

## **SHAME (POSTED ON THE 04.10.2021)**

When we experience shame, we feel like we've failed ourselves in some way. We believe that we didn't live up to some standard that was set. Maybe it's a precedence (internal vow, something of importance, a rule) that was set by us or someone else that we failed to live up to. Feeling shame leaves us feeling like were "bad" or "damaged" in some way.

Shame is usually a response to the breaking of a social norm that we value, it is often a violation of certain codes and morals which are socially interested. Shame will come from an overly harsh evaluation of oneself.



**LET'S JUST SAY THAT SHAME IS COMPLICATED.**

There are many, many things that can cause shame. Shame can be anything that causes you to internalize AND TAKE TO HEART something that someone has said about you, or it can even be something that YOU HAVE TAKEN TO HEART about something you did and feel bad about.

**THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GUILT AND SHAME; IN SHORT YOU CAN USUALLY TAKE ACTION ABOUT WHAT YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT.**



**SHAME IS VERY HARD TO GET RID OF AND WORK THROUGH. WHY? BECAUSE YOU DON'T USUALLY WANT TO TALK BOUT WHAT YOU ARE SHAMEFUL OF.**

**SHAME TENDS TO STAY / GUILT CAN BE CONSTRUCTIVELY REMOVED OR WORKED THROUGH.**

The list of what causes shame can be endless, here are a few:

Verbal Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Addiction to Pornography, Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Poverty, Rape, Teenage Pregnancy, being a Bully, Being the victim of a Bully, Mental Illness, Substance Abuse, doing something behind closed doors that you know is wrong that only you know about, Childhood Trauma, feeling as though you have flaws and that those flaws could be revealed etc. etc.

### **Definition of Shame**

A painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness / awareness/ perception of wrong or foolish behavior. Shame is a painful emotion caused by the belief that one is, or is perceived by others to be, inferior or unworthy of affection or respect because of one's actions, thoughts, circumstances, or experiences.

Shame is turned inward – it persecutes **YOU** because, **you think that everything about you is just WRONG**. Shame may **emerge from an evolved disease avoidance architecture**. That is, shame may stem from the primary emotion of disgust being reflected on the self (i.e., perceiving the self as a source of contamination).

Psychology Today defines shame as a concealed, contagious, and dangerous emotion.

Shame causes us to hide and to exclude ourselves.



### **Is there anything positive about shame?**

While shame is a negative emotion, its origins play a part in our survival as a species. Without shame, we might not feel the need to adhere to cultural norms, follow laws, or behave in a way that allows us to exist as social beings.

Healthy shame can also exist. Shame can be healthy when it causes us to have humility, allows us to laugh at ourselves, makes us humble, or teaches us about boundaries. **Without at least a little bit of shame, people would have no way to manage how their behavior affects other people.**

There are other feelings related to shame such as guilt, humiliation, and feeling inferior.

### **Definition of Humiliation**

Humiliation is the embarrassment and shame you feel when someone makes you appear stupid, it is to reduce (someone) to a lower position in one's own eyes or others' eyes

### **Definition of Inferior**

Of little or less importance, to feel lower than.

### **Definition of Guilt**

An emotional experience that occurs when a person believes or realizes—accurately or not—that they have compromised their own standards of conduct or have violated universal moral standards and bear significant responsibility for that violation. The fact of having committed a specified or implied offense or crime:

### **Self – Defeating Conduct**

The following is a list of self – defeating behaviors related to shame: You feel disgraceful, you feel inadequate, you have feelings of regret that you cannot get over, you become a perfectionist, you have become paranoid and do not trust other people, you are overly sensitive, you do not feel comfortable in your own skin, you withdraw and shut people out, you feel like you are not good enough, you have no identity, you never want to be the center of attention, you feel that you cannot be your true self and you just cannot stand being seen or noticed by others.

When someone feels shame, they often are not confident, they look down instead of looking people in the eyes, a shameful person is unable to act spontaneously, a shameful person will often feel rejected and will cry if they feel shame or embarrassment.

Reactions to shame can often differ as well, anger can be a reaction to shame, lashing out at others can also be a reaction to shameful feelings, concealing and not revealing yourself is a reaction to feelings of shame. Avoidant behavior such as apologizing when you don't have to or avoiding conflict just to feel safe can be a reaction to shame.

Chronic Shame can stay with a person all the time, it makes one feel not good enough and can affect mental health and wellbeing. Internalized shame refers to shame that has been turned inward. For example, those who experience childhood abuse may experience a feeling of being unworthy or a feeling of shame related to their abuse. Toxic shame is like internalized shame in that it involves the notion that there is something inherently wrong with you on the inside. Toxic shame is a part of your core identity. People who experience toxic shame may try to present a perfect outer self to hide how they feel on the inside, therefore they become perfectionists.

**Shame  
is a soul  
eating  
emotion.**  
-C.G. Jung



What is the cure for shame? How do we deal with shame?

According to Dr. Henry Cloud, the biggest thing we need to understand about shame is that it is **a separation from love; it is not just simply feeling bad about yourself.**

If someone is loved and they are made to feel loved – they will not be afraid of their badness. They will feel accepted, and they will feel safe. They will not have to feel good about themselves in order to feel safe.

The fix for shame is not about trying to improve your self – esteem because that can be a dead end – it's getting yourself **connected to love and acceptance.**

One of the most destructive causes of guilt or shame is emotional and spiritual isolation. The saying to remember is this:

**AN ALONE SELF IS A BAD SELF.**



If someone feels alone, he or she is going to feel “bad.” The answer is not “goodness,” or more self-esteem. **The answer is love.** Try to put an end to your **internal isolation**, find that isolated part of your heart and give yourself grace, love and connection.

### **Shame is all about loss!!**

- Loss of intimacy
- Loss of connection
- Loss of acceptance
- Loss of unconditional love

Shame is a big deal, it is universal, and everybody has it or is struggling with shame

But we need to normalize it – stop thinking that there is something wrong with you, (there is something wrong), but it is normal. Intimacy, connection and shame all go together.

Think about Adam and Eve – they were naked and **unashamed** and then? When they did what ever they did then they started to cover up – what did they cover up?

### **THEIR PRIVATES!!!!**



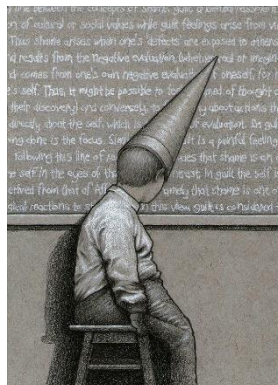
### **WHY?**

Because that is the most intimate part of our body that we share with anyone else. That is why rape, molestation and that type of thing causes so many shame issues – it causes you to disconnect not only from yourself but from other people as well.

### **THE THREE CATEGORIES OF SHAME**

**Ontological Shame.** Ontology is the science and study of being. So ontological shame is being ashamed just of myself – just of me – I am ashamed of who I am. Am I good enough? Am I bad? Am I flawed?

**Shame can be related to specifics** - Specific parts of you, Specific acts, or events. Victims of abuse suffer huge shame – but they did not cause it they were not responsible for it, yet they feel bad about themselves. Victims of abuse often find it hard to even talk about what happened to them – even though they are in a safe environment, they carry the shame even though they were not the cause.





**Little bits and pieces of shame** - Certain parts of our bodies / Little things that we feel shame about.

All these added together cause us to want to hide, it causes us to want to cover up and then we try to overcompensate for it – for how we feel. For e.g. bragging, someone who constantly brags is someone who is trying to cover up the way they feel about themselves, they will spend way too much energy on trying to look better – that is overcompensating. The opposite of a bad self is not a good self. I feel bad so I try to become good (I overcompensate)



**The opposite of a bad self is a loved self.**

You will never overcome shame by trying to perform and do better than everyone else, more money, more awards more of any material thing is not going to repair shame at all – only love and connection will.

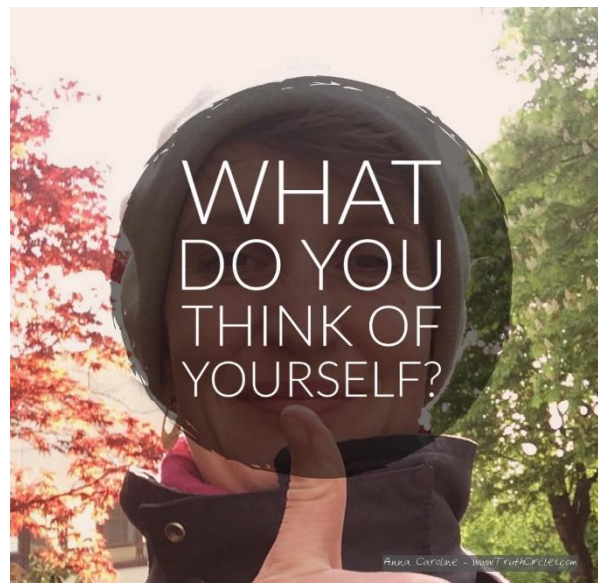
**To Overcome Shame**

Every aspect of shame needs to be known. You must get help from someone who does not put themselves above you, you cannot deal with shame if someone is judging you. The initial CONNECTION with someone who is going to help you is the beginning of the healing process. The connection must be positive.

Put yourself with people that are not trying to be above your shame, but are able to embrace your shame, remember it's about connection and realizing that you are not the only one..... **GET YOURSELF CONNECTED**

Realize that some of your shame is internal – it's in your thinking. Sometimes you don't need yourself to feel shame – it's a voice of someone that just keeps playing around over and over in your head. A teacher, a parent, a brother, a sister whose voice is just on repeat. You start

calling yourself names like stupid, or ugly or dumb. Start to apply and listen to what other people say about you – **FIGHT AND CHALLENGE THE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD.**



What are the things that have been done to you? Acknowledge them and give them a name. For instance, if you have been abused, name the perpetrator, and put the badness onto them. **TRANSFER THE SHAME TO THE ONE THAT DESERVES IT** – give it to the person that has damaged you but get the bad out of yourself.

Make it conscious and name it so that you can process it, by doing that it is going to take the pain out of it – the bite – and it's going to diminish it.

Look at how many times you start something and then you pull back and you don't finish what you started, it's almost as if your shame has created a barrier and a wall and it's stopping you from doing what it is that you want to do. **RECOGNIZE YOUR TRIGGERS.** Name the shame and push it away from you.

**TAKE ACTION** and walk into the area that you have been afraid to operate in – do the class, achieve the goal, do what you have been trying to avoid. **Take that first step and confront things.**

You must get back up onto the horse – once you have exited from life, from some important part of life, you must get back in the game.

Learn to share that part of you – because that shameful part of you may just be a gift to someone else. **LEAD THE GROUP AND STEP OUT.**



## **PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST SHAME**

- Don't take on any new shame
- Identify what your shame is and where it comes from
- Become more aware of your emotions and when shameful emotions are triggered
- Protect yourself from shame inducing people and environments – set boundaries
- If you are vulnerable, then protect yourself.
- Don't let people abuse you, control you etc.
- Stay away from unsafe people
- Be aware of your triggers
- Don't let someone double click on your shame button – avoid the people that you know are going to trigger you
- Don't get into conversations that you know are going to trigger you
- When you get triggered overcome it and reach out to the people that are good for you – catch the trigger when it happens
- Reach out – do the opposite of isolating yourself and hiding away
- Reprogram – learn – self-study – read
- Journal. Write about your feelings of shame and past events that have caused you to feel shame and influence your behavior today
- Bring what you feel shameful about out into the open and into the light (see a therapist)
- Rather, talk about your feelings and share them in that safe space that you have created. Allow your suffering to be legitimized and normalized. This will help you to get some perspective on your shame.
- Turn around and dispute the shame – reprogram your thoughts so that they lose their power, accept the fact that you have made mistakes. All of us have.
- Remember that your love for yourself must be unconditional without any strings when you feel shame. Be honest with yourself and with other people. Don't avoid the shame that you are feeling.

If you're struggling to get past shame, think about your desired outcome. If you could get past shame, what does a resolution for you look like? What steps do you think you need to take to get to that resolution? Think about your safe people. Who in your life is safe? Who can you talk to, and how do you think they can help you? Start working on changing your thoughts, emotions as well as your attitudes and beliefs about yourself.

**Audit all your relationships.**

**Seek Professional Help.**

**TO CONCLUDE:**

**Step five of narcotics or alcoholics anonymous is: *We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.***

**THE RECOVERY BIBLE**

**TEACHING OF JOHN 8:3 – 11**

**Feelings of Shame**

Shame has kept many of us in hiding. The thought of admitting our sins and revealing ourselves to other human beings stirs up feelings of shame and the fear of being publicly exposed.

“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. (John 8:3 – 9)

Many believe that it was Jesus’ writing in the dust that caused the accusers to leave. Perhaps Jesus was listing the secret sins of the Jewish leaders. If this is true it gives us a beautiful picture of the kind of person Jesus is. He is a person whom we can safely expose our secrets.

Our confessor – the person who we confess to needs to be someone who is not surprised by sin and will not be waiting to condemn us. Such a person needs to take private note of our wrongs, writing them in the soft dust, not etching them in stone and posting them in public. Since shame can be a trigger for addictive behavior, we need to be careful about whom we chose to confide in.

John 8: 10 – 11

Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. **"Then neither do I condemn you,"** Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

**Sources for this article:**

Very Well Mind (<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-shame-5115076>)

Dr. Henry Cloud (boundaries.me)

The Life Recovery Bible

