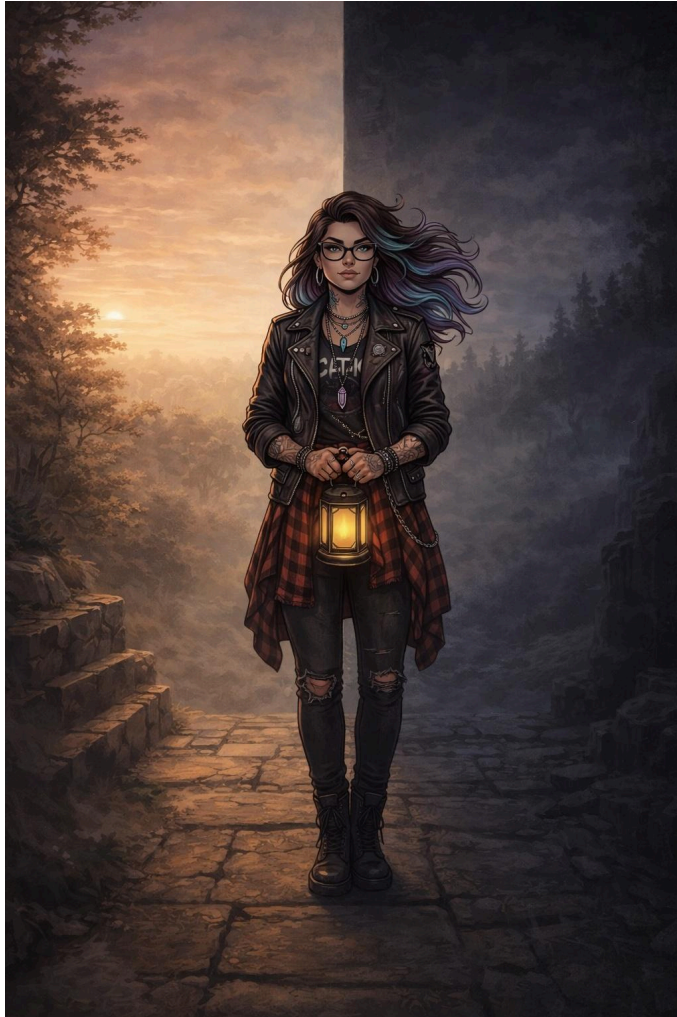


Walking Between Light and Shadow



A Developmental Map for Therapists

This is not an assessment.

It is not a checklist.

It is a way to orient yourself with more clarity and less urgency.

Therapist development rarely moves in straight lines. Most clinicians cycle through phases of growth as their capacity, caseload, life circumstances, and nervous system change over time.

This map reflects common developmental **capacities**, not identities. You may recognize yourself in more than one place. That's expected.

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1. Foundational Light Work

Primary capacity: Regulation and relational safety

This phase emphasizes steadiness, attunement, and containment. Therapists learn how to hold the room, calm the nervous system, and remain present without overwhelming clients or themselves.

What often helps here:

Clear structure, strong supervision, skill-building, predictable rhythms

Common misinterpretation:

Believing regulation equals integration

Equating calmness with competence

2. The Performance Crack

Primary capacity: Awareness of internal strain

Something begins to feel off. Regulation still works externally, but internally it starts to feel compressed. Fatigue lingers. Emotional responses get smoothed over too quickly.

What often helps here:

Honest reflection, naming burnout without self-blame, slowing down

Common misinterpretation:

Assuming something is “wrong” with you

Trying harder instead of listening deeper

3. Entering Shadow

Primary capacity: Tolerating internal complexity

Disowned emotions and reactions surface. Anger, grief, boredom, resentment, or ambivalence appear and refuse to resolve neatly.

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What often helps here:

Supervision that welcomes honesty
Containment rather than catharsis

Common misinterpretation:

Thinking shadow work means indulgence or over-excavation
Trying to eliminate uncomfortable reactions instead of integrating them

4. Meeting the Golden Shadow

Primary capacity: Owning impact and authority

Positive qualities that were once disowned begin to emerge. Confidence, intuition, leadership, and influence may feel more uncomfortable than pain.

What often helps here:

Ethical reflection on power
Support around visibility and boundaries

Common misinterpretation:

Confusing humility with shrinking
Avoiding authority to stay “good” or likable

5. Embodied Integration

Primary capacity: Nervous system trust

Insight begins to live in the body. Authority no longer tightens. Rest becomes possible. Emotional responses inform rather than overwhelm.

What often helps here:

Somatic awareness
Consistent support over time

Common misinterpretation:

Believing this is a permanent state
Expecting the work to be finished

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6. Ongoing Cycles, Not a Finish Line

Primary capacity: Recoverability

Integration does not end development. Therapists move between phases as life, work, and capacity shift.

What often helps here:

Flexibility

Self-compassion

Respect for timing and seasonality

Common misinterpretation:

Judging yourself for revisiting earlier phases

Mistaking cycles for regression

A Note on Pacing and Support

Not every phase is appropriate at every time. Shadow and golden shadow work unfold best within containment, supervision, and adequate support.

Shadow walking requires enough light to find the way back.

Closing Orientation

If this map helps you locate yourself, let that be enough for now. Development does not require acceleration.

Integration is not something to achieve.

It is something to keep company.

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