

Shadow Work

Is Your Shadow Undermining Your Path to Sacred Union?

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Shadow Work Is Your Shadow Undermining Your Path to Sacred Union?

We seek heaven on earth, to return to paradise, because our hearts remember the beauty and sacredness of our own wholeness and our own divinity. And yet, as we seek beauty, we often ignore the descent to our inner and under worlds. We have forgotten that to discover wholeness is to bridge the worlds of the upper and the lower. We ignore the call of our own shadow, seeking healing and union. This we can't escape, for the shadow lives in the heart. The path to paradise is a step up and a step down the Tree of Life, a step forward and a step backward being the living bridge to the primal world and the Divine realm.

About this e-book

The first section of this mini e-book offers two stories of Maggie and Serena and their personal shadow work. You may find you relate to some if not all of their story.

The last part of the book offers eight steps to healing your shadow. You'll find examples of each step clearly demonstrated in Serena's story. It's best to work with each step one day at a time giving yourself 15-30 minutes to contemplate and meditate. Have a pen and special journal ready. The steps apply to any shadow work, not just regarding sacred union.

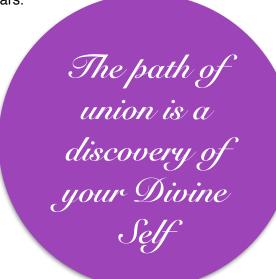
Blessings on your beautiful journey!

Sacred Union

It's our desire and our continual longing for intimacy and union with our beloved that motivates us to walk the path to sacred union. Our hearts remember melting and dissolving into the sea of love as our bodies drop away and we bare our soul to another. The gentle kisses and the soft caresses that open the doorway to our innermost sanctuary where our own divinity is revealed. Without desire, we wouldn't forge ahead through the unknown wilderness where we meet face to face with our deepest fears.

Our deep desire for union is ultimately with our God/ Goddess self where we experience our true blueprint - our Divine selves that transcend both our personality and our individuality. The place where we become the living bridge for the ultimate union of heaven and earth.

The pathway to union with another involves union within ourselves. Every aspect of ourselves we encounter requires our love so that we can become whole human beings. This is where understanding **shadow work** is important. The union of self is learning how to embrace and heal your shadow aspects so you can become whole. It is a path that leads us back home to our true selves.



So what is your shadow?

Your shadow is the parts of you that have been wounded and misunderstood. Another term for it, that I adopted from Ekhardt Tolle, is your "pain body". It's a part or parts of yourself that when wounded was not tended to. This part of you still hurts and will express itself negatively, as the shadow aspect, undermining the life you desire until it is healed.

What's tricky is that you do not experience this part of yourself as being separate. The voice of your shadow becomes your thoughts and your actions that you're completely unaware of. It becomes your story that gets acted out in your life over and over again.

If we don't acknowledge our shadow, we continue to struggle, feel disappointed, believe we're just unlucky or blame it on someone else. We need to be committed and curious to know our true selves and to heal our shadow, and only then can we close the book on our old story in which we've been the star of for far too long.

While many of you may feel your shadow remains a mystery, trust me, it's no mystery. Just because it's called 'your shadow' doesn't mean it's hiding in the dark. Your shadow self is actively intervening in your relationships, your career and undermining your overall happiness. What IS hiding, is the beauty and the power that is the real you.

In regards to **sacred union**, we choose partners that mirror to us our beauty as well as our shadow. I tell my clients that being in a relationship is the fast track to healing. The honeymoon phase of a relationship only lasts so long before we begin to experience our shadow selves. When we understand this process and see it as a journey of discovery and learning more about ourselves, then we can approach this phase with curiosity and wonder rather than fear and a desire to walk away.

My Introduction to Shadow Work

My first understanding of shadow work came about during a visit to a stone circle in northern England. I was with nine other women and we rode a small bus up a winding, tree-lined road far from the village below. Pulling off to the side of the road, we got out of the bus and climbed over an old, moss-covered stone wall. Ahead of us was an ancient stone circle. We walked into the center of the circle and while holding hands, began to sing and dance. I closed my eyes in order to tune into the subtle energies and feel the beauty of the ancient place. In my mind's eye, standing in front of me, staring at me, was an image of a skinny, gaunt-looking woman. I shuddered and turned away. She was not what I wanted to experience in this magical place. I returned my focus back to our singing, but again she appeared, this time with paler skin and ruby, red eyes. Again I turned away, getting increasingly more frustrated. This was not the experience I was wanting to have. The woman appeared again, each time looking more and more horrific.

I realized turning away was only making her appear worse. As soon as I made the decision not to turn away, I felt a presence that at the time, felt like my higher self. She stood behind me and with her arms outstretched, taking hold of my hands, we embraced the terrifying woman in front of me(us) gently caressing her cold, pale skin and telling her how beautiful she was. Her monstrous appearance melted away revealing a young woman - her pale, gaunt skin turned to rosy, plump flesh, her scraggly hair turned into a lustrous mane and her ruby red eyes turned

into a pool of sapphire. She was the forgotten treasure, reclaimed from the dark corners of my psyche.

I experienced this at the very beginning of my training. It laid the foundation for my shadow work as I dove deeper into the mysteries in the years to come. The message was very clear - *embrace your shadow*. This was an important message for me. The shamanic practices I read about before beginning my training in the mysteries, taught how to fight demons and dispel darkness. The concept of *embracing* and transmuting darkness contradicted many shamanic practices, but to me, *embracing* felt true to my heart.

Case Studies

Here are two case studies of women working with their shadow to heal. They are both driven to heal themselves because of their desire for sacred union.

Meet Maggie(a case study)

Maggie had been with her partner for two years. Just before they started dating, she had read several books on Tantra and attended a class on sacred sexuality and feminine power. When she first met her partner, she was excited to find someone to explore this path with, but two years later, she was pretty discouraged. This is when she called me.

"I need help opening up to my sacred sexuality," she said.

I asked her what it was about sacred sexuality that she was most drawn to. She was very open and honest.

"I can't really explain why, but it's a feeling of power that I want, I guess. That, and union with my partner," she said.

I asked her to tell me about her partner. She shared how much she loved him and that their lives worked really well together in many ways. However, lately, his tendency to not listen to her or respect her needs even with the simplest of things was starting to really upset her. She said he is very set in his ways, and kind of stubborn. I asked her what ways she didn't feel listened to and she explained to me that whenever she asked him to do something around the house or to take his shoes off when he came in, he either seemed to forget or it was too inconvenient for him in the moment. She also said that she feels like he's the one in charge of everything.

"I've tried asking him nicely and talking with him how important it is to me and I even hung up a sign by the door to remind him," she said sounding exasperated. "But this feels really off topic from sacred sexuality," she said apologetically.

I assured her she was on course.

"How do you feel sacred sexuality will help your relationship?" I asked. Maggie was so honest that she was wonderful to work with and I knew we could make great progress. She shared with me that she felt if her partner experienced her power as a goddess in sacred sexuality, then he would 'see' her and have respect for her.

"Aaaah yes, I said. That is a very common belief. You are not alone with that thinking. However, it's backwards," I said.

I explained to her that respect needs to come first. This was a "light bulb" moment for Maggie and she completely got how backwards her thinking was. She also soon realized her deep belief that if she was good, she would get what she wanted. Too many times she didn't stand up for herself, avoiding conflict at all cost, trying to please her boyfriend and thinking way more about his needs than her own. And her boyfriend, unconsciously, was mirroring this back to her.

It was clear that one of the reasons Maggie was drawn to the power of sacred sexuality was because she wasn't connected to her power in any other way. Essentially, she believed her anger was bad and not spiritual. A big realization of a very old family pattern.

Maggie jumped right to her underlying belief that was preventing her from being really grounded. By avoiding conflict, she was avoiding being truly present and instead lived in a dreamworld. This is very common for anyone who is afraid of anger, standing up for themselves and being in their power.

I explained to Maggie that the path to sacred union and the intimacy she was longing for starts on the physical plane.

Being grounded, expressing your feelings, and being present in every situation in your life would help her to grow towards what she wanting. Essentially, she needed to get in touch with her wild woman self.

Let your Wild

Woman self
dance and sing
and enjoy the
pleasures of your
body!

was

I guided Maggie into a meditation to connect with her wild woman. I told her to imagine she was meeting a sister or a friend who was passionate and powerful and wasn't afraid to say what she was feeling. As she called in her wild woman self, she felt both fear and judgment. I encouraged her to explore the judgment and as she did, she recognized herself as a little girl who never really stood up for what she believed in. She was always trying to make everyone happy and be the "good girl".

This is a common "split" between our spiritual self and our wild woman self. To be spiritual is to be good and obedient and refrain from any type of feelings that are deemed negative. We banish our power to the shadows of our psyche and we aren't living authentically.

As Maggie began to realize the judgement she held towards being the type of woman who speaks her mind and expresses herself, tears pooled in her eyes as she felt an emptiness and a longing to reconnect with her wild woman self.

This was a beautiful moment of softening and opening and embracing this part of herself and she realized that she needed to find her voice, express her feelings and free her wild woman.

Maggie had a lot of work ahead of her that required her to be present and face her fears of conflict and expressing her feelings. She did a wonderful job moving through this process, but the real work was going to come when she returned home.

We imagined a number of scenarios between her and her boyfriend and different ways to respond that would be more true to what she was feeling. I also suggested her talking to her boyfriend about what she was working on so he would understand her process. Since she loved to dance, I suggested she spend time dancing(maybe even bellydancing!) alone as a way to connect to her wild woman. This was going to be a process for Maggie and not something that was going to happen overnight. She already felt so much more grounded and was on her way to standing in her power.

I frequently work with clients who are on the path to sacred union and there's confusion around the *art of surrendering*. They tap into the feeling of surrender when it comes to opening up to their goddess energy during intimate/sexual moments, but they often surrender in moments when they need to wield their sword and speak their truth. We have to be able to stand in our power to cultivate safety for ourselves in our relationships. Once safety is established for both the woman and the man, then you can allow yourself to surrender and be vulnerable.

Meet Serena(a case study)

Serena is a spiritual seeker. She's taken several transformational coaching programs and has worked with a variety of healers offering a wide-range of healing experiences. While her interests lead her in many different directions to creating a life of passion and purpose, her main desire is for sacred union with her husband and the spiritual initiation of the Sacred Marriage. She's read many books and articles about the subject and it speaks to her heart completely. It's a path she's fully committed to.

You can imagine the level of frustration she carries after working so hard towards this, knowing so much and yet, feeling so far away from experiencing union. She feels blocked when it comes to her husband and fears their passion is dwindling. If she can't experience union with her husband then how can she experience the Sacred Marriage? This was her question.

When Serena came and talked with me, she was tired of trying to figure this out. She felt really blocked and felt like her husband had a wall around him that was impenetrable. No matter what she tried, nothing changed her experience. She desired an intimate connection and to experience the magical union she had learned so much about. She was grief-stricken that it just wasn't working for her.

Without openly blaming her husband for the situation, Serena was holding him responsible. So the first step was to take full responsibility for **her** experience and begin to unearth her core beliefs.

After taking some time breathing into her pain, she realized that she was also blaming herself for not being perfect. She was pretty hard on herself. She also recognized a pattern that had been passed down from the women in her family - the belief that it was her responsibility to tend to her husband's needs all on her own. This was great insight. Serena had let go of this pattern in so many other aspects of her relationship long ago. Her husband helped with the kids, cooking and cleaning the house, so you can imagine Serena's surprise when she recognized this pattern showing up again in their sexual/spiritual aspect of their relationship.

Serena surrendered the need to be perfect and the belief that she was responsible for creating a sacred, sexual experience with her husband all on her own. It takes two to tango!

Now Serena was excited to go deeper. Her eagerness to learn more about herself came pretty naturally to her. She effortlessly aligned with the archetypal Hero and dove right in. We identified her area of struggle as she worked with "the wall" she felt around her husband. She described it as an impenetrable wall that shut her heart down. I asked her if there was any other area in her life where she encountered this experience. It was the most pronounced with her husband as it always is with our most intimate experiences, but she said she also noticed that she didn't experience as much joy in her life as she felt she could.

Your Outer
experience is a
mirror to your
inner world.

"A little bit of dullness," she said. As Serena sat with this for a moment, her eyes began to fill with tears and she said, "I don't think I've ever experienced joy and intimacy with a man. I've never felt truly safe!"

This was a big moment for Serena as she discovered her core struggle, feeling safe.

She realized that she made up countless excuses as to why she couldn't connect deeply with her husband and that it actually was coming from her feeling unsafe. I asked her if she was aware of any voice in her head that perhaps became louder the closer she got to connecting with her husband. She thought about this, breathing deep into her belly. I reminded her that she would hear the "voice" as her own thoughts.

"Yes!" She exclaimed after a few minutes pondering my question. "I am constantly questioning whether he's the right person for me. I wonder if I've made a mistake and I begin to convince myself that I'll never have what I want with him."

This was a huge moment for Serena as she discovered the voice of her shadow.

"Serena," I said, "Let's imagine that the voice is coming from someone else. Who do you see or imagine the voice coming from?" Serena closed her eyes.

"I see an angry and scared little girl," she said.

Another big moment. Identifying the wounded self by creating separation is important for the healing process.

"Serena, what would your response be to any little girl or your own daughter if she was angry and scared?" I asked.

Being a mother, it was easy for Serena to shift into the role of the archetypal mother and embrace the little girl that was her wounded self. I guided Serena into a meditation where she asked her little girl self what she needed to feel safe.

Establishing a parent/child relationship with your wounded self is a way to give yourself what the wounded part of you needs. Nurturing, love, safety, expression.

Serena had an incident when she was about three years old with her father and even though she was aware of her wounding and had done so much work with her relationship with her father, she hadn't truly understood how it was effecting her deepest desire to have an intimate, sacred connection with her husband. She never realized till this moment that she didn't feel safe and the wall that she encountered with her husband was actually her own wall that she built up every time she started to get close to her husband. The wall was built by her own thoughts of whether or not she had made a mistake and thinking that he just wasn't right for her.

"Serena, let's take a look at the moments where 'her' voice is convincing you that your husband may not be the right person and where you begin to create a wall of protection. Knowing that this is the voice of your wounded little girl, what would your response look like?" I asked.

"Well, I think as soon as I hear this, instead of believing the words and backing away, I would talk to myself or my little girl self, my wounded self, and tell her that she's okay. That she wants this too and that I'm going to make sure she's kept safe," responded Serena.

"That's great. How do you feel about inviting your husband in on this process? Is there anything you can think of to ask him to do that would help you to feel safe?" I asked.

This is always an important step to shadow work and healing. By looking at the moments in which our wounded selves sabotage what we want, and coming up with a response that helps to heal the situation rather than perpetuate it, is one of the most important steps to breaking the pattern and establishing healing. It was also important for Serena to invite her husband to help with this process and not take on the responsibility for creating safety in their intimate relationship all by herself.

So where do YOU begin?

The fact that you're reading this, is a huge step towards healing your shadow. Many of us spend years navigating our lives without ever really addressing our shadow. We become very good at managing our struggles until we can't take it any longer, and we begin to ask "Why?"

"Why am I continuing to have the same experience?"

"Why haven't I solved my problem after all these years of working so hard?"

"Why do I struggle when I see others succeeding?"

The very first step is acknowledging that you're having a continued experience that you no longer want to have. Maybe you've tried everything to change this externally - changed jobs, changed relationships, implemented new strategies, moved to a different part of the country, and still you're having the same experience.

This moment is very difficult because to turn your search inward means to acknowledge that you've had a hand in creating the experience, or that you're responsible for your experience and

you can no longer point the finger at someone or something else. This can be a very challenging realization. It doesn't mean you're bad or you've done something wrong, or you're not smart. It means that you are ready to know more of who you are. This is all a part of your personal evolution and your unlimited potential.

THE STEPS TOWARDS HEALING YOUR SHADOW CAN BE BEST UTILIZED BY WORKING WITH EACH STEP ONE DAY AT A TIME. THERE ARE 8 STEPS, SO TAKING 8 DAYS TO SPEND WITH EACH STEP, A FEW MINUTES A DAY IS VERY BENEFICIAL. GRAB A NOTEBOOK AND PEN, AND LET'S GET STARTED!

The STEPS towards HEALING

1. Opening the Gateway to Your Inner Landscape

Our mindset is very important. There are particular paths that our mind will "walk down" that I refer to as the "door closers" to your inner world. In other words, the thoughts and beliefs that I've listed below serve as road blocks, distractions and/or excuses that prevent you from embarking any further on the adventure of traversing your inner landscape. And it IS an adventure! Here's the list:

- · Blaming someone else, including yourself.
- Trying to fix the problem only in the external.
- Thinking you need to be perfect.
- · Believing that there's something wrong with you
- Believing that everything that's wrong is your fault.

Choose the one(s) that apply to you and take a moment to sit with it. Relax, breathe and close your eyes. What would it feel like if you let go of your belief? How attached are you to blaming or the belief that there's something wrong with you? Feel the struggle that your belief is immersed in. Imagine letting go, having it all washed away. Do you feel a sense of relief with letting go? Or maybe you feel a little lost letting go? Just breathe through this and notice your body becoming more relaxed and know that you're okay.

2. Calling in the Archetypal Hero

Working with archetypes provides you with a particular consciousness that is part of our ancestral heritage and collective consciousness. They embody a particular set of patterns that is part of human nature. Working with an archetype helps you to access the particular qualities it represents.

The first archetype you're going to align yourself with is the Hero. The Hero embodies the characteristics of the explorer - the one who forges new paths and traverses unchartered landscapes, will slash through the thicket and persist until the quest is completed. The Hero archetype encounters the inner journey with wonder, excitement, enthusiasm always asking 'Why?' and being willing to face fear, confront demons and persist ahead.

Close your eyes and relax. Imagine your Hero self. Are you a knight in shining armor? Are you Wonder Woman or Superman? Really visualize your Hero self. What are you wearing? What is your super power? Do you have a sword? A bow and arrow? Breathe in the energy of your Hero letting their strength, their confidence, and their eagerness for a quest infuse you. Notice

how different you feel in your body compared to when you were still attached to a limiting belief. You are not a victim, but a hero on a quest.

3. The Looking Glass

Your life is the most perfectly designed classroom for you to learn. Every experience you have in your life and how you choose to respond is the portal to discovering more of who you are and embracing your shadow. However, it's the areas in our lives that we don't like, that create struggle and grabs our attention where our most valuable lessons lay.

Looking at your life and your experiences as a mirror to your inner landscape is key to your shadow work. Where you experience rejection, betrayal, depletion, invisibility, or lack (just a few possible examples) is a mirror to a part of you that is rejecting yourself, betraying yourself, depleting yourself, hiding, or lacking love and attention. The Hero in us wants to know why this is so, and inevitably save us from our own demise.

Write down all the areas of your life where you experience struggle and/or are continually discontent.

4. Identify Your Struggle

Look at your list of all the situations where you experience struggle. See if you can identify the **feeling** that you're left with from each experience. Most often, you will find a common thread - a feeling that underlies each experience no matter how different the experience looks on the surface. It's not so much the action of what's taking place but the feeling that it brings up for you. Maybe you felt you didn't get enough attention or there wasn't enough love to go around when you were little. This can show up in a variety of ways as an adult. It may manifest as feeling like you're never able to make enough money to cover your expenses or you never have enough support or don't get enough attention from your spouse. The initial belief from your childhood that you weren't worthy of having your needs met, shows up as the underlying feeling in a variety of situations.

Find a comfortable place to sit. Relax and take a few deep breaths. Look at your list of struggles you wrote down for step #3. Dive in deep with each experience and begin to voice out loud your feelings with each experience. Voice your frustrations, or sadness, or despair, or anger that you feel with each of these experiences. What is the common feeling that you find for each experience? Keep with the feelings until a particular set of words applies to all your experiences of discontent. For example, you may initially feel anger and frustration, but if you stick with it, the words that may come that hits the nail on the head is, "I don't feel like I matter." Sometimes for this exercise, it's helpful to ask someone to listen, but it's important that you tell them what the exercise is for you and that the only thing you want them to do is be present and listen. No comments, no helping, just listen.

Once you feel the right words, take a deep breath and give yourself a big pat on the back. Good work! You're body is like a tuning instrument. When you find the right words, it's like hitting the right note. You'll know that it's your truth by the way it feels in your body. And remember, what you've discovered is only the belief that comes from your wounded self. It's not your truth.

5. The Voice Inside Your Head

The closer you get to "seeing" your shadow and healing, the more your shadow self will try to fight to stay alive. What does this look like? It typically will be a voice in your head that becomes more prominent. Up until now, the belief(s) that you uncovered in step 4 was buried deep in your sub-conscious to the point you didn't even know it was there. And the voice that carries that belief went unnoticed because it was so much a part of you. But now that you are facing your shadow and doing this work, you will be able to hear the voice of your shadow much more clearly. Often times, this is the point you feel that nothing you do is going to change or heal your shadow because it appears to be getting worse. The voice inside your head, the voice of your shadow, has become more distinct and is a continual stream of negative messages or maybe truly horrible. This is your shadow fighting to stay alive. This is a good thing because it gives you something more tangible to work with and leads to the next step. So don't get discouraged. Your shadow's voice is like a bully on the playground. The more threatened it becomes, the more it's going to try to control you. It's threatened because you are calling it out! YAY for you!

6. Separation

So now you know the words, the core phrase that sums up your beliefs from step 4 AND maybe you're hearing the voice of your shadow playing loud and clear in your head. Now you will need to create a separation. This may sound counter intuitive since our main goal is to heal, embrace and integrate our shadow self. But the reason for this step, is that until you create some separation between you and your shadow self, you will see yourself only as the wounded one. You will believe the negative messaging. Creating a separation helps you to see your shadow as only a part of you. Perhaps it's your child self, or your teenage self. Once you create a separation then you can discover what this part of you needs and establish a relationship that will heal your shadow.

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Imagine your belief and the voice of your shadow lifting out of you and materializing in front of you. Who is this? What do they look like? What is their name? What are they wearing?

7. The Archetypal Mother/Father

Once you identify the part of you that needs healing, taking on the role of the archetypal Mother or Father enables you to offer nurturance and protection and to **embrace** your shadow. Give yourself whatever this part of you didn't get. For example, if you grew up with a family that stifled your creativity, then you want to parent yourself as you would your own child. Look for classes or experiences to support your creativity. Or if this is a part of you that never felt heard, never listened to and taken seriously, then YOU must listen.

Taking on the role of the Archetypal Mother or Father, enables you to parent your self. You will need to tend to your own needs, keep yourself safe and loved to heal your wounds. Establish a relationship with the wounded part of yourself as you would your own child or a child. Listen to their grief or their anger. Acknowledge their wound. Find out what they need to heal and to feel safe.

Close your eyes, take several deep breaths and relax your body. Imagine you are sitting across from the wounded part of you. No matter how they are showing up right now, breathe into your heart space and send them your love. Feel the stirrings of compassion in your heart. Invite him/her to share with you. What do they want to say? What do they need to express? Listen to

them and acknowledge their pain. Feel their pain. Tell them you want to help. Ask what they need and how you can help. Let them know they are loved and beautiful.

What did you learn from this meditation regarding what the wounded part of you needs? How are you going to tend to these needs in your daily life? Do you need more play? Better boundaries? Self-love? Creative expression? Whatever it is, you'll need to create a strategy to accomplish tending to your needs as a way of healing your wounded self.

8. Response

The most necessary step in changing a pattern or a story is to change your response. This literally changes your neurological pathways in your brain. Your beliefs about yourself and your story has developed particular pathways in your brain so that when an experience happens that touches upon your wound, you quickly respond as a way to keep yourself safe. Consciously changing your response, sends the message to your brain that you're safe so that the old story doesn't continue.

Go back to your list of experiences that you wrote down in step 3. Can you determine what your response has been in each of these experiences? Is it to lash out with anger? Is it to withdraw? Is it self-criticism? Whatever your response has been, it is a response that validates your belief that comes from your wound and perpetuates your old story.

What new response can you have? Go over each experience and imagine a different response that does not continue your story or feed the belief that comes from your wounded self.

This can be tricky as patterns are habits. However, the more you tend to your needs and heal your wound, the more aware you become in the moments where typically your wound has been triggered. It's almost like you can now see the situation or the experience coming and you can talk yourself through it and change your response. Eventually, the pattern will have dissolved completely.



I hope you've found this information helpful on your personal journey. Remember - you are a diamond in the rough. You have untapped potential and hidden treasures that are waiting for you to discover. Life is an adventure and while I personally know the hardships we endure at times, our journey is nothing more than letting go of the layers that aren't in alignment with our true beauty.

if you would like support on your journey or to dive in deeper to the mysteries, please check out my private session offerings and online classes. For a truly, powerful transformative experience, consider accompanying me on a Sacred Journey. I started traveling and studying at the ancient mystery schools and sacred sites 25 years ago. The sites I visit hold an incredible power that helps us to shift, release and awaken in a way that nothing else does.

Blessings on your journey and much love to you! Trista