Let's play with this a little bit and learn a bit more about it. Take a sheet of paper—you could do this right now if you want—and divide the sheet into four columns. Draw four lines going down it. You want four columns, not rows.

Okay, I want you to think of somebody who really does get on your nerves, irritates you or makes you see red. This could be in your personal life, your work life; it could be in the past, it could be in the present: but somebody who really, really got on your nerves.

Then, I want you, in the first column, to list all the bad qualities of that person who pushes your hot button. So, in other words, you don't have to be complimentary. Nobody's going to see this list. If you think they were selfish, if you think they were aggressive, if you think they were mean—whatever you think, don't hold back. Just write a few of those qualities that you found so annoying.

Once you have two or three of those down, I want you, in the second column, to list the opposite of those particular qualities. If you said they were mean, list the opposite. They were kind. Or, maybe you meant *mean* by saying that they were cheap. Well, then they'd be generous. If you said that they were selfish, well unselfish. List the opposite of that bad quality that you listed.

Most people, when they see that second list, recognize that it's a list of words they would use to describe their best selves. It's what you think of as your own strong qualities in that second column. That's partly because, in fact, the first column is your nemesis. It's the parts of yourself that you've repressed in order that you can be the kind of person that you're describing in column two. Most people will have that experience.

Now think about: why has this been a disadvantage to you? In column three, I want you to take the words in column one again, and this time find another word for it, one that you think that *that* person would use to describe the quality. If you thought the person was selfish, how do you think that person [would describe it]? It's unlikely that they would say they were selfish. What would they say? How would they describe the characteristic they were exhibiting when they did that thing that caused you to call them selfish?

When you've done that, you can ask yourself, looking at that third column: *what was the value of those shadow traits?* In other words, if I were to say that I thought someone was selfish, I think of myself as unselfish. But they would say, *"I'm not selfish; I'm assertive. I assert my interests in a particular situation."*

Ask yourself: can I think of a situation I've been in where asserting my interests in a particular situation would have come to a better outcome for me—but maybe even for the initiative that I was trying to promote? And, yes, I usually can.

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