date _____ The part I am writing to _____

Sentence starters, if you need them:

"I notice you when..." *"Maybe you were trying to help me by..."*

"What I want you to know now is..."

Dear _____,

From,

_____

Grounding & Aftercare Checklist

Use it before you start, whenever you need a pause, and when you finish.

Before I start

- [ ] I have 15 to 20 quiet minutes
- [ ] I picked 1 prompt, not 5
- [ ] Water or a warm drink is nearby
- [ ] I know how I will close the session
- [ ] I can skip any prompt today

Pause or stop if...

- my heart races or I feel panicky
- a memory feels too vivid or heavy
- I feel numb, spaced out or very low
- I feel unsafe in any way

Close the notebook and try the grounding steps below. You can come back another day, or not at all.

5-4-3-2-1 grounding *name them out loud or write them here*

5 things I can see _____

4 things I can feel or touch _____

3 things I can hear _____

2 things I can smell _____

1 thing I can taste _____

Aftercare: when I finish, I will...

- [ ] take 5 slow breaths
- [ ] drink some water
- [ ] do something light: music, a show, a walk
- [ ] stretch or shake out my hands
- [ ] look out a window or step outside
- [ ] text or talk to someone I trust

People I can reach out to: _____

These pages are not a replacement for professional support. If shadow work brings up more than you can handle alone, please talk to a doctor, counselor or therapist.