



SHADOW, TRAUMA AND ATTACHMENT

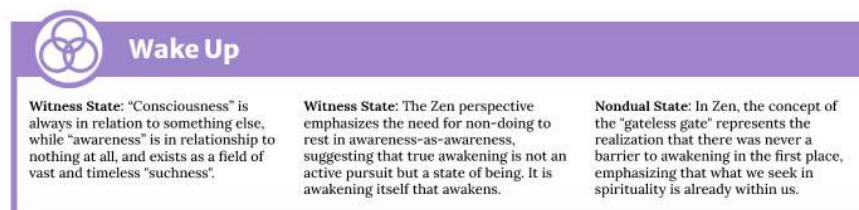
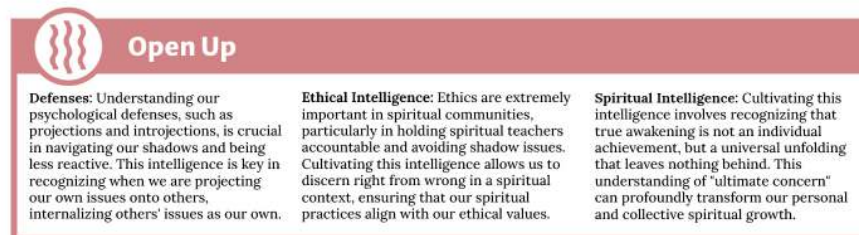
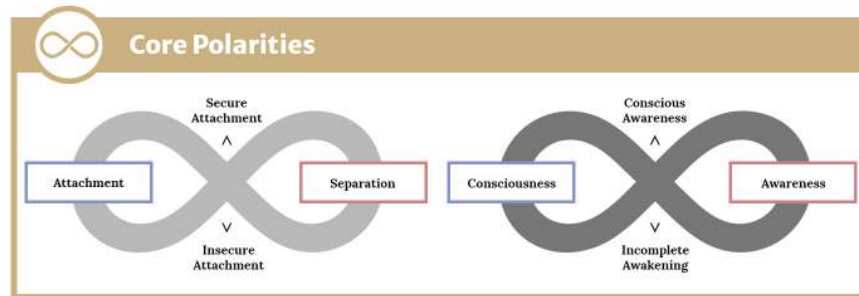
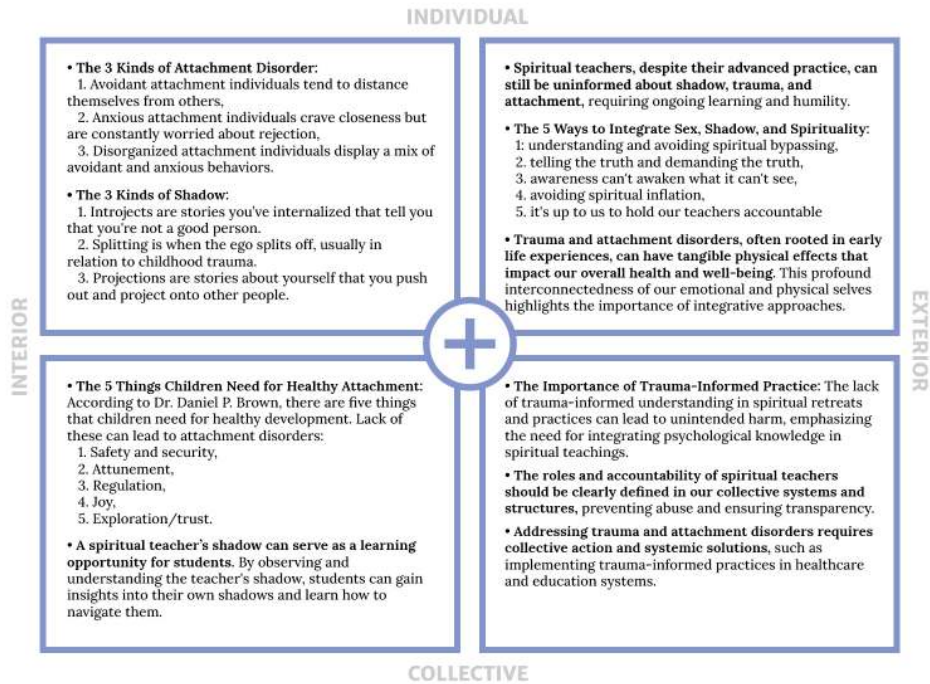
*Why Do Spiritual Teachers
Keep Messing Up?*

Keith Martin-Smith

Insight Map

Shadow, Trauma, and Attachment: Why Do Spiritual Teachers Keep Messing Up?

Keith Martin-Smith



[00:00:00] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Welcome everyone. My name is Keith Martin-Smith and I am the author of *When the Buddha Needs Therapy*, which was released by Integral Life Press back in the fall. And today I really wanted to take more of a specific dive into a narrower focus of the book, which is to really get into this idea of what is awakening, and how does shadow play into it? And most importantly, what can we understand, both as practitioners, but also as students, you know, as we look to teachers and mentors in the field.

So I'd like to start off just by really just sort of telling a simple story here. My teacher was Junpo Kando Denis Kelly Roshi. He was the 83rd patriarch of Rinzai Zen. And, get a little more into his journey and his understanding of shadow in a little bit. But when I would talk to him about the nature of awakening, the nature of enlightenment, he would often tell me that, look, when you awaken fully, when you have a complete enlightenment, it is absolute. It awakens all of your shadows, all of your personas, all parts of the personality. And that awakening... complete awakening is complete. Nothing gets left behind.

And I've come to a where I really believe that that is just simply not true. And, and not only is it not true, I think it's destructive. I think it's destructive for teachers, and I think it's destructive for students. And I think it's frankly, a bit of a toxic thorn in the side of Buddhism, Vajrayana, Zen, but also in a lot of other kinds of spirituality we can see a lot of spiritual bypassing, which I'll get to in a minute.

So my premise is that awakening can't awaken shadows, hard stop. And in order to sort of get into this, let me just do a drive by of what shadow is, and then we'll do a drive by of what awakening is. And then I'll give you five things that I think we can do as practitioners, as teachers, as students, that can help to basically put an end to this reoccurring problem of spiritual scandal with spiritual teachers.

And it's not just sex, right? We've had troubles with power, with privilege, with, verbal or emotional abuse, money, you know, money shadow, favoritism, nepotism, just all kinds of things that have come out, you know, over the last a hundred years, where we've seen lots and lots of problems with spiritual teachers.

So let's understand shadow. So we take a look at shadow. Shadow, very simply, sort of shadow 101, is the things that are in your consciousness that are invisible to your consciousness. Shadow doesn't mean like, oh, you know, I have a money shadow

because, I struggle with money, that's not really a shadow, because I can see that I have a money shadow.

So the fact that I can see it means that it's not really in shadow. Now, I might not have metabolized a shadow, it might still be really impacting my life, but the fact that I could tell you I've got a little bit of a money shadow means that it isn't really in shadow.

So a real shadow is something that I can't see, it's part of the makeup of my ego consciousness of my small self. And I have no idea that it's a shadow.

So there are three kinds of main shadows and, you saw my conversation with Kim Barta a month ago, Kim really gets into this, and I'm really just gonna recap what he told me.

So the three kinds of shadows, you've got three kinds. You've got introjects, and so introjects are stories that seem like they come into your head that basically tell you that you're not a good person in some way. So an introject could be something like, you know, you just, you always screw things up. Or, you know, just not a good person. Or it's just a matter of time until they leave you. Or, you know, I'm just a failure in my career. I'm just not doing enough, I just don't work hard.

And introjects are stories that, from the outside, would appear to be pretty untrue. You know, if you're like a really hardworking person and you have an introject that says that you don't work very hard, you know, there's a problem there.

So introjects tend to get put into us when we're little, like almost all trauma and shadow, but not all, but almost all. They get put into us by parents, by caregivers, by educational systems. and because they get put into us, and because they aren't who we really are, the therapeutic process around working on that shadow is to actually let go of the introject, to see that it isn't true. Okay? So in other words I don't wanna incorporate the introject. I don't want to get into a whole dialogue with it, that the process is a cutting away and a letting go process.

Second kind of shadow is splitting, it's when the ego splits off. And this usually happens in relation to childhood trauma. And some of you may have heard of things like, you know, your inner wounded child, you know, or your inner child, your inner loving child,

anything that's around an inner child. If we're doing any kind of parts work in psychotherapy where we're working with cells, different parts of the egoic self, what we're working with is parts of our egoic consciousness that got split off due to trauma, and walled off, so that the psychological organism of "me" could continue to grow and develop in a reasonably healthy way.

So if I have a not so good childhood, you know, maybe my parents are not attuned to me, and maybe they're verbally abusive to me, and these sorts of things, then I might at some point take my inner "Keith" and sort of wall him off inside of myself and basically develop a persona on top of that, that helps to protect him. So maybe I'll become the rebel. Right? Which is actually what I did do. Or maybe I'll become someone who's really obedient to authority, or you know, someone who's really aloof or whatever. But the idea is that when there's a split off self and we go into adulthood, we're sort of a fractured whole, because we're not in touch with parts of our whole self.

Oh, and I should say too, the way to work with the split off selves is, that's the work of integration. So if the work of introjects is to let go of the introject, then the work of the splitting self is to actually those selves together. We want to actually make the psyche whole by reparenting our inner child, by taking these cutoff selves and bringing them into to the whole.

And then the third one is projections. So projections, projections are really fascinating. You know, projections are everywhere around us. I mean, if you look at the current news cycle, and you look at the sort of prototypical left and the prototypical, right? What they are mostly doing is projecting onto each other. They're projecting onto this idea that the other side is wrong, the other side is evil, toxic. and the other side really needs to be obliterated or, destroyed. You know, they're just the worst thing possible.

And so, you know, projections are always when we have a part of ourself, a part of our inner self that we are uncomfortable with and that we don't like, and that's in shadow. And then when we see that behavior mirrored out there, we become highly, highly reactive to it. And we want, basically destroy it out in the world. And we wanna destroy it out in the world because we can't tolerate that it's inside of ourselves.

And so, you know, you can see this with a lot of the performative contradictions that abound on the left. Where you'll see people that are, you know, very caring liberals and

they're very concerned about equity and inclusion and fairness, and those are all wonderful things. We should all care about those things. But then they can be really intolerant and unfair and unjust and inequitable to people who don't share opinions just like their own. And that can lead to things like cancel culture and this kind of stuff, a real intolerance.

So that's an example of a projection. So something that's intolerable within, that you see out in the world, and you can't stand it.

And the way to tell if it's a projection or not, if you have a projection or not, is pretty simple.

It's like, if you're like this, if you're really like, "Oh, I just hate that guy," or "I hate that thing," there's at least some projection going on.

Okay, so introject, splitting, projections. Those are the three types of shadows. So how do shadows get created? Well, there's really two ways. The first way is trauma, right?

So 101 is, basically when you have an experience that happens to you, and the experience is so emotionally or physically intense, that you can't metabolize it fully in the moment. And so the experience gets pushed off into shadow, where hopefully it can be fully experienced and integrated later on.

That's basically it. So trauma is tricky, because trauma is subjective, not objective. And by that what I mean is that, you know, you could take two children and one child lives through a war like the second World War, let's say, and grows up and actually doesn't have any trauma. And another child lives through the war, and is highly traumatized by what happens. can be traumatized. The spiritual teacher, Reggie Ray, told a really beautiful story once years ago, about how in the depths of his meditative insight, he had this powerful memory come up of being a very, very, very little baby and being left in his crib for too long. And not like, you know, not abandoned, like left there just a little bit too long, and the feeling in his little baby self of this terror of abandonment. And he tells this crazy story about, you know, seeing this adult version of himself that was all dark, sort of blackened out, sort of walk up the stairs and walk into a room, and it was his seeing

his literal shadow sort of as a psychic projection.

So trauma can happen through overt abuse, you know, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, that can cause severe trauma. but it can also happen with more minor things. You know, if parents just sort of screw up in everyday ways, it can still lead to trauma that needs to be resolved in the adult.

And then how do we know if we have trauma? Well, trauma that's unresolved tends to manifest in things like psychological disorders, anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, other things that are not in the realm of, say, personality disorders, but are in the realm of psychologically distressing things, that can get in the way of and interrupt life, can interrupt your capacity to be in relationship, your capacity to generate money, your capacity to feel fulfilled, your capacity to wanna spend time by yourself, your capacity to be around people and be in social situations.

Sort of anytime that we are feeling like, "I feel a really strong reactivity or anxiety or collapse around things," oftentimes that's pointing to unresolved trauma. So that's one of the ways that we can look for it.

And in my experience, you know, almost all of us are traumatized, at least a little bit. And that doesn't mean we all have to be doing trauma work, but it means, you know, I'm always wary of someone who says something like, "I don't think I have any trauma." To me that's like, you know, woo, red flag. Right? Like huge red flag.

So.

The three kinds of shadow, introjects, splitting, projection, they get created by trauma is one way. And the second way is attachment problems. So unhealthy attachment in say, the first five years of life. And this is really according to Dr. Dan Brown, the brilliant Dr. Dan Brown, who co-wrote a book with Ken Wilber back in the early eighties and who was a, a really brilliant teacher of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, til he passed away about a year ago.

But Dan was a brilliant, brilliant, luminous mind and a brilliant teacher. And I don't know if this is his theory or if he's pulling someone else's theory, but I got this from him, so I'm

just gonna give him credit.

So attachment disorders, when we have attachment disorders, there are five things that we need as children, all of us need as children. And we have to get all five of these things, or it will often lead to an attachment disorder. So the five things are safety and security. So when we're very little, we have to feel safe and secure around our parents.

We have to be attuned to. So attunement is, if little two year old Keith comes into the room and he's upset, but maybe he's hiding it, you know, mom or dad will say like, "oh, hey honey, you seem upset." You know, drop down on a knee, like you know, "Hey, you know, what's going on, you can talk to me." So attunement is the capacity to correctly read and interpret emotional data, and be accurate, right?

So, so like my mother, for instance, was... she very much wanted to be attuned to me, but she was terrible at it, so she would always get the emotion wrong. So then it felt really weird in my little, you know, small self.

The third thing is regulation. So the idea is, children, before we have a prefrontal cortex, children cannot self-regulate their systems. Children cannot self-regulate their systems. So when you see the little kid fall down and like hit knee, or you know, bump his head, and you think, "Ooh...", you know. But you know he's not hurt. Right? It's just, it's just like a little pop. And what do they do? They get up, and they look around and they look around, and they look for their parent, and they're holding everything in. And then they run over to the parent and they start to cry. You know? And then a parent who's good at regulation will say like, "it's okay, you know, I know it hurt. I know it hurt." But they will help regulate the child's nervous system with their own nervous system, so that the anxiety, the fear, the pain, right, the child who can't hold those things on their own, they get to be in a bubble with the parent. And the parent's nervous system, probably based on mirror neurons and things like this, helps to regulate the child's nervous system. ,

And you see this all the time in the animal world, where say like a baby elephant will get spooked by a predator and then it will run up to the mom and the baby elephant will be shaking and shaking, and the mama elephant will just sort of wrap her big body around it. And you'll see the child elephant just calm down. So regulation.

Okay, fourth one, and this one is very rare in the West, most of us don't have this one, no matter how good our parents were. Joy at your existence. So that you, as a little kid come into the room and your parents see you, caregivers see you, there's genuine joy that you're there. Which means they're not too busy, they're not distracted, they're not like, you know, we tend to get so busy in the West, right? I think children can feel sometimes like a burden even when we love them, even when we want them to be around it can be a struggle because we live in an atomistic society, nuclear family, right? So we usually don't have grandma and grandpa and, you know, Uncle Bob and Aunt Joe and everything, living in an extended community so that the kid gets to get the feeling of joy and being wanted by more than just his parents, there's lots of people that can give that.

Fifth and final thing for attachment disorder is the capacity to explore the world on your own and to be trusted for who you are. So one of the problems with, say, helicopter parenting is that it gives the child the impression that they are not trustworthy, that they need mom or dad to hover around them and make sure that they're not gonna hurt themselves.

So attachment: safety, attunement, regulation, joy, exploration / trust. Those are the types. If we don't get those five, and all five, then we almost always end up with being avoidant attachment, which is just like it sounds, means when there's conflict, as an avoidant attachment, I get into a fight with my partner, what do I do? I want to sort of get away from her. I wanna be by myself. I wanna process by myself. What I don't want to do is be in any contact anymore. I want to avoid.

Second one is anxious attachment. Just what it sounds like, right? So it's like, that same conflict, but now I'm anxious instead of avoidant. And then what happens is, I want to rush in and I need to be reassured constantly that I'm okay, that I'm safe, that I'm okay, that I'm safe.

And then there's disorganized attachment. And disorganized attachment is kind of like a combination between the two. So people that have disorganized attachment, like the avoidant, they're kind of distrustful of other people, sort of thinking other people might not be totally trustworthy, but like the anxious, they need to be validated. And so avoidant-anxious people are sort of pulled in two directions. So they might, for instance, create a conflict with someone that they're close to, and then when that person pulls

away, then the disorganized person will sort of rush in after them and try to get them back. So that's sort of disorganized attachment.

So that's an overview of shadow. And I'm not a therapist, guys, so, you know, like take this with a grain of salt. is sort of my layperson's understanding of things. based on a lot of research, but, comprehensive enough that it... really, what I want to point to here is that shadow is complex, the things that cause shadow are complex, because we're very complex creatures and we can have very complex wounding in our egoic self. That's all I'm pointing to.

so now let's move over to the sort of awakening consciousness side of the street. And again, try to take a quick drive by of this just to get a sense of how these things fit together, and then, then I'll open it up for some questions.

So simply put, consciousness is always in relationship to something else. Consciousness is always in relationship to something else. So my egoic consciousness, my sense of Keith-ness, it can be really vast. I can be, you know, having a mystical experience with, you know, every fifth breath or something, right? But a really profoundly spiritual consciousness is still in relationship to Spirit, still in relationship to God, still in relationship to the ethereal or the ancestral realm or the creator. In other words, there's the consciousness that is me and it's in relationship to something else, and that relationship to something else could be my mother, it could be my God. It could be the mystery of the divine universe. It could be my personas, it could be my shadows, it could be my friends, it could be my dog. And again, it could be myself. Consciousness is in relationship to something. That's what defines it. Very simple. And inside of consciousness, we have ego, we have persona, and we have shadow, among a lot of other things.

And the more our consciousness evolves, the more we grow up, the more we can see from consciousness into consciousness. And so we develop a more and more profound capacity to differentiate from the structures of ego and to become more and more self-aware of actually all of the pieces that make us up.

And when we are very, very evolved in our consciousness, we can really see through our personas, we can see our projections in real time. Projection comes outta my mouth, and as the projection's coming out, I go, "wow, that's... I'm projecting." Right? It's

very sophisticated. I can see where myself splits off right away. It's like, oh, look, that's my inner child, you know? And I might say, "Hey, hey buddy, I love you. I'm sorry you're having a hard time." Boom, catch it right away.

Or I might see an introject, you know, I'm doing something and all of a sudden this thought comes in that's like, "boy, you're just really just a piece of shit today." And it's like, "oh yeah. Hey mom. How you doing? Good to hear from you again." You know, I think I'm just gonna let that one go.

So consciousness can get very, very sophisticated. We can get very adept at working with our shadows. We can get very good at being less destructive in the world, because we're able to track a lot of the things that make us normally reactive. And instead of being reactive, we can actually be much more self-aware, choose much better how to react to what's happening to us, and project a lot less.

And then we have awareness. And so if consciousness is in relation to something, awareness, awakening, enlightenment is in relationship to nothing. Awareness just is.

Inside this field of awareness, which we're all residing in right now, there's timelessness, there's vastness, there's suchness. And sitting in this space, I can watch, or I should say awareness can watch I, see it's tricky, language is very tricky here. Awareness can watch as I come into existence, as the "I" that is Keith, with this beautifully sophisticated consciousness, with all of these shadows, awareness watches as Keith comes into existence. And inside of the unfolding of Keith is also all of the wonderful things that he can see.

And so the really advanced practitioners in the world have a profound capacity to rest in awareness, as awareness. When this happens, the insight that "we don't awaken" is perfectly obvious, right? Keith doesn't awaken. Junpo doesn't awaken. Adyashanti doesn't awaken. Ken Wilber doesn't awaken. The Dalai Lama doesn't awaken. Right? Awakening awakens. An awakening is already awake. And that's why in spirituality, all the teachers are saying the same damn thing all the time, which is "you have what you seek".

In Zen they call it the gateless gate, right? And when you realize this for yourself, you realize it seemed like you had to walk through a gate. And on the other side of the gate, there's enlightenment. But when you walk through the gate, you see there was never a gate there in the first place. That awareness is just aware. And that awareness includes everything and the manifest and unmanifest universe, including all of your little precious ego.

Okay, so why do teachers keep screwing up? So my theory, my premise, is that one of the reasons that teachers, highly advanced teachers, keep screwing up... sort of two things. One is that they're just not aware of things like shadow, trauma, and attachment. So there's just simply an egoic ignorance of those things. Certainly that was the case with a lot of Tibetan teachers. And I recently saw a talk between Gabor Maté the Canadian physician who wrote *In the Realm of the Hungry Ghost*, brilliant book. And Gabor was talking to Adyashanti, and he really gave a Adyashanti quite a bit of shit for being uninformed around trauma. And in Gabor Maté's view, sort of setting participants in retreats up to experience trauma in the quiet of meditation. And then Adyashanti's staff and people, not really being trauma-informed, not really knowing what to do. And it was a very lively discussion. It's on YouTube, I think if you just googled "Adyashanti Gabor Maté interview" it would probably come up. It's about an hour long. Very, very, very interesting conversation.

So one reason that spiritual teachers don't operate around an understanding of shadow, trauma, attachment is because they just, they don't know. No one's told them.

The other reason that's more complicated, is that if I reside in awareness, as awareness, from this place, from this seat, there's no problem. Everything is as it is, and it can be no other way. And it can be very hard to see shadow arising, because the ego can't see it, and because I'm so disidentified with my egoic self anyway, the shit show that is me just arises and falls away like the clouds arise and fall away. And so it can be very hard to see the things that you really need to see with your consciousness, not with your awareness. Awareness isn't going to do shadow work. Consciousness is.

So final piece. So I have, what I say, there's five ways that we can understand and integrate sex, shadow, and awakening. Here are the five.

Number one, we need to understand and avoid spiritual bypassing. And I'm gonna go ahead and read a quote from Junpo Roshi, my teacher, because it's really profound. I asked him, when I interviewed him one time, I said, "Junpo, you became a Roshi in the early nineties, and then the first thing you did was you started doing psychological shadow work. Why?'

And here's what he said.

"Because I was a fraud. There was nowhere to hide. In 1992, when recognized as a so-called Zen master, I had to face the fact that, in my case, Zen was just not working effectively, not for me or for many others. I had insights, but I wasn't free. I had a lot of psychological damage from my upbringing, and Zen simply hadn't touched it. I could transcend it, true, with my will, but the damage was still intact and mostly untouched. I didn't know if that was just my problem, or if it was something that was common in the larger Buddhist community.

I saw with my six years in the monastery, a lot of psychological shadows of myself, but also in the men and women training with me in other spiritual communities, and in Eido Shimano himself." That was Junpo's teacher. "But how widespread it was, and what it meant, I could only guess at. How come after decades of practice, real wisdom and compassion were not ruling my life, directing my behavior, and transforming lust, anger, jealousy, envy. How could love and compassion not hold in the face of my internal conflict?" And here's the really key phrase, this is the definition of spiritual bypassing. Junpo:

"I could remain non-reactive in the face of these things, but it was a very repressive energy that was required, and my negative emotions still flourished. And they would sometimes overpower my discipline and my insight. Why? How? I had to know.

Okay, so, first point is we have to understand and avoid spiritual bypassing, and that's what spiritual bypassing is.

Second way, we have to tell the truth and demand the truth. Very simple. One of the things that I find really effing irritating about almost all spiritual teachers today, is they

don't talk about when they screw up, they don't.

Adyashanti never talks about, like, "oh, I, you know, I kicked a dog the other day," or "geez, you know, I, this guy caught me off in traffic and I had a meltdown." And maybe he's above it. maybe he doesn't have it, but I just don't believe it. And so when spiritual teachers don't tell us about their egoic struggles, it's a problem, cuz it causes us to project onto them, which I'll get to.

And the other thing is this. When a teacher screws up, and all teachers screw up, they need to tell the truth. They need to tell the truth, "I screwed up, this is what happened, this is how I'm gonna clean it up, and this is what I learned from it." As students, as members of a sangha or a spiritual community, we have to demand that our teachers, our elders, those in positions of authority, that they are held accountable to the truth when they screw up. Don't let somebody sweep it under the rug. Okay? Tell the truth.

Third point, awareness can't awaken what it can't see. So I just talked about consciousness and awareness. So if I have a really deep spiritual awakening when I'm 22, and I mostly reside in awareness, and then my ego isn't really something that I interface with much, awareness can't awaken what it can't see. Which means if there's a lot of shadow in that ego, awareness can't awaken it, period.

The process of residing and awareness means I can actually metabolize and let go of anything in my consciousness. But not shadow, cuz I can't see it.

And the example I like to give is that, here in the 21st century, we are aware of lots of cultures around the world. Most of us are aware that our culture is just one of many cultures and we are embedded in a cultural worldview. It's the water in which we swim. But some of us can kind of see the water a little bit. If you go back to 17th century Japan, when Japan was completely isolated, xenophobic, closed borders, and you talk to a "fully awakened" Japanese Zen master, they would not be able to see through the constructs of their culture, they would be as embedded in their culture as any fundamentalist. Because they can't awaken what they can't see. Period.

Okay. Fourth point, watch out for spiritual inflation. So I said this before, but we don't awaken, our spiritual identity doesn't awaken, awakening awakens. And we can't be

special and awake. We can't be opinionated and liberated, and we can't hold on to a spiritual identity if we are truly awakened. All these things go straight out the window. It's not possible. You can't be special and awake. You can't. Can't be opinionated and awake. You can't. So if you have those things and you think you're really spiritual, just watch out. You got some spiritual inflation going on.

Fifth and final point, it's up to you. It's up to us. So we really have to watch out for our golden shadows when it comes to our spiritual teachers. Golden shadows, golden projection. "Hey, my teacher's perfect. They're more or less human than me or anybody else, they are divine. Ah, they're so special, it's like they're not really human." You know, these are all projections, golden projections. It's not true. All right? They may have deeper insight than you. They may have more knowledge than you. They may be a more skilled communicator than you. But they are human, just as human as you. They were born, and they will die, guaranteed. And they're gonna make mistakes, and they're gonna have shadows, so they're gonna screw things up.

So it's up to us. It's up to us to hold our teachers accountable by not allowing a golden projection that they're above us, that they're better than us. Okay?

So the five points, I'll just say 'em again. The five ways to understand and integrate sex, shadow, and awakening:

Understand and avoid spiritual bypassing.

Tell the truth. Demand the truth.

Awareness can awaken what it can't see.

Be aware of spiritual inflation.

And it's up to us.

So that's it. So before I go to questions, I will say, if you're interested in what I just talked about, I wrote a single standalone piece that's on my website, KeithMartinSmith.com,

and you go to my homepage, it'll pop right up and all this stuff is in there, exactly what I talked about today. So if you feel like, wow, I really wish I'd written all this down or something, go there, it's all written down.

All right, that's what I got. So, uh, any questions? So to remind you, you can look on your bottom bar there and you can press, I think, "call in", something like that. And that would let me see you.

It would turn on your camera. You can also chat me a question and if you chat me a question, I'll read the question out loud and I'll, I'll do my best to answer it.

Okay, so Neil has a question, and his question is how to differentiate between introjection and genuine feedback from someone.

Okay. Genuine feedback would be in the realm of being constructive and it would come from outside of you. So an introject always comes from the inside. So I'm gonna tell myself some version of "you're an awful human being." An introject is gonna have sort of a nasty... an introject is gonna be something that you would tell yourself that you would never tell a really close friend of yours. That might be a good way to frame it. Like, even if my really good friend is screwing up, I'm not gonna say to him like, "boy you're really effed up." I might say, "Hey man, you know, some of your behavior is kinda problematic for me. Can we talk about it?" So if you had a voice that arose in you that said, "Hey Neil, you know, the way you just talked to that guy, that's a little problematic." That's not an introject. That would be part of your intelligent egoic construct giving you a little tap on the shoulder. Does that make sense?

All right. We got a call coming in here. Hello!

[00:35:46] **Varun:** Hello.

[00:35:47] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Is it Varun? Is that correct pronunciation?

[00:35:50] **Varun:** Yes, that's correct nice to meet you. I always lead with saying I'm slightly anxious. I've had, I've had these thyroid issues, hormonal problems, and, uh, I

was, uh, we were talking with Reverend Bu Nan Brown, who is kind of saying that these things can have like a somatic or psychosomatic cause. And my parents, without going too deep, uh, into this, but my parents were quite repressive. They were Indian, they were like career focused. They never talked to me. Quite neglectful and like not, uh, super affectionate or anything, and just like, " and just do well in class and like, that's it. You know? Like you have food and like a shirt on your back. So just do that. You're in a nice place. Like, I don't know what to talk to you about, emotions or anything." So I always was quite neglected and I just read books and then I hung out with friends and did like, did all sorts nonsense, like, you know, going out and drinking and all sort nonsense.

[00:36:43] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

[00:36:43] **Varun:** And so I've always had these more of these like sort of like friends values. One thing though, uh, to make this a question is that when I was say, um, not to get like too heavy, but when I was a teen I had like some experiences like sort of, uh, you know, like girls and stuff like this. And then I guess, it was always a thing with my parents not being affectionate, that I was always obsessing about the opposite sex and always trying to be more like lovable. And so I got into all of this horrible dating advice and like a little bit of the pickup stuff in my twenties and stuff and all that. I was always very much into that, trying to like build attractiveness, attractiveness, attractiveness. And I find that developing like positive habits, or trying to develop, and I don't find myself very attractive now cause like I'm, I'm fat and I have like, hormone issues is like, is a mess. But isn't it that if we are trying to develop ourselves in a positive way, doesn't it tend to be like a kind of a spiritual thing at the end of the day. Cause I think that even Corey, like Corey deVos in an article he wrote, he said that Eros or like the natural, like evolutionary path of things is kind of like a expansion and sort of like the, the universe expanding, kind of like love in a way.

So is it possible that in trying to do that just like become like more likable or like develop myself and that kind of things that I'm going in, in a spiritual direction? And my question here also would be, to make it a question so having this experience when I was a teen, I've always been trying to go back to that one experience. But I mean, when I, and to make this a question, I'm sure I have a lot of things. I never kick dogs or do anything like that. I'm sure Adyashanti doesn't kick his dog and stuff.

[00:38:21] **Keith Martin-Smith:** I mean, it would be, it would be pretty surprising that, that's obviously a sort of a metaphor

[00:38:27] **Varun:** Eckhart Tolle...

[00:38:28] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Wouldn't that be surprising? Like...

[00:38:33] **Varun:** ... just like he's tired of being so perfect,

[00:38:35] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Right!

[00:38:35] **Varun:** Like, but I don't feel like I do anything that bad. And when I go to like regular church, like everybody looks at me kind of like I'm a saint. They're like, I gotta find something wrong with you. Like there's, and like, I'm like, I'm not that, I'm not that perfect or anything, like I mess up and stuff, but I'm just like more flexible about things. And I feel like I want to just for myself, yourself, just try and, and, and, you know, make the right moves and, and stuff and do like, like that.

But then I probably have shadow, I probably have shadow, cause I had quite a lot of addiction around this whole, like opposite sex, like sex addiction kind of thing and all of that. And so, that's what resulted in the 10 years now of the, like these hormone problems. So that's been like a massive pain. So it's like obviously building up from a lot of like past trauma and like childhood trauma and stuff like that. But is it possible that like now, like I am perfect? Like I'm, I'm joking, but...

[00:39:30] **Keith Martin-Smith:** so, okay, so let me interrupt you cuz because it's a lot of content. So let's,

[00:39:33] **Varun:** Yeah, I'm kidding. I'm just kidding.

[00:39:34] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Yeah, yeah. So, And actually I wanna actually start with that last point. So from view of awareness, yes you are perfect. From the view of awareness, everything in the manifest universe is perfect as it is. Everything, right? It's perfect because it exists. That includes war, it includes genocide, right? It includes all

the really hard things from the view of awareness. If it exists, it exists, right? There is no moral right and wrong when we rest in awareness. There's just isness, right? It's the human mind that values. My teacher Junpo used to say, God does not share your valuations. Right? In other words, God doesn't share your morality. So I would, you made that as a joke, but I would say yes and no.

Secondly, you know, you called yourself fat, and I would say that's probably an introject, right? That if I was your close friend and I was struggling with a thyroid issue, and you came up to me and, you know, Varun came to Keith and he was like, "Hey Keith, you know, you're, you're pretty fat man." I am sure I would be really wounded, and like, "Hey, I've got a medical condition. I'm doing the best I can, I'm working on it." So I'm just noticing that that was probably an introject by you, you know, a self judgment.

And then the last thing you said is, you know, is work on the self spiritual? And that's a yes and no. It depends on how we define spiritual. If we define spiritual as the capacity to rest in awareness, as awareness, then no, not really. That would be work in the consciousness realm, which helps you better understand your consciousness. But some people define spirituality as high spiritual states, you know, mystical states and transcendental states, you know, in which you're still in relationship to something, like the Godhead. Right? So in that sense, yeah, it could be spiritual. It just depends, that's where an integral semiotics can be really important. So we can sort of, we get clear on what do you mean by spiritual? What do I mean by spiritual? And then we can actually answer the question.

[00:41:30] **Varun:** Okay, I understand. Okay. And I won't take up too much time here, but uh, I guess there's like flow states and things like that, so it, it could be like maybe defined as spiritual if you're trying to achieve a flow state or like if some sports person is doing in a flow state, it could be said to be spiritual.

I think Nomali as well was saying that, um, if you're good in a cognitive, in a certain line of development, at very high levels, it's kind of spiritual as well.

[00:41:58] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Uh, yeah. Again, it depends how we define spiritual. So, if we define spiritual as the highest states of a line of intelligence, then the answer would be yes. Again, I'm from a Zen perspective, we would say no. We would say no, the only thing that's "spiritual" is your capacity to rest in awareness as awareness, period. But

Zen is a little on the extreme side, you know, so it depends how we define things.

And I know Ken and the integral folks tend to define the highest rungs of, as I understand, any line of intelligence, uh, you know, cognitive, emotional, relational, nature-based, whatever. You know, all those highest levels are gonna be "spiritual". But it just depends how we define the word.

[00:42:37] **Varun:** Oh, okay. Thank you so much.

[00:42:39] **Keith Martin-Smith:** And go easy on yourself, man.

[00:42:41] **Varun:** Thank you so much. You know what? My parents were really hard on me, and

[00:42:44] **Keith Martin-Smith:** And now you're being hard on you. Right. That's, that's how it works.

[00:42:47] **Varun:** So true.

[00:42:48] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Yeah, of course, of course. It got into you. So...

[00:42:52] **Varun:** You gotta be self-compassionate. All right. And, I won't take up more time, but I just really found interesting what you said about consciousness and awareness and them not being the same thing. So I've always been asking myself that, should I just rest in awareness or be present? I have a hard time managing the anxiety and functioning. So even now I'm trying to do things in like manual. So, like, usually I'm just in automatic, I'm just like switch my brain off in habits. But, um,

[00:43:19] **Keith Martin-Smith:** So let me give you one tip there, okay? So, consciousness can't go and "get" awareness. Awareness is already here. So all we do is, we have to release and surrender into what's already present. There's no doing, there's no doing. Anytime we're doing, we're playing the ego game. So all we do is...

[00:43:39] **Varun:** Always non-doing.

[00:43:41] **Keith Martin-Smith:** Always non-doing. It's the only way to get here. that, that's seeking mind, right? Seeking mind, right? But then we actually have to eventually rest in non-seeking mind. So it's the thing of what got you onto the meditation cushion, which is seeking mind, is not gonna help you rest in awareness as awareness.

Anyway Varun, let's see if, uh, we get anybody else on here to get a question. Okay, brother. Thank you very much.

Alright, so Phyllis asked, "do you see a developmental process from transcendental spiritual states to the capacity to rest in awareness as awareness?" So, do you see a developmental process from transcendental spiritual states to the capacity to rest in awareness as awareness. So, boy, is that a big question. I spoke to Terri O'Fallon about this, maybe two months ago. So if you're really interested in that conversation, Phyllis, I would suggest you go back, uh, and watch me and Terri's two conversations on Integral Life, we really get into that a lot. So I would say, Terry's model and my personal experience line up here, which is that I've noticed that as I continue to do the growing up process, and my ego continues to develop and unfold, I find that I'm able to access emptiness and awareness through my egoic structures rather than tangentially to my egoic structures.

So, in other words, than having a state experience of non-duality that's separate from my Keith-ness, those experiences are happening within my egoic structure. The language is a little tricky for me cuz it's, it, these are really difficult things to find, language to describe. But I would say yes, I do see a developmental process for transcending spiritual states, to rest in awareness, as awareness. It seems to me that there is a capacity to do that as part of the evolving of the egoic self. In Terri O'Fallon's model, that would be her her fifth stage.

So Osama said, where to draw the line between holding elders accountable and being stubborn and egoic myself?" Where to draw the line between holding elders accountable and being stubborn, and egoic myself? Well, to me, if I'm understanding that question correctly, Osama, I would say that holding elders accountable, we wanna make sure that we're not projecting. So if I'm holding my teacher accountable, and I'm really pissed off at them, "I can't effing believe that they failed me. It's totally effed up,"

you know, and I'm just, I'm thrown off by it completely. Well, I'm projecting a golden shadow onto them, and I'm probably projecting my own disgust at my own human failings onto them. And so it makes their mistake intolerable to me, and it makes me despotic when I go after them, right? "How dare you fail?" And so there, I would say that would be of stubborn and egoic on the part of the person doing it. I'm not sure if that's what you mean by the question. Let me know if I, if that answers it or make a clarification if I didn't.

Great. Okay. All right. So maybe, maybe one more question, if anyone has one.

Okay. So Osama asked a follow up question, which also on the other hand, what would holding them accountable look like? So it's a, it's a good question. So to me, that comes up to point number two in my five ways to understand and integrate sex, shadow, and awakening. And the second point is tell the truth. Demand the truth.

So in my experiences with Junpo Roshi, my teacher, Junpo had a lot of shadow. He had a lot of narcissistic wounding, uh, he got the shit beat out of him as a kid. His dad used to just beat him bloody, a really horrific, horrific abuse for him and his brothers. And it created a lot of shadow. His mom never protected him against dad. Dad was a bad alcoholic, bad drunk, traumatized from the second World War, what he experienced. So Junpo would not infrequently do things in shadow, and we would have to call him out and say "that behavior is not acceptable, it's shadow." And uh, sometimes he would be unwilling and unable to come to us and meet us in a place of saying, "tell me what you see. You're probably right." So in other words, sometimes he would get defensive. Most of the time, 80% of the time, at least in my experience of him, he would say, "shit, all right, what do you see?" You know? And then you would tell him and he would say, you know, "Oh God." You know? "Yeah. All right. That's probably my, you know, , that's my narcissism coming back in." And so we would be able to work it as a community, be able to work it in the public by telling the truth, demanding the truth.

So a spiritual teacher, you know, they may not always be able to see that they're in shadow. It's okay. I can't always see that I'm in shadow. It's only a problem if they're going out there pretending like they're really better than the rest of us. Right? This is where Andrew Cohen in the EnlightenNext community got into a lot of trouble. Andrew Cohen had a lot of narcissistic wounding, like Junpo, and he had a lot of shadow, and he was really unwilling to look at it. And, you know, it ended up blowing his community

apart, literally, like the community blew apart because his shadows were strong enough and dark enough that they ended up making the community very cultish and toxic on a certain level, until it just blew apart.

So you could hold your teacher accountable, it might not go right, and as I said to the previous question, you wanna be real clear about your own projections, your own shit.

Let me know if that answers the question, Osama. And uh, okay. We've got, we've got one more question here, we're on a roll.

So Stephanie asked, " what processes, practices do you recommend to address shadow?" Stephanie, that's a great question. Again, I'm not a therapist, but what I understand to be really true about shadow work is that we have to be clear on what we're doing work on, are we doing work on introjects? Because introjects require that I get out the voice of, say, my mother. Like the call-in, Varun I think his name was, pardon me if that's not correct. I think it was Varun. But he was saying, you know, his parents were really hard on him, and then he called himself fat. And like, so that's an introject.

So if he was working with a therapist, it would be someone who was good at working with getting rid of these introjects that got put into you.

Which is different than a split self. If I have a split self problem, if I never cry, if I'm a man and I never, ever, ever cry or a woman and I never, ever, ever cry, right? I can guarantee that I have a split off child that's disowned and hiding in my psyche somewhere. And so there I have to do the work of integration. It's integration shadow work, where I have to work with someone, do parts work, you know, figure out how to maybe change my chair and, you know, talk as the wounded child, you know, I feel really scared, I feel wounded, and then go over here and, you know, talk as the adult and you know, and you do this kind of work, which helps you to integrate these cells.

And then the work around projection, and the projection is, sort of a combination of the two, but it's basically like, where do I... you know, if I really hate Donald Trump, I hate Donald Trump, or I hate Joe Biden, or, you know, whatever person is, if it's this really strong emotion, the work is what do you find intolerable in yourself? What does Trump remind you of? Does he remind you of your dad? Does he remind you of a part of

yourself? You know, where is the extreme emotional reaction coming from? And you could free yourself of that by working with the right therapist.

So it's important. According to Kim Barta, as I mentioned who I talked to last week, it's really important that your therapist understand the difference between those three types of shadows, and have tools to work on those three kinds of shadows. Because if they try to integrate a projection, or they try to integrate an introject, that it's kind of the wrong work.

Okay, everybody, we are at the top of the hour here. It was really fun talking about these things. I hope you enjoyed it. I'm, again, you know, this guy, I get into this in a lot of detail in my book, *When the Buddha Needs Therapy*. So here's... if you want the deep dive, pick up the book and, you know, feel free to shoot me an email, you know, my, through my website, I always respond. I'd, love to know what you think, if it's helpful, you know, there's a lot of examples. There's things are really broken out in great detail, and if you want to get into it faster or you want to just relive this whole thing, as I said on my website, KeithMartinSmith.com, there's an essay, it's pretty long, but it covers everything I talked about today and has everything mapped out. Introjects, projections, the five ways to understand and integrate sex, shadow, and awakening. So it's all there if you want it.

Okay. And, thank you everybody. I appreciate your devotion and dedication to being on this path with me. It's an honor to be here, it's an honor to share what I love, what I love doing, what I love talking about. So I'll see you all in a month.