



Psychology & Gameplay

Shadow's Edge 2.0

"Shadow Release"

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**Digging
DEEP**



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Psychological process in the game

Shadow's Edge is a narrative therapy and art based process across three phases packaged into a mobile game.

The three core phases of the psychological process from a player's point of view are:

1. **Explore what is going on in your life and decide on what you want to work on** (define your reason to play). Practice reflecting on your life from a distance, naming difficulties instead of blaming yourself. Realize that the stories in your life are not set in stone and that you can re-write them. Learn about the theoretical background of the narrative therapy based process and its steps, as well as the role of Shadow as a part of oneself you do not relate to yet. This phase is called **Disruption**.
2. **Explore emotions and evaluate strategies you apply in your life.** Take an inventory of your emotions, thoughts and actions and make the checks and balances of what is working and what is not serving you. Practice connecting with parts of you that you normally neglect and practice expressing your emotions to yourself and others. Learn and practice breathing and muscle tensing exercises to support you. Realize there are others also going through challenges and realize that your shadow is pieces of yourself that you are not connecting with or that you are neglecting. Learn the theoretical background about the importance of connecting with all your emotions, also the so-called negative ones, and about the importance of getting to know yourself. Learn what a growth mindset is. This phase is called **Disillusionment**.
3. **Reimagine your story, identify the relationships that support you** and define how you can anchor your new story in your life. Learn about the power of language and recognizing how we can use language on how we talk to and about ourselves and re-define our own narrative. Practice to reframe your story around your strengths and the wisdom and resilience you have gained through your experiences. You also understand that it is key to cultivate relationships that support you in your new story. You learn that your Shadow is a part of you that is not something to get rid of, but that your shadow is always connected to you and is a source of ever deeper self-knowledge and a key to your individuality and wholeness and ability to connect with others. Learn and practice to use your imagination as a tool. This phase is called **Discovery**.

The game works with examples to support the player through this process and dive into answering the prompts and knowing what to draw.



The Story

Once, there was a city. Not perfect, but perfectly normal. Day's flowed one into the next, and along the way things grew and changed. One day, though, the storm came, and with it Shadow.

In Shadow's way stand three Guardians, but they are each lost themselves. Without a catalyst for change, they'll just circle around the same arguments, the same worries, and the same problems. When the game begins, they are each lost themselves, waiting for that catalyst.

That catalyst is the player, stepping into a fragmented set of relationships with the goal of building connection and setting things right. The story missions and the optional side missions will focus on the players confrontation with Shadow, and also the Guardians conflict with each other. As representatives of different aspects of the player, they each start in very different places, unable to reconcile their relationships with the other Guardians.

Each Guardian has something they want to achieve, but feels stymied in the pursuit of, due to the storm and their limited abilities in this world and also their limiting beliefs about themselves. Only with the player's help can they fully engage. For the first two acts, these story missions represent each of the Guardians standing alone - exploring their situation, feelings and finding ways to resolve their issues, but not repairing their relationships with the other Guardians.

Ultimately, they will resolve these issues and realize they need to work together. This represents the final act, and gives each of the Guardians a chance to reflect on how far they've come.

Against this personal conflict stands Shadow, who first appears when each Guardian is at their lowest. Through the player's encounters and ultimately integration of Shadow, the Guardians realize that the things they've lost are less important than what they meant to them, and in the process they learn to build new meaning and new activities.

In concrete terms, this means they're seeking things that represent their old lives - but they reach resolution when they build new lives with each other.



Game levels, psychological tasks, and gameplay

Intro / Cinematic 1

The introduction is your first touchpoint with the game. You fly into the city of Shadow's Edge and practice your first interaction with putting art on the wall. While you do this, you meet the antagonist Shadow for the first time. They bring a huge storm to come up over the city.

Level 1: Disruption

Psychological task: map out what is going on in your life and decide on what you want to work.

Psychological Outcomes / Checkpoints: can you look at your story from a third person perspective? Can you name things you want to work on? Can you identify healthy / unhealthy narratives you are telling yourself?

Mapping to narrative Therapy according to White:

Externalization of the problem, which mirrors the steps of the position mapping exercise:

- Developing a particular, experience-near definition of the problem;
- Mapping the effects of the problem;
- Evaluating the effects of the problem;
- and justifying the evaluation.
- Externalize the problem – separate you and the problem

Overview of Gameplay: You get on boarded onto art and writing through simple exercises and you have first confrontations with Shadow where art and writing you have done help you advance to the next level of the game. Writing prompts invite you to reflect on the different dimensions in your life and how you experience and feel about them and to assess what is challenging for you. The page will invite you to “just sit with it” or to indeed write on it. You find the first key to the old community gallery that foreshadows that there are ways to see art from other players. You also meet the Phoenix. Phoenix provides you with wisdom around why you must embark on this journey and how to go about it. Phoenix also initiates players to a breathing exercise and a muscle tensing exercise so players have tools to manage their energy.

Story Missions & Game Mechanics:

Before the player has arrived in the space, Ty has been told to stay well clear of the other phases. Pax doesn't want his negativity messing with Discovery, and Maize is sick of his outbursts. Likewise, the other two Guardians don't have much to do with each other. Maize finds the endless stream of positivity exhausting, and Pax finds Maize a downer. Into these broken relationships and broken streets creeps Shadow, who has been fanning the flames of these arguments while letting the city wind slowly down.



The player meets Ty, and begins to help him, first with his own problems and then to help out Maize, who isn't talking to him. The player learns that each of the Guardians is stuck, both in their current mood and situation but also here in their phase.

Level 2: Disillusionment

Psychological Task: Explore your emotions and strategies and take the checks and balances of what is working and what is not; identify which aspects of yourself you are not connecting with and expressing yet. Understand that Loving yourself also when you are in dark places is a key part of learning to accept your Shadow. Understand that most people are more afraid of their greatness than of their so-called difficult sides.

Psychological Outcomes / Checkpoints:

Can you identify your relation with your emotions and which ones seem “comfortable” and which ones “uncomfortable” to you and why? Can you identify skills, knowledge, values that support you in your daily life? Can you identify at least one thing you want more of in your life and that motivates you? Can you give examples of the concept of growth mindset versus fixed mindset? Realize everyone is going through something. Learn that knowing that others are going through hardship too and that it is nothing to be ashamed of. Experience that sharing and connecting with each other can support you.

Mapping Narrative Therapy according to White:

Re-authoring conversations by:

- Helping the client include neglected aspects of themselves;
- and shifting the problem-centered narrative.

Overview of Gameplay: The player's work is starting to show effect, rays of light are starting to come through and flowers are starting to grow, but Shadow is still dominating the atmosphere and keeps it gray and cold. You and Maize discover that you are not alone in this world, but that there are other players also working on getting to know and integrating their Shadow in the quest to bring Shadow's Edge back to life. You learn you can connect with other players through the art that you create in Shadowgram and you can view inspiring art in the Community Gallery.

Story Missions & Game Mechanics:

When coming out of the elevator, The player meets the guardian Maize. Maize is an artist. Part of being an artist lies in knowing that the work you make will never be as good as what's in your head, but trying anyway. She's worried though, she feels she's letting everybody down. If only she was making better work, all of this would sort itself out and she'd be able to get home. To that end, she's convinced that she just needs to sort all this out herself.



Level 3: Discovery

Psychological Task: Reauthor your story and identify the relationships that support you to anchor your new story in your life. Understand that Shadow is always connected to you and is the key to unlocking your full potential. Understand that relationships also can support you to thrive and that you can create a supportive environment for yourself by choosing relations to support you. Players dive further into the power of language and the importance of recognizing “how” we define our own narrative in shaping our subjective reality could be beneficial. (i.e. Internal dialogue such as “I am depressed” vs. “I am someone who is depressed sometimes” vs “I am someone who copes with depression.”)

Psychological Outcomes / Checkpoints: can you identify who supports? Can you describe your dreams? Can you describe examples where your language supports you to thrive and where not?

Narrative Therapy according to White:

- Remembering conversations that actively engage the client in the process of:
 - Renewing their relationships;
 - Removing the relationships that no longer serve them;
 - and finding meaning in their story that is no longer problem-saturated as much as resilient-rich.

Overview of Gameplay: The player and the guardian of Discovery Pax discover the Community Wall in the community gallery, where the player can create art together with friends. Phoenix teaches the player an imagination exercise to support the player to visualize a place that provides them relaxation and nourishment. The player and guardians continue to confront Shadow until Shadow completely merges into the guardians, symbolizing it is now an integrated piece.

Story Missions & Game Mechanics:

The final act is a chance to get to know Pax, who really is bright and optimistic. So much so, she can't actually seem to find the focus to get anything done. She's confident she'll get out of here, but she's not actually doing anything about it.

Here is the point that the player brings all three Guardians together, with each of them having integrated their Shadow. In doing so, the Guardians realize they actually belong here. Their job is to help the player, and that's what they want to keep doing.



Appendix 1: Complete list of prompts

Disruption				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
disruption	downtown	Hello diary	Here's to an easy start!	Write down something, anything at all. If you're not sure what, writing "hello journal" can be a good starting place :-).
disruption	downtown	Write for fun	Journaling isn't all personal and serious.	Here's a prompt to let your imagination run wild: what could be the story in a sequel to your favorite movie?
disruption	downtown	Write to calm your mind	Some people like free flow, others like prompts.	Write whatever comes to mind - or use a prompt: What's the best thing that happened to you in the last day? It could be petting a cute dog.
disruption	downtown	Get it off your chest	Ever tried venting to a page? It can be fun!	I will start: all my pages are empty, that sucks! Now you, what do you want to vent about?
disruption	park	I am thankful for	*Ice cream*, sunshine, music...	Ty loves skateboarding and he's so happy he has that. What are three things you are grateful for this week?
disruption	park	Diving in	We're diving into more *personal* questions now...	Personal thoughts and opinions are just that - personal, there's no right or wrong :) Like in: what music do you like? Is there a reason why?



Disruption				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
disruption	park	Memory bank	Ty is remembering life before the storm.	We all have families in one way or another - how do you feel about yours?
disruption	park	Tools	Holding a presentation, who to sit with at lunch...	There are moments when we don't feel comfortable. How do you support yourself when you feel stressed to make it through that situation?
disruption	park	Strengths	There's a chance you're not *appreciating* you...	Whether it be meeting new people or taking a test - what strengths did you use to get through?
disruption	commercial	Negative Self Talk	Shadow is *taunting* Ty	Ty can't stop thinking about how Shadow is taunting him after the last confrontation. What could you say to Ty to support him?
disruption	commercial	What you like in others...	...can be things you don't see *in yourself*	What quality do you overlook in yourself? Examples people often miss: being a good friend, a hard-worker, or a good listener.
disruption	commercial	Give yourself a break	Not judging ourselves is very hard.	What do you say to your friends when they are hard on themselves? How might that help Ty in the current situation?
disruption	commercial	Time to relax	Whether it be listening to *your favorite* song...	Taking a few deep breaths or sniffing at your favourite flower... How might you find a moment of peace right now?



Disruption				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
disruption	commercial	Imagination rocks	To prove there's no right or wrong answers here...	...just for fun: if you could have one thing grow out of the top of your head - what would it be? (Maybe your favorite food, wings to fly ?)
disruption	central	A miracle of my own	Sometimes it's time to *dream*.	What would a miracle look like for you?
disruption	central	A special meeting	Someone you thought you'd *never* meet	If you could meet anyone in the whole wide world: which person alive or dead would you like to meet and why?
disruption	central	Magic wand	Making the world a *better* place	Here's a tough one (there's no right answer!), if you could change 3 things to make the world a better place: what would you change?
disruption	central	Letting it fly	Ty wants to *get in touch* again with Maize and Pax.	What negative stories about yourself can you let go? Write and say good-bye to them.
disruption	central	Your shadow	Is a part of you waiting to be *explored*	What do you want to understand better? It may be a challenge, something from the past, or a talent you're not yet expressing.



Disillusionment				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
disillusionment	downtown	Feel your best	Maize is starting to sketch again in the *morning*	What do you love doing but have not been doing and want more of in your life? Many Small steps lead to big changes.
disillusionment	downtown	The Key	Tough times can give a *new perspective*.	Maize is learning to let go of her inner critic telling who says her art is never good. What criticism of yourself can you let go of?
disillusionment	downtown	Getting Confident	Step over your *shadow*!	When do you feel like you are most "yourself." Maybe its while with your friends, playing a sport, writing, or just watching a pretty sunset.
disillusionment	downtown	Heroes Fly	Let's take off...	What super power would you like to have and why?
disillusionment	downtown	Give Yourself a Break	*Kindly* please!	Write some kind words to yourself today... Like how loyal you are, a hard worker, or a great listener.
disillusionment	park	I'm in charge	Maize is learning to draw *for the fun of it*	What are you doing more to please others than for your own pleasure?
disillusionment	park	Attitude	My *attitude* says something about *me*.	Ty is a go-getter, Maize is more soft and sometimes goofy... write all the things you love about your style (like your directness, or honesty)



Disillusionment				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
disillusionment	park	Good Energy	Maize *loves* drawing, *instead*...	Maize often finds herself mindlessly scrolling on her phone. What can help Maize do more of what she loves?
disillusionment	park	What a pain!	Ty, Maize and Pax are *dealing* with a lot	What has been tough for you? Like, missing out on something, a friendship breaking up, or something you are afraid of?
disillusionment	park	How are you feeling	...can be a really *difficult* question.	Writing can help you feel what's up and even relieve stress. Let's give it a shot. Finish this sentence: Today I'm feeling...
disillusionment	commercial	My Armor	Maize keeps up her *guard*.	Maize shows her joyful side only when feeling safe & appreciated. When do you put up your guard?
disillusionment	commercial	The Masked Me	Safe *behind* the mask.	Spray the mask you show people onto the Theatre building. Then write how you really feel on the inside.
disillusionment	commercial	Praising Me	*One* thing only I know	Maize is discovering a new side of herself working together with you. What is one amazing trait you never talk about to others?
disillusionment	commercial	Pieces of Myself	Dealing with *norms*	What norms do you feel are holding you back from expressing who you really are?



Disillusionment				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
disillusionment	commercial	Hidden Talents	If you would *dare*...	Imagine you woke up and could speak your favorite foreign language fluently. What would you talk about and in what language?
disillusionment	central	Smile :-)	A long *list* to add on to...	Make a list of 5-10 things that make you smile. Come back for more everytime you smile for something not on your list yet.
disillusionment	central	A Sea of Tears	Maize has done a lot of *crying*	What sadness do you have inside?
disillusionment	central	Lovin' Feeling	I feel *special* when...	Maize feels appreciated when people take time to listen to her. What makes you feel seen and acknowledged?
disillusionment	central	Boiling Point	Maize remembers a *situation*	Maize felt ignored by Ty and Pax when they were debating taking Shadow on. She felt like exploding. What sets you off and how do you show it?



Discovery				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
discovery	downtown	Future Me	My *things I'm gonna* do list	Pax wants to hang out with friends, travel and learn yoga when her family is back. What do you do for fun and to recharge?
discovery	downtown	Heart Songs	*Salsa!*	Pax loves to dance salsa to recharge her soul battery. What's something you'd really like to try but don't feel confident yet? Like singing on stage or traveling.
discovery	downtown	Star in your story	Put your challenge on the *big screen*!	Imagine you were in a movie or TV show that you create: what genre would it be and what role would your character play?
discovery	downtown	Power of Possibility	Imagine *anything* is possible!	If you had the power to do something irrespective of what it costs or where you are, what would you do?
discovery	park	Sharing my Wisdom	Your life, your *teacher*	Your unique story might have helped you learn a lot along your journey. What wisdom can you share with others?
discovery	park	Dream Big	*Dreams* help us follow our *hearts*	Write down your dreams about how you want to live and three steps you can take to make them happen.



Discovery				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
discovery	park	Blessings After the Storm	There's a *rainbow* in every cloud	Pax had to learn to live alone and rely on her own strength. What have you discovered and are proud of now?
discovery	park	Mantra	Some days feel like nothing has changed...	What's a saying that might help you during stressful times? Like "I know I can do this" or "One day at a time." Anything works!
discovery	park	A good day	A good day is made of many *small things*.	What are the small things in your ideal best day? Like smelling the rain, petting your cat, hearing your favourite music?
discovery	commercial	Introverts and Extroverts	Intro, extro or somewhere in between?	How does interacting in a group affect your social battery - does being with people make you feel recharged or drained?
discovery	commercial	Being Real	Pax wanted to be who people *expected* her to be	How do you act around people who you can just let your hair down with and just be you?
discovery	commercial	Reaching Out	Pax is so glad you turned up to help.	Who can you ask for help or support?
discovery	commercial	Animal Kingdom	Ty likes turtles...	Maize is a cat lover and Pax is thinking about getting a bearded dragon. What animal do you feel a connection to?



Discovery				
Phase	Block	TitleEnglish	ShortQuestionEnglish	QuestionEnglish
discovery	commercial	True Friends	Small things that make the difference...	What makes you a good friend? It can be how you listen or how you don't judge...
discovery	central	Endings and Beginnings	Relationships *change*	What friends have you lost and what friends have you found along the way?
discovery	central	Talking, Listening and Hearing	Sometimes it's hard to be *understood*	Who really listens to you and how do you know?
discovery	central	Gratitude and Appreciation	How do you show *gratitude*?	How do you give thanks to the people who love and care about you?
discovery	central	Talking to Strangers	Sometimes *strangers* are easier to talk to	Ever spilled your guts to a stranger? Why may it be easier to be honest with someone you may never see again vs. a friend or family member?
discovery	central	Shining bright	My *style*	How do you deal with people not approving of your style choices, whether it be your clothes, hair, make-up or music?



Appendix 2: CBT Exercises

Diaphragmatic Breathing Technique

- Sometimes it could be seen as if the world is just too much for us to handle. When that happens, many of us would start hyperventilating, or taking shallow breathes into our chests. Doing so can make us feel even more anxious and overwhelmed, instead of helping us calm down. The good news is that by practicing, we can learn to breathe correctly, helping our body and our mind to relax.
- For this exercise, it's important that you feel comfortable. Try to find a quiet place where you can be in a comfortable position, like sitting in a comfy armchair or lying in your bed. Place one hand over your chest and the other over your stomach. Take a deep breath in and watch which of your hands is moving.
- If you see the hand on your chest rising, you are chest breathing. This kind of breathing is shallower and less effective. Let the air out and try again - but this time trying to keep your chest relaxed and instead using your diaphragm, which is a muscle at the bottom of your lungs. You will know you are "Diaphragmatic Breathing" when the hand that moves is the one on your stomach.
- Now try and do it again, you can close your eyes if that helps you concentrate. Inhale and mentally count till three as you slowly inhale through your nose. Hold your breath for one second, and then slowly exhale, counting till three.
- Try and practice five breathes at a time, inhaling slowly, 1... 2... 3... then holding for one second, and then exhaling slowly, 1... 2... 3...
- When you are done, make a mental note of how you are feeling.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique

- We often rely on our body to help us understand and experience the world around us. By teaching ourselves to relax our bodies, we can also help ourselves relax our minds. In this exercise we will practice a way to relax our body.
- The trick is to make a mental note for ourselves of what relaxation feels like, which we can then use in situations that might cause us to feel stressed or anxious.
- Find a comfortable place to sit. Take a few deep, diaphragmatic breaths (those are the ones that go through your stomach).
- Imagine that you have an energy sphere and as I ask you to visualize as it travels around your body, I will ask you to tense and relax the muscles in those areas. Imagine that you are now holding the sphere in your right hand. I want you to tense your right hand and forearm by making a fist, squeezing the energy from the sphere. Hold that fist strong, 5...4...3...2...1... now let it go.
- Imagine the sphere traveling up your right arm. Feel the comforting glow it leaves behind, as it travels from your palm to your right bicep. Bend your elbow, bring your hand to your shoulder, and tense your right bicep. And hold, 5...4...3...2...1... then let it go.
- Feel the warmth of the sphere as it crosses your chest, goes down your left arm, and into your left palm. And now, tense the left hand. Squeeze the sphere in your left fist. 5...4...3...2...1... and let it go.
- The sphere goes up your arm, to your left bicep. Now bend your left elbow, bringing your hand to your shoulder, and tense your left bicep. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- As the sphere travels up from your left bicep it splits into two smaller energy spheres, with each going to one of your shoulders. Tense your shoulders and bring them up to your ears. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- From your shoulders, the spheres travel up your neck, up your face, and to your eyebrows. Shut your eyes and squeeze your eyebrows. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- The spheres go down from your eyes, and into your mouth. Tense your face by clenching your teeth and tensing your jaws, pressing your lips together as if frowning. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- As the spheres go down from your mouth to your chest, they once again merge into one. Feel the sphere beating in the center of your chest. Take a deep breath in and hold it. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- From your chest the sphere goes down to your stomach. Tense your stomach by pushing it out. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- As you unclench your stomach, visualize that the sphere is moving from your stomach to your lower back. Curve your back backwards and create an arch. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- As the sphere leaves your back, it splits into two once more. Each sphere goes down one leg, stopping in your thighs. Press your heels into the floor and tense your thighs. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- From your thighs the spheres go down to your calves. Press your toes into the floor to tense your calves. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- Lastly, the spheres reach your feet. Bend your feet up towards your face and tense your foot muscles. 5...4...3...2...1... let go.
- As the spheres are leaving your body, I want you to take a couple of deep breaths. Notice what it feels like when there is no tension in your body.



Guided Imagination Technique

- The sights and sounds of the world around us can become very stressful. In times like these, it can be helpful to replace those stressful and negative scenes with safer, calmer ones. In this exercise, you are going to create a place that makes you feel safe and relaxed.
- To start, find a comfortable place to sit, take a couple of diaphragmatic breaths, and let's begin.
- Let's free your imagination and allow it to fly high, unbounded by your body, the walls of your house, or the laws of nature. Let it travel between real and imaginary places that only you know.
- Let your imagination find a special place where you could feel safe, and relaxed. It can be anywhere - a real place, or a place you read of in a book, or saw in a movie, or a place you invented yourself. It can be a place you have visited many times before, a room in your house that you particularly like, or a place your family goes to every year.
- When you find that place, immerse yourself fully into it and allow it to really take shape around you. Look to the horizon and see the views and the far edges of your place.
- Look above you, and below you - where are you standing? What colors can you see? Listen to the sounds that surround you, allowing them to wash over you and using them to relax even more.
- This place is for you to feel safe in and you can adjust for that in any way you wish. It can be open with endless miles of sandy beaches and no one around to bother you. It can be in your room in your house, protected by your own walls, hearing the comforting sounds of your family and friends around you in the house and in the street.
- Take a deep breath in. What does your special places smell like? Try to pick smells that you associate with relaxation. Let those smells calm you down.
- This is your special place, so you can make it as you please. Reach out and touch something in your special place. What are you touching? What does it feel like in your hand? Is cold or hot to the touch? Is it soft or is it hard?
- Now imagine that you are there, in your special place seated comfortably, smelling the scents, hearing the sounds, feeling the movement of the air, and feeling very relaxed. Take another deep breath in, filling your stomach with air.
- Feel how your body is giving in to the warmth and safety of your special place, and let it surround and protect you. Take a mental note of the place. Note how you feel when you are there. You can return here at any time.