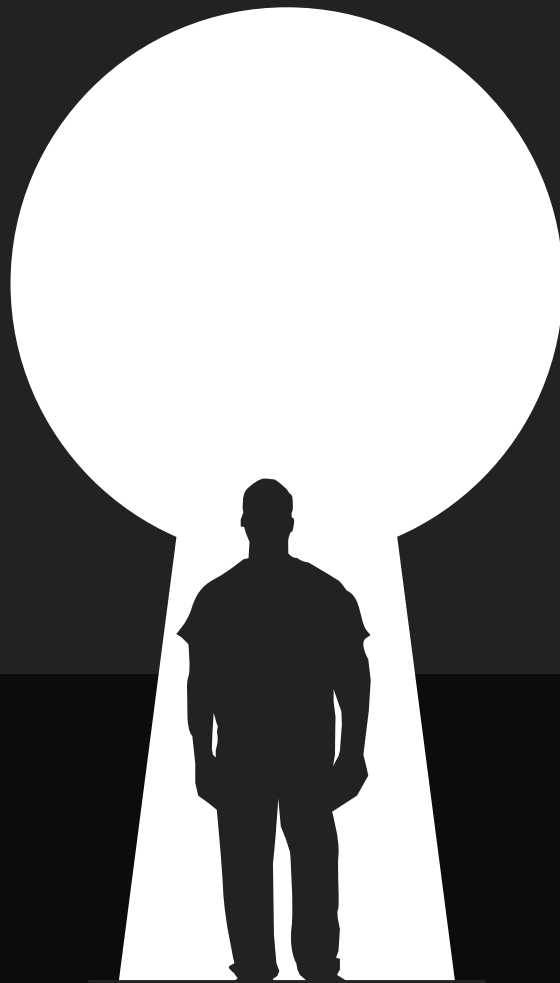


BREAKING THE CHAINS OF SHAME



A Journey from Darkness to
Dignity

Written by
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MYND

Welcome to MYND Practice

Hi There!

MYND Practice was founded to help our emotionally crippled society heal by providing compassion, communication, and a sense of belonging. We are dedicated to social change that helps bring about initiatives that better people's lives.

MYND Practice believes it can make a difference in the way society approaches mental health, helping to create a more stable, happier, and fulfilled society.

MYND Practice has been dedicated to fulfilling its mission of inspiring and giving people hope by assisting them in making positive changes in their health, relationships, businesses, and finances.

Counselling isn't just about making a bad life good, but making a good life great. It's about building a brighter future for yourself and your loved ones. Our single focus is helping you achieve what's most important to you.

Jonathan Riley

MYND PRACTICE FOUNDER

Hi, I'm Jonathan Riley. I have dedicated my life to the field of mental health as a writer, educator, counsellor, and speaker.

No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.



Introduction

To begin our investigation of shame, we must first understand what emotions are and why they matter. Emotions are our internal barometers, signalling our reactions to our environment, our relationships, and our innermost thoughts. They guide our actions, influence our decision-making, and shape our perception of ourselves and the world around us.

Emotions can broadly be categorised into two types: positive and negative. Positive emotions, such as joy, love, and excitement, make us feel good and are generally associated with satisfaction and happiness. They uplift us, inspire us, and motivate us to strive for our goals.

Negative emotions, on the other hand, such as fear, anger, and shame, are typically associated with pain, discomfort, and dissatisfaction. They signal distress, perceived threats, or challenges. However, it's important to remember that labelling emotions as positive or negative is a simplification of a complex reality. All emotions, including those we tend to avoid or resist, serve a purpose in our lives. They guide us, alert us to our needs, and allow us to communicate with others.

Understanding our emotions is necessary for developing emotional intelligence, which is the ability to recognise, understand, and manage our own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence facilitates empathy, improves relationships, and contributes to overall mental well-being.

Understanding our emotions, including shame, allows us to live more authentic and connected lives. So, let's begin this journey of understanding and exploring shame, one of the most profound and, often, most misunderstood emotions in the human experience.



Defining Shame

Shame is one of the most intense and complex emotions we experience as human beings. It's often called the "master emotion" because it has such a big effect on how we think about ourselves and how we act. To define shame, Toxic shame is a deep-seated, debilitating emotion that arises from the belief that one is fundamentally flawed or unworthy of love and belonging. However, this definition only scratches the surface of shame's complexity and depth.

Shame is a deeply personal experience that is linked to our sense of self. Unlike guilt, which is associated with a specific action or behaviour, shame is a broader and deeper emotional experience. It reflects a negative evaluation of one's self, a feeling of worthlessness, and a sense of being fundamentally flawed or inadequate. When we experience shame, we don't just feel that we have done something wrong, we feel that we are something wrong. This feeling goes beyond the action or situation at hand and affects how we see ourselves in general. This is what sets shame apart from other emotions like guilt or embarrassment.

Shame frequently causes people to want to hide or escape in order to avoid the painful sensation of being exposed. It can cause us to withdraw from others, hide our perceived flaws, and avoid situations that may cause us to feel ashamed. The paradox of shame lies in its invisibility; it thrives in silence, secrecy, and judgment but wilts under the light of empathy, connection, and understanding. Furthermore, shame can be both a private and a social emotion. It frequently occurs in interpersonal contexts and can be triggered by social interactions, but it is also deeply rooted in our personal psychology and history.

As we move forward in our exploration, we'll discuss how shame originates, how it affects our lives, and most importantly, how we can learn to live with shame without being consumed by it. Understanding shame is a crucial step towards emotional growth, self-compassion, and authenticity.

Self-Assessment

This page invites you to engage in a self-assessment exercise. Please read through each statement and reflect on how often you feel this way or behave in this manner. It's not about scoring or categorising yourself; it's about identifying patterns that may require further exploration in the realm of self-compassion.

		YES	NO
1	Do you have a difficult time believing someone could love you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Do you push away people who are good to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Are you afraid that if people really get to know you, they won't like or accept you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Do you feel like a fraud?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Do you feel like a failure in life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Do you hate yourself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Do you hate yourself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Are you a people pleaser?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Do you censor yourself when you speak to others, taking care not to offend or hurt their feelings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Do you frequently compare yourself with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		YES	NO
11	Do you frequently compare yourself with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Do you feel anxious or uncomfortable in social situations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Do you focus heavily on your weaknesses or shortcomings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	When someone criticises me, I can't help but feel that I really am incompetent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	If I don't do as well as others, it means that I am an inferior person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	It's important to me to be liked by everyone I meet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	I modify my personality, opinions, or appearance in order to be accepted by others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	I feel awkward when walking into a room full of people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As you reflect on these statements, remember to be kind to yourself. Recognising certain patterns can stir a range of emotions, and that's okay. Allow yourself the time and space to process these feelings. Remember, this self-assessment is not a definitive tool, but a starting point for your journey towards greater self-understanding and self-compassion. If you identify with several of these statements and it causes you distress, consider discussing your feelings with a mental health professional.

Note: This self-assessment is not a substitute for professional help. If you're struggling with feelings of distress, it's crucial to seek help from a mental health professional.

The Origins of Shame

The origins of shame can often be traced back to our earliest years. Children can begin to experience what can be viewed as indicators to shame as early as infancy. When an infant's needs for attention, comfort, and engagement are not adequately met, feelings of distress, confusion, and powerlessness can begin to surface. Although it's not shame in its fully developed form, these early experiences can lay the foundation for feelings of shame as the child grows.

As children move into toddlerhood and early childhood, their understanding of self and others grows more sophisticated. They start to internalise standards and expectations from their surroundings. The development of self-conscious emotions, including shame, starts to take root. When children perceive that they have failed to meet the expectations of significant others - be it parents, teachers, or peers - they may begin to experience feelings of shame.

Shame in childhood often manifests when a child feels exposed, ridiculed, or rejected. These feelings can stem from various sources, such as academic struggles, social difficulties, or parental disapproval. For instance, a child who struggles with reading might feel shame when asked to read aloud in class, fearing ridicule or judgment. Or, if a child gets in trouble for something they didn't know was wrong, they might see the punishment or reprimand as a sign of how bad they are, which can make them feel ashamed.

Children, especially young ones, lack the emotional vocabulary and understanding to fully grasp what they're feeling when they experience shame. It is frequently a vague, overwhelming feeling that something is seriously wrong with them. Children who lack the ability to articulate or process their feelings may withdraw, act out, or develop maladaptive coping mechanisms.

Experiences of shame in childhood can have long-term impacts. Persistent feelings of shame can influence a child's self-esteem, hinder their ability to form healthy relationships, and even impact their mental health. Childhood shame can shape our shame narrative and influence how we see ourselves and interact with the world as adults.

Shame's Silent Hold in Youth

Adolescence is a pivotal time in our emotional development, marked by significant physical, cognitive, and social changes. Our self-conscious emotions, including shame, become more complex during this stage. During adolescence, people become more aware of how they are perceived by others, and the need for social acceptance intensifies. Coupled with the increased independence and autonomy of this stage, teens are often exposed to new situations and challenges that can trigger feelings of shame.

Peer relationships are especially important during adolescence. Feelings of shame can result from a failure to fit in or meet peer norms and expectations. Adolescents may feel shame about their appearance, their academic performance, their socio-economic status, their family situations, or any other aspects of their identity that they perceive as not fitting the "norm". Furthermore, as adolescents grapple with their emerging identities and navigate the process of individuation from their families, they can experience shame related to these personal struggles. An adolescent questioning their sexuality, for instance, might feel intense shame if they perceive themselves as being different from their peers or fear rejection from their family.

Shame during adolescence can be particularly intense and potentially damaging. Without adequate emotional support and guidance, adolescents who frequently experience shame may resort to harmful coping strategies, such as substance abuse, self-harm, or aggressive behaviours.

Understanding shame during adolescence allows us to better comprehend its impact on our development and identity formation. Next, we will discuss how shame shapes our adult lives and how we can cultivate resilience and compassion in its face. This knowledge is a crucial step toward navigating the complexities of shame and fostering emotional well-being.

Shame in Adulthood

As we transition into adulthood, our experiences with shame continue to evolve. There are more areas of our lives where we might feel shame, and the depth and intensity of that shame can change as we go through life.

Adults can feel ashamed for a variety of reasons. These include career setbacks or stagnation, financial difficulties, failed relationships, parenting challenges, and unmet personal expectations. Furthermore, shame from previous life stages can continue to influence our self-perception and behaviour.

As adults, we often face societal and self-imposed expectations of who we should be and how we should act. When we perceive a gap between these expectations and our realities, we can feel shame. For example, a person may feel shame for not achieving a certain level of success by a specific age or for not fulfilling traditional societal roles.

Another factor that comes into play in adulthood is the role of shame in intimate relationships. Shame can influence our ability to form and maintain healthy relationships. For example, shame can cause people to avoid vulnerability, a critical aspect of deep and meaningful connections, because they fear judgment or rejection. Shame intertwines with emotions like guilt and fear, influenced by culture, upbringing, and personal experiences. Differentiating constructive from toxic shame is crucial; support and therapy enable healing and mutual understanding.

Experiencing shame does not reflect a personal failing or weakness; rather, it is a part of our shared human experience. Understanding this can help to normalise the emotion and reduce its power over us.

Cultural Aspects of Shame

While shame is a universal human experience, it is also deeply influenced by our cultural contexts. Different cultures have distinct standards, norms, and values, all of which play a significant role in shaping our understanding and experience of shame.

In collectivist cultures, where interdependence and group harmony are very important, people often feel ashamed when they do something that hurts social harmony or brings shame to the family or group. The societal expectation to conform to social norms and uphold the group's honour can exert significant pressure, causing people to feel shame when they perceive themselves as failing to meet these expectations. Shame in these cultures is not only an individual experience but also a shared one, affecting the collective identity.

In contrast, individualistic cultures, where personal independence, autonomy, and achievements are emphasised, shame is often tied more to personal failures or perceived inadequacies. Failing to achieve personal goals, lacking certain attributes or abilities, or not living up to self-imposed standards can trigger feelings of shame.

Here, shame is a deeply personal experience, tied closely to one's self-identity. Furthermore, specific cultural factors, such as religion, traditions, and societal structures, can also influence what is considered shameful. For example, certain behaviours or actions may be deemed shameful in one culture but acceptable or even commendable in another.

Understanding the cultural aspects of shame can shed light on why certain situations or actions trigger feelings of shame. It can help us understand the profound impact our cultural context has on our emotions and can provide a valuable perspective as we navigate our own personal experiences with shame.

Shame vs. Self-Esteem

The relationship between shame and self-esteem is complex and profoundly significant. Shame and self-esteem are closely linked. Self-esteem is our overall sense of self-worth and personal value. When we feel shame, it's not just about a specific incident or action; it's about who we are as a person. Shame makes us question our worthiness and can significantly lower our self-esteem. It tells us that we are fundamentally flawed and not good enough and it challenges our inherent human worth.

Chronic experiences of shame can result in persistently low self-esteem. People who frequently experience shame often have an internalised belief that they are deficient or unworthy. These internalised shame messages can lead to a negative self-concept and create a cycle where feelings of shame lead to lower self-esteem, which in turn, increases susceptibility to feelings of shame. Furthermore, people with low self-esteem often engage in behaviours that confirm their negative self-view, reinforcing the shame and further diminishing their self-esteem. They may avoid challenges, give up easily, or sabotage their success, perpetuating a cycle of shame and low self-esteem.

It's important to note that while shame can diminish self-esteem, self-esteem can also act as a buffer against shame. Higher levels of self-esteem can provide resilience against shame, allowing us to navigate failures, mistakes, or negative evaluations without internalising these experiences as a reflection of our worth.

Building and maintaining healthy self-esteem requires us to challenge the shame narratives we've internalised and replace them with more compassionate and accurate self-perceptions. It involves acknowledging and embracing our inherent worth, regardless of our actions, achievements, or the opinions of others. Understanding the complicated link between shame and self-esteem can help us see how deeply shame affects our sense of who we are.

Which Emotion Are You Feeling?

Understanding the subtle differences between shame, guilt, and embarrassment is an important part of our emotional education. Because of their overlapping characteristics, these emotions are frequently mingled and misinterpreted. Understanding the distinctions, on the other hand, can shed light on the specific ways they shape our thoughts, actions, and relationships.

Guilt, like shame, is a self-conscious emotion that arises when we violate our moral standards. However, the fundamental difference between guilt and shame lies in what we focus on when we experience these emotions. Guilt is associated with a specific behaviour or action - "I did something bad." We may feel guilty for lying to a friend or failing to keep a promise. Guilt is about our behaviour, not our self.

Shame, on the other hand, is less about our actions and more about our self. When we feel shame, we're focusing on our worth and value as a person. Shame carries with it a sense of "I am bad" rather than "I did something bad." It's a judgment of the self, creating a sense of worthlessness, powerlessness, and exposure. Embarrassment, while similar to both shame and guilt, is generally a less intense emotion and is tied to less serious violations of social or personal standards. Embarrassment frequently arises in situations where we feel awkward or nervous, but these feelings are fleeting and have little to do with our core sense of self.

Unlike shame, embarrassment does not involve a global negative evaluation of the self. When we're embarrassed, we may blush or laugh it off, knowing that the situation is temporary and not reflective of who we are as a person. By differentiating it from similar emotions like guilt and embarrassment, we can better recognise shame when it arises and respond to it with greater understanding and self-compassion.

The Shadows of Shame in Our Minds

Shame, while a universal emotion, can have profound effects on mental health when experienced frequently or intensely. In fact, a large body of research suggests that chronic shame is a major contributor to a variety of mental health issues, including but not limited to depression, anxiety, PTSD, and substance use disorders.

One of the most debilitating aspects of shame is its ability to create a sense of isolation and disconnection. People experiencing shame often report feeling alone in their perceived failures or inadequacies, which can lead to a self-perpetuating cycle of withdrawal from others. This isolation can breed a sense of hopelessness and foster a belief that one is fundamentally unlovable or unworthy. These feelings have a strong correlation with depressive states.

Shame can also distort one's cognitive functioning, leading to an internalised belief of being inherently flawed or defective. These negative self-perceptions can perpetuate a cycle of negative thinking and self-blame, key characteristics of depressive disorders. As a result, people who experience chronic shame may be predisposed to depression.

Anxiety disorders, particularly social anxiety disorder, can also be influenced by shame. The fear of experiencing shame, humiliation, or rejection in social settings can trigger intense anxiety. This fear often extends to everyday situations, leading to avoidance behaviours and further exacerbating feelings of isolation and shame.



Shame also plays a significant role in the experience and perpetuation of PTSD, especially when the traumatic experience is interpreted through a lens of self-blame or perceived failure. This shame can exacerbate the symptoms of PTSD, often leading to avoidance of triggers and hindering the process of healing and recovery.

For instance, consider a young professional, Jake, who made an error in a major presentation at work. This mistake became the talk of the office, and Jake internalised the embarrassment, feeling deeply ashamed. Every day, he became more withdrawn, avoiding colleagues and declining team lunches for fear of judgment.

He started overanalysing every interaction, leading to sleepless nights filled with anxiety about potential future errors. At home, he sought solace in a bottle of wine every evening, trying to forget the piercing feelings of inadequacy. As his drinking increased, his shame deepened, leading to a downward spiral that began with a simple workplace mistake.

Common humanity encourages you to acknowledge that imperfections, failures, and difficulties are not unique to you but are shared by all humans. It's about understanding that everyone, at some point, experiences pain, faces challenges, and makes mistakes.

The relationship between shame and substance use disorders offers another clear example of the destructive potential of this emotion. For many people, substances can serve as a means to escape from or numb feelings of shame. The temporary relief provided by alcohol or drugs can create a vicious cycle, where shame leads to increased substance use, which in turn can lead to more shame, particularly as the person grapples with the consequences of addiction.

Recognising the significance of addressing and healing shame requires an understanding of the relationship between shame and mental health.

Shame and Relationships

Shame, when it burrows deep into our psyche, can profoundly influence our relationships with others. Relationships are at the heart of human existence, providing us with a sense of connection, belonging, and identity. However, the tentacles of shame can seep into these relationships, creating significant disruption and distress.

One of the most impactful ways shame affects our relationships is by forming a barrier to vulnerability. Vulnerability - the ability to reveal our true selves, including our fears, doubts, and perceived inadequacies - is crucial for creating deep and meaningful connections. However, the fear that accompanies shame, the fear that our true selves will lead to rejection or criticism, often prevents us from being open and genuine in our interactions.

Shame can also fuel destructive patterns in our relationships. When a person is grappling with shame, they may unintentionally project these feelings onto others. This projection can manifest as blame, criticism, defensiveness, or even anger - reactions that can lead to conflict and estrangement. Similarly, to avoid situations that might trigger or exacerbate their shame, people might withdraw or isolate themselves, disrupting communication and connection within their relationships.

Moreover, shame can subtly influence our relationships by fostering a persistent need for external validation. When we are trapped in a cycle of shame, our sense of self-worth can become contingent on the approval or admiration of others. This reliance can put enormous strain on relationships and create a sense of insecurity and dissatisfaction.



Similarly, people who are dealing with shame may constantly compare themselves to others, trying to match or beat others to get rid of feelings of not being good enough. This competition can also cause problems in relationships and make it harder to make real connections.

Take Amy, for example. She was both excited and nervous about attending her colleague's housewarming party. She felt an overwhelming sense of insecurity as she entered the living room. Around her, groups of people laughed, chatted animatedly, and seemed completely at ease. Amy, on the other hand, felt like she had stepped into a world where she didn't belong. The shame of feeling "out of place" and "not good enough" overwhelmed her. She became hyper-aware of every gesture, every laugh, and every conversation, fearing she might say something that would draw unwanted attention or criticism. She hovered near the snack table, using it as a shield against her perceived inadequacies. Every time she thought of approaching someone, the weight of comparison and the fear of judgment held her back. Amy's shame, magnified by the lively social gathering, created an invisible barrier, preventing her from enjoying the evening and connecting with others.

In addition to affecting our close relationships and friendships, shame can also affect how we interact with other people. The fear of exposure or humiliation can make us excessively cautious or inhibited in social situations, preventing us from forming new relationships or engaging fully in social activities.

Despite these challenges, it's essential to understand that relationships also offer a significant potential for healing from shame. Relationships marked by empathy, understanding, and acceptance can serve as powerful antidotes to shame, fostering a sense of self-worth and belonging.

How Shame Resides in the Brain

The neuroscience of shame provides us with fascinating insights into how this emotion is processed in our brains and how it affects us on a neurological level. Understanding the brain's role in experiencing shame can provide a more comprehensive picture of its impact and suggest ways to mitigate its negative effects.

Shame is a self-conscious emotion, which means it involves a complex interplay between different parts of the brain. Predominantly, the limbic system, which includes the amygdala and the hippocampus, plays a critical role in emotional processing, including shame. The amygdala, in particular, is responsible for detecting threats and regulating emotional responses, which includes our reaction to shame-inducing situations.

When we experience shame, our amygdala perceives a threat to our social acceptance or status. It responds by releasing stress hormones such as cortisol, triggering the body's fight-or-flight response. This response prepares us to deal with perceived danger, but when the threat is shame, it can lead to withdrawal, avoidance, or aggression—common reactions to feelings of shame.

The hippocampus, another part of the limbic system, contributes to our experience of shame through its role in memory formation. It helps us remember shame-inducing incidents, forming a link between particular situations, emotions, and reactions. This process can create a feedback loop, where the memory of past shame experiences triggers feelings of shame in similar situations, even if the threat is not real or immediate.

The prefrontal cortex, responsible for higher-order functions like self-awareness and regulation of emotions, also plays a key role in managing feelings of shame. It can moderate how strongly we feel an emotion and change how we understand and respond to situations that make us feel ashamed. This understanding of the brain-shame link emphasises how feeling and reacting to shame is a complicated process that is closely linked to how our brains work.

The Physical Manifestation of Shame

Shame doesn't just affect our minds; it also has a significant impact on our bodies. Our emotions are closely linked to our physiological responses, and shame is no exception. Understanding how our bodies react to shame can provide us with important insights into its pervasive effects and how to manage them.

When we experience shame, our bodies often respond by initiating the stress response, also known as the fight-or-flight response. This is primarily due to the release of cortisol, a stress hormone triggered by the amygdala's recognition of shame as a social threat. This response can lead to several physical symptoms, including rapid heartbeat, shallow breathing, dry mouth, and sweating. These are physical manifestations of the distress and discomfort we feel when we experience shame.

Moreover, chronic shame can lead to prolonged activation of the stress response, which can have detrimental effects on our health. Long-term exposure to stress hormones can result in a range of health problems, including digestive issues, sleep disturbances, weakened immune system, and even increased risk of heart disease. Furthermore, shame can also be stored and remembered in our bodies. Embodied shame refers to the idea that our bodies can carry memories of shame, triggering physical discomfort or distress in response to shame-inducing stimuli. This physical manifestation of shame can be quite powerful, often serving as a nonverbal and instinctual reminder of previous shame experiences.

Shame can also affect our body image and how we relate to our physical selves. Persistent feelings of shame can lead to negative body image and destructive behaviours such as disordered eating or self-harm, as people try to cope with their feelings of unworthiness or disgust. Understanding the connection between shame and the body offers us a holistic perspective on this powerful emotion. It also provides us with pathways to healing from shame, not just psychologically but also physically.

The Health Effects of Shame

Unravelling the complex relationship between shame, stress, and health is essential for a holistic understanding of how this potent emotion can shape our lives. Shame triggers our body's stress response, a primal reaction designed to protect us from immediate threats. This involves the release of hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which prepare our body to either fight the threat or flee from it. However, this reaction, originally intended to face physical dangers, can become harmful when it's repeatedly activated by emotions such as shame.

Persistent exposure to these stress hormones due to chronic shame can lead to a state of constant stress. This chronic stress can weaken our immune system over time, leaving us more susceptible to a wide range of illnesses from common colds to more serious infections. Additionally, it can increase blood pressure and heart rate, a state that maintained over time can lead to heart disease and stroke, some of the leading causes of death worldwide.

Chronic stress can create alterations in our metabolism. In the face of stress, our bodies tend to store fat as a protective measure, potentially leading to weight gain. This, along with the impact of stress on our body's insulin sensitivity, can increase the risk of developing metabolic disorders such as diabetes.

The mental health consequences of chronic stress are also significant. Persistent stress can exacerbate symptoms of existing mental health conditions, such as anxiety disorders and depression. Moreover, it increases the vulnerability to



developing these conditions, adding to the burden of shame with additional mental health struggles.

Cognitive functions, including memory, concentration, and decision-making skills, can also be negatively affected under chronic stress. Additionally, the stress resulting from shame can lead to harmful coping mechanisms. People may resort to substance abuse, overeating, or self-harm in an attempt to numb or escape the discomfort of shame. However, these behaviours further contribute to physical and mental health problems, creating a vicious cycle that can be challenging to break.

Shame can also have a significant impact on our health behaviours, affecting how we care for ourselves. Shame can discourage people from seeking medical help when needed, due to fear of judgment or the belief that they are unworthy of care. This reluctance can lead to delayed diagnosis and treatment, exacerbating health problems.

In recognising the extensive links between shame, stress, and health, it becomes evident that addressing shame is crucial in our pursuit of health and wellbeing.



Shame's Impact on Family Dynamics

The family environment can play a significant role in the development and perpetuation of shame. Families form our first social context, the initial mirror through which we view ourselves. The messages, values, and reactions we receive within our family can shape our self-concept, including feelings of worth and adequacy.

Families that promote a culture of perfectionism, criticism, or comparison can foster a sense of shame. If children feel they need to meet impossibly high standards to be loved or accepted, they may internalise feelings of inadequacy. This can lead to what we call "toxic shame," a deep-seated belief in one's unworthiness.

Sarah grew up in a household where her parents were constantly comparing her to her older sibling. Every time she brought home a test, the immediate question was, "Did you get a higher score than Anna?" This constant comparison made Sarah feel like she was living in Anna's shadow, never able to shine in her own light. Her parents, themselves products of strict upbringings, believed they were motivating Sarah. Unbeknownst to them, they were sowing the seeds of toxic shame. Sarah began to believe she was inherently inferior, not just to Anna, but to her peers as well.

In school, Sarah hesitated to speak up, fearing she'd be laughed at. She internalised every mistake, viewing them not as opportunities for growth, but as proof of her inherent inadequacy. However, during a family gathering, Sarah's aunt, a therapist noticed her withdrawn behavior. She took the time to talk with Sarah, empathising with her feelings and offering a different perspective. Through consistent communication and support, Sarah began to recognise the source of her shame and slowly started to rebuild her self-worth.

This story exemplifies how family can be both a source of pain and a source of healing in our relationship with shame. Addressing these feelings within the context of the family is critical for emotional healing and growth.

Family dynamics that stigmatise vulnerability or emotional expression can make it difficult for children to understand and express their emotions in a healthy way. This emotional repression can feed feelings of shame, particularly when children are reprimanded or ridiculed for showing their feelings.

Abuse, neglect, or trauma within the family can also lead to profound feelings of shame. Children who experience these adverse events often internalise the blame, leading to feelings of guilt and shame. The secrecy often surrounding these situations can intensify these feelings, as children may carry the burden of this hidden shame well into adulthood.

Moreover, intergenerational shame, where feelings of shame are passed down from parents to children, can perpetuate cycles of shame within families. Parents struggling with unaddressed shame can unconsciously transmit these feelings to their children, either through their behaviours or the attitudes they instil.

Conversely, families can also provide a space for healing from shame. Families that promote empathy, acceptance, and open communication can help children develop a healthy self-esteem and resilience against shame. These positive messages can counteract external shame-inducing influences and support emotional well-being.

Understanding the role of families in shaping our experience of shame allows us to address its roots more effectively. It emphasises the importance of promoting healthier communication and emotional understanding within families. It also underscores the need for targeted support for families struggling with patterns of shame.

By recognising and addressing the impacts of shame within the family context, we can help break cycles of shame and support healthier emotional development.

Addressing Shame in Our Careers

The workplace is another significant social environment where shame can play out. In this setting, our abilities, skills, and personal traits are constantly judged, which makes it easy for feelings of shame to grow.

One common source of workplace shame is criticism or failure. While constructive feedback is an essential part of growth and development, it can be a shame trigger for those who equate their performance with their self-worth. Similarly, mistakes or failures, whether they are real or perceived, can elicit feelings of shame, particularly in cultures that don't foster a healthy approach to learning from errors.

Workplace bullying or harassment is another potent source of shame. Such experiences can leave us feeling isolated, demeaned, and fundamentally flawed. The stigma surrounding these experiences can compound these feelings of shame, making it difficult for us to seek help.

Workplace cultures that foster competitiveness and comparison can contribute to shame. When we are constantly measured against another person, it can lead to a sense of inadequacy, fostering shame. A lack of inclusivity and respect for diversity can also lead to shame among us who feel we don't "fit" the norm.

Just as workplaces can trigger shame, they can also be arenas for healing and resilience. Companies that promote a culture of empathy, open communication, and acceptance of mistakes can help employees develop resilience against shame.

Encouraging self-compassion, celebrating diversity, and providing support during times of failure or difficulty can foster a more shame-resilient work environment. In understanding the impact of shame within the workplace, we emphasise the need for compassionate leadership and healthy organisational cultures.

Shame in Social Interactions

There are a lot of different ways that shame can show up in social situations. As inherently social beings, we constantly measure ourselves against societal norms and expectations. When we perceive a discrepancy between our behavior, appearance, or status and what we believe is expected, we can experience shame.

Situations that can provoke shame include perceived social failures, such as awkward conversations, public speaking blunders, or unsuccessful attempts to fit in. Social exclusion, bullying, or discrimination can also evoke deep feelings of shame, as we may internalise these experiences as reflections of our worth.

Our society's emphasis on certain ideals or standards, such as beauty, wealth, or success, can contribute to feelings of shame among those who feel they don't measure up. This societal shame can lead to a host of negative effects, including social anxiety, isolation, and even depression.

Pete had always prided himself on his financial stability. His friends knew him as the person who knew a lot about investments, always made a strict budget, and gave good financial advice. But all of a sudden, Pete found himself in a lot of debt after making some bad investments and having to pay for medical bills that he didn't expect. Every social gathering became a source of shame for him. When friends talked about their latest travels or purchases, Pete felt an overwhelming sense of embarrassment, thinking about the unpaid bills piling up at home.

The societal standard of success, often equated with financial stability, weighed heavily on him. Pete began to decline invitations to events, fearing judgment or pity. Even casual conversations at coffee breaks made him nervous, afraid that the topic of finances might come up. The

shame of not meeting the societal standards, especially when he once was the epitome of them, consumed Pete, making every social interaction a potential minefield.

Shame can also arise from stigma related to personal characteristics or life circumstances, such as mental health issues, financial struggles, or family background. This stigma-related shame can compound the challenges associated with these situations, making it more difficult for us to seek help or connect with others.

However, social situations also offer opportunities for healing and resilience. Social connections that foster acceptance, empathy, and mutual respect can provide powerful antidotes to shame. In these environments, we can learn that our worth is not contingent on external factors, fostering a sense of self-compassion and resilience to shame.

The role of society in shaping our experiences of shame highlights the need for wider social changes. By promoting acceptance, challenging societal norms, and fighting stigma, we can create a more shame-resilient society.

Understanding shame in social situations also emphasises the importance of personal strategies for managing shame. Cultivating self-compassion, challenging internalised societal messages, and seeking supportive social connections are just some ways we can mitigate the effects of social shame.



Consequences of Shame

Addictive Behaviors: Shame can drive adults towards alcohol, drugs, and other addictive behaviors as coping mechanisms. These substances temporarily numb the pain, but inevitably exacerbate the cycle of shame.

Mental Health Issues: Unresolved shame is often linked with depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders. It becomes a constant presence that makes you feel bad about your own worth.

Broken Relationships: Shame makes vulnerability hard, causing walls to be built around one's heart. Without openness and trust, relationships often fail or become dysfunctional.

Avoidance: To avoid feeling the sting of shame, adults might isolate themselves, shunning social events, meaningful connections, or opportunities that might bring potential judgment.

Perfectionism: Driven by an inner critic, many adults overcompensate by seeking perfection, only to burn out or crumble when they inevitably fall short.

Impaired Career Progression: Shame can hold adults back from seizing opportunities or believing they're deserving of promotions, leading to stunted professional growth.

Sabotaging Success: When success is on the horizon, the deep-seated belief of being 'not good enough' might cause people to unconsciously sabotage themselves.

Violence and Aggression: Some adults externalise their shame, projecting it onto others in the form of anger, violence, or bullying.

Stunted Emotional Growth: Instead of developing emotional intelligence and resilience, adults with unresolved shame might get stuck in patterns of juvenile behavior, never fully maturing emotionally.

Internalised Shame

Internalised shame refers to the process through which feelings of shame become an integral part of a person's self-concept. Rather than being linked to specific behaviours or situations, internalised shame manifests as a pervasive belief in one's inadequacy or unworthiness. It is a fundamental conviction of being flawed, less than, or unlovable.

For Jake, internalised shame manifested early in his life. Growing up, he was constantly told by his father that he was "good for nothing." This repeated shaming internalised, making him feel inherently flawed. As an adult, setbacks reaffirmed his sense of unworthiness, influencing relationships and aspirations, preventing him from pursuing true passions.

Internalised shame often stems from repetitive shaming experiences, particularly during formative years. When shame-inducing messages are repeated over time, whether from family, peers, or societal influences, we may begin to adopt these views as our own, embedding them into our self-image.

This type of shame can be particularly insidious because it operates in the background of our consciousness, subtly influencing our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. It can lead to self-defeating behaviours, strained relationships, and a host of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and addiction. Moreover, internalised shame can hinder our ability to connect authentically with others. Fearing that others will see our perceived unworthiness, we may isolate ourselves or wear a mask to hide our authentic selves. This disconnection can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and perpetuate the cycle of shame.

It is crucial to note that internalised shame can be addressed and healed. Through therapeutic interventions, self-reflection, and the cultivation of self-compassion and shame resilience, we can challenge these internalised beliefs and reclaim our self-worth. Understanding internalised shame is an important step in recognising its influence and taking steps toward healing.

Understanding Vicarious Shame

Vicarious shame refers to the shame we feel on behalf of others, even when we are not directly involved in the shame-inducing situation. It occurs when we empathise with someone else's shame to the point that we start to experience it ourselves. This can often happen when someone we closely identify with, such as a family member, friend, or colleague, experiences a shameful event.

The process of vicarious shame is deeply rooted in our social nature. As empathetic beings, we're not only capable of sharing in others' joy or pain, but we can also feel their shame. While this capacity for empathy can foster deep connections and understanding, it can also lead us to carry the weight of shame that isn't ours to bear.

Vicarious shame can lead to a sense of guilt or responsibility for actions we didn't commit. It can also increase our anxiety around shame, as we become hyper-aware of potential shame-inducing situations. Furthermore, if we're not mindful, it can escalate to harmful coping mechanisms like avoidance or overcompensation.

On a societal level, vicarious shame can be experienced as collective shame for actions or events associated with a group we belong to. This could be our family, community, nation, or even humanity as a whole. Collective shame can often be seen in response to historical injustices or atrocities, where members of a group feel shame for actions they personally did not commit but were perpetrated by their group.

However, like all aspects of shame, vicarious shame can be addressed. By cultivating self-compassion, developing boundaries in our empathy, and learning to distinguish our emotions from those of others, we can manage the effects of vicarious shame. Understanding vicarious shame is crucial in comprehending the full spectrum of shame and its impact on our lives.

Toxic Shame's Lasting Impact

Toxic shame refers to a deep and pervasive feeling of unworthiness and inferiority. It extends beyond feeling ashamed of one's actions to feeling ashamed of one's self. Toxic shame makes us feel like we're fundamentally flawed or broken, while healthy shame tells us we've crossed our own boundaries and pushes us to change how we act.

Toxic shame often arises from repeated experiences of shame in childhood, particularly those involving abuse, neglect, or persistent criticism. Over time, these experiences can be internalised, leading us to believe we're inherently bad or unlovable. This belief becomes part of our identity, influencing our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in damaging ways.

People struggling with toxic shame may engage in self-destructive behaviors, suffer from mental health issues, or find it challenging to form healthy relationships. The fear of revealing our perceived flawed selves can lead to isolation, or conversely, we may wear a 'mask' to hide our true selves, preventing genuine connection with others.

Further complicating the picture, toxic shame is often hidden. We may be unaware of the underlying shame that fuels our struggles, making it difficult to address. Or we may feel too ashamed to reveal our feelings, keeping our pain hidden even from therapists or loved ones.

Toxic shame is not impossible to deal with, even though it is deeply rooted and often hidden. With understanding, compassion, and appropriate therapeutic interventions, we can learn to recognise and challenge our shame, gradually replacing the belief in our fundamental flaw with a sense of inherent worth.

Understanding toxic shame is the first step to healing. The goal is to replace the toxic narrative of inherent unworthiness with a more healthy understanding of self and others, promoting resilience and healing.

Healing from Shame: A Journey of Hope

Overcoming toxic shame may seem like climbing a steep mountain, but remember, every ascent begins with a single step and the journey, while challenging, promises vistas of profound self-awareness and newfound love. If you've grappled with this burden, take heart; healing is not only possible but awaiting you.

The first beacon of hope is the innate resilience of the human spirit. Our ability to heal, grow, and transform is incredible. Even if shame has left deep imprints, the capacity to rewrite your internal narrative exists within you. Acknowledge your past without being enslaved by it, and give yourself permission to reframe your story.

Embrace self-compassion. Each time shame casts a shadow, counteract it with kindness and understanding. Visualise a comforting presence, perhaps your wiser future self, gently whispering words of encouragement. Over time, these moments of self-love will create healing over time, mending old wounds.

As you embark on this transformative path, seek allies. Sharing your story with trusted friends or therapists can be a potent act of defiance against shame. There's immense power in vulnerability; it reconnects us with our shared humanity.

Remember that healing is a journey, not a destination. Some days will be tougher than others, but each step you take, even the tiniest one, draws you closer to a life free from the chains of toxic shame. Embrace the journey, for as you heal, you'll not only reclaim your self-worth but also inspire others to embark on their own journeys of hope and healing.



Breaking the Chains of Toxic Shame

The legacy of toxic shame is insidious. Its weight can be handed down, generation to generation, like a heavy heirloom. If left unaddressed, shame doesn't simply disappear; instead, it finds new avenues, often impacting those we love most. Yet, the profound truth is: if you don't pass back the shame, process it, and heal from it, you might unwittingly pass it on to the future.

This isn't a message of fear but one of empowerment; it is an invitation to become the vital link that breaks this generational chain. By confronting and healing your own shame, you not only free yourself but also protect future generations from bearing this burden.

Imagine the power of change: a lineage that was once tainted by shame can become one that is lighted by understanding, strength, and self-worth. It's in this transformative process that the promise of hope thrives.

Healing from toxic shame is a courageous act of reclaiming your narrative. It involves introspection, seeking support, and practicing self-compassion. It might mean therapy, journaling, or connecting with supportive communities. Whatever the path, the journey is uniquely yours, and every step taken is a stride towards a brighter future.

Remember, you are not defined by the past. Each day offers a new opportunity to rewrite your story, to convert pain into wisdom. By healing your own wounds, you are also lighting the path for those who follow.

Embrace this challenge with hope and determination. Not only will you find liberation from the shadows of shame, but you'll also ensure that the generations to come will stand tall, unburdened and empowered, knowing that they are the beneficiaries of your brave journey of healing.

Releasing Shame - A Path to Authenticity

Shame, in its most toxic form, can feel like a dense cloud obscuring the light of our true selves. But just as clouds can be dispersed by gusts of wind, therapy offers a powerful gust that can drive away the weight of shame, revealing the authentic self beneath.

To heal from shame, one must first 'give it back.' But what does this mean? It's the process of identifying the sources and roots of your shame and returning the burden to its origin, freeing you from carrying the weight that was never truly yours. This could be past traumas, family dynamics, societal expectations, or old narratives that no longer serve you.

Therapy, particularly with a compassionate and skilled therapist, provides a safe space for this exploration. Within this therapeutic environment, you can dissect, understand, and challenge these narratives. As you peel away layers of untruths and imposed beliefs, you'll uncover the core of who you are and who you wish to be.

Embracing therapy is a proactive step toward transformation. It's not just about addressing pain but envisioning a future where you stand firm in your authentic self, unburdened by external judgments. Through therapy, you're granted the tools and insights to navigate life's challenges with resilience, grace, and self-compassion.

Hold onto this hope: every session, every moment of introspection, is a step towards a brighter, shame-free future. By giving back the shame, you're reclaiming your narrative, granting yourself the permission to evolve into the person you've always wanted to be. The journey may be challenging, but the destination—a life rooted in authenticity and self-love—is profoundly rewarding. As you continue on this path, remember that you are not alone. Others have walked this journey and found healing, and with determination and support, you too can emerge stronger and more aligned with your true self.

Personal Stories

In the upcoming pages, we will delve deep into the profound journeys of two remarkable people, Fiona and Sam. Each faced immense challenges, from confronting intense shame at work to building stronger, more meaningful personal bonds. What was the driving force behind their transformation? A deep-seated understanding and courageous confrontation of shame.

Our society frequently nudges us to wear masks, encouraging us to hide our vulnerabilities and consistently present a facade of perfection. This, unfortunately, often culminates in feelings of inadequacy, a sense of isolation, and deep-seated shame, leading to significant emotional distress.

But imagine an alternative path. What if, rather than burying our shame, feeling defeated by it, and denying its heavy presence, we chose to confront it head-on? By understanding its origins, implications, and addressing it with gentle curiosity, could we transform its impact? And in doing so, might we cultivate a sense of deep empathy and connection, not just for others in our lives, but crucially for ourselves?

As you journey through Fiona's and Sam's experiences, you'll discover how confronting and understanding shame can profoundly influence and reshape diverse facets of life, from professional pursuits to our most cherished relationships.

Their stories, filled with struggles and triumphs, will offer a glimpse into the transformative power of facing our deepest shame and fears. Let their narratives inspire and guide you towards a journey of self-awareness, healing, and genuine connection.



Fiona's Silent Struggle

Fiona was always a high achiever. She appeared to be successful, poised, and admired. But beneath that polished exterior was a raging storm of anxiety and depression. Fiona was plagued by crippling shame that dated back to her formative years, which seemed irrational to others.

In her childhood, every misstep was magnified and mocked. "Fiona the Foolish" was a nickname her siblings gave her after a small error at a family gathering. Her parents never reprimanded the teasing; instead, they chuckled along. Over time, Fiona internalised these jabs. She believed that she had to be flawless, or else she was worthless.

As she grew, Fiona's fear of mistakes morphed into severe anxiety. The slightest oversight would send her into a spiral of panic attacks. She would ruminate over every detail, wondering if someone noticed, if they were judging her, if they were whispering about "Fiona the Foolish."

Her constant state of alertness was exhausting. Slowly, the fatigue paved the way for depression. Every morning was a battle against a force that told her she wasn't good enough. Her nights were long and sleepless, replaying moments she thought she should've done better.

Yet, for all the visible symptoms of her anxiety and depression, it was the invisible grip of shame that was the root. The constant voice criticised her, making her try too hard and scolding her when she stumbled.

Many see anxiety and depression as the primary issues, but for Fiona, they were mere symptoms of the insidious shame that had embedded itself in her soul. Acknowledging that shame was the main problem, the underlying monster, became the first crucial step in her journey toward healing.

Note: Names and details have been changed to protect privacy.

Sam's Journey with Toxic Shame

Sam grew up in a house where voices were raised more often than comfort was given. Each mistake, no matter how small, was a glaring spotlight, making him feel small, inadequate. "You never do anything right," was a chorus he heard almost daily.

In school, he kept his head down. Laughing classmates were, in his mind, laughing at him. He was sure he was the constant topic of their whispers. Every stumble reinforced this thought: "I'm not enough. I never will be."

Friendships were hard. Anytime a friend was upset, Sam was certain he was the cause. He constantly apologised, even when he didn't know what he was apologising for. After all, wasn't everything his fault? Relationships? Even harder. Some people didn't get why he would snap at simple criticism or why he was so eager to please, even if it hurt him. They didn't know the weight of the words he carried from his childhood.

At work, Sam second-guessed every decision. Positive feedback was dismissed. "They're just being nice," he thought. Negative feedback? That was proof of his incompetence. One day, a close friend, worried about Sam's self-deprecating comments, gently suggested, "Maybe you should see a therapist." It was a simple sentence, but it planted a seed of hope.

Everyone carries a story, but Sam's was colored with toxic shame. Growing up in a dysfunctional family wasn't his choice, but recognising the pain and seeking help was. The journey to healing is long, but for Sam, it began with one step: acknowledging the past and seeking a brighter future.

Note: Names and details have been changed to protect privacy.

Additional Resources

As we draw this guide to a close, keep in mind that overcoming shame is a journey. This journey involves recognising your patterns, comprehending their origins, and learning to build healthier ways of relating to yourself and others.

Shame constrains your identity rather than expanding it. It makes you feel like a flawed person, burdened with weaknesses and limitations, resistant to growth and change. Recognising the need to confront shame is a crucial step towards a more fulfilled and balanced life. Remember to take one day at a time, appreciating that each small step towards healing, no matter how incremental, signifies progress.

While the journey may appear daunting, remember that you are not alone. Don't hesitate to reach out for support when needed, and always be patient and compassionate with yourself. This journey is uniquely yours, and every effort you put forth attests to your resilience and inner strength.

Additional Resources found at mypracticecounselling.com.au

“The Boundaries Bible: A Guide to Setting Healthy Boundaries with Work”
by Jonathan Riley

“A Guide to Setting Healthy Personal Boundaries”

“A Guide to Self-care”

“A Guide to Personal Development”

“A Journaling Guide”

“A Guide To Mindfulness”

Disclaimer: The resources listed here are for general reference and are not a substitute for professional advice. Always seek guidance from a mental health professional.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. Remember, you are worthy of love, respect, and a fulfilling life. Here's to your journey towards healthier relationships and a happier you.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Navigating the landscape of emotional health often leads to encountering unfamiliar concepts and terms, one of which may be shame.

Understanding this concept is fundamental to recognising patterns in your own behaviour and relationships, fostering positive change. Shame can be a complex topic, and it's normal to have questions. Here are some frequently asked questions about shame along with their answers.

Q1: How does shame affect our behaviour and decisions?

A: Shame can lead to avoidance, withdrawal, or even aggressive behaviours. It can hinder personal growth, relationships, and overall well-being. Shame can also affect decision-making by pushing people to hide, deny, or run away from their mistakes instead of addressing them.

Q2: Can shame be beneficial in any way?

A: In moderate amounts, shame can serve as a social regulator, ensuring that people act in ways that are accepted within their communities. However, excessive or chronic shame can be damaging to one's mental health and relationships.

Q3: How can one cope with or overcome feelings of shame?

A: Approaches include self-compassion, therapy, understanding the source of shame, challenging negative self-beliefs, connecting with supportive communities, and practicing self-awareness and mindfulness.

Q4: Is it common to experience shame?

A: Yes, everyone experiences shame at some point in their lives. It's a natural human emotion. However, its intensity and frequency can vary from person to person.

Q5: How is shame related to mental health?

A: Chronic feelings of shame can lead to various mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation. Addressing and processing shame is crucial for emotional well-being.

Q6: What role do society and culture play in shaping our feelings of shame?

A: Societal and cultural norms and expectations often dictate what is considered acceptable behaviour. Deviating from these can result in feelings of shame. Different cultures have different shame triggers based on their values and norms.

Q7: Can childhood experiences influence our relationship with shame in adulthood?

A: Yes, adverse childhood experiences, including neglect, abuse, or even being shamed by caregivers, can shape a person's relationship with shame in their later years. It can create deep-rooted feelings of unworthiness that persist into adulthood.

Q8: How does shame influence our interpersonal relationships?

A: Shame can affect relationships by causing people to withdraw, hide their true feelings, or avoid intimacy. It can also lead to defensive behaviours, such as blaming or lashing out at others, to protect oneself from perceived judgment or criticism.

Q9: Are there physical manifestations or symptoms of shame?

A: Some people might experience physical reactions when feeling shame, such as a flushed face, sweating, a sinking feeling in the stomach, or even a desire to disappear. Chronic shame can also lead to stress-related symptoms like insomnia, fatigue, or headaches.

Q10: Can shame be linked to other emotions or states, like pride or perfectionism?

A: Yes, shame can be intricately linked to other emotions or states. For instance, a person might feel shame after a perceived failure, leading to an overcompensation through perfectionism. Similarly, a person might use excessive pride or arrogance as a defence mechanism against underlying feelings of shame.

Note: The answers provided in this guide are meant for general understanding and are not a substitute for professional advice. Please consult with a healthcare provider for personal advice.

Final Words and Encouragement

Overcoming shame is a layered process, and it might seem daunting to fully understand and confront it. Nonetheless, setting out on the path to recognise and heal from shame can lead to profound personal transformation and can lay the foundation for stronger relationships with oneself and others. Remember, confronting shame is an ongoing process, not a one-time task. It demands time, patience, and kindness towards oneself. Be aware that there will be days of clarity and days of struggle, moments of insight, and times of doubt. It's perfectly alright to reach out when you need guidance.

On this path to confront and heal from shame, keep these pivotal thoughts in mind:

Professional support is available. My Practice Counselling Melbourne can provide you with valuable guidance, support, and tools to help you navigate this transformative journey.

Change is possible. While addressing shame might be tough, healing and change are entirely attainable. Cherish every breakthrough, regardless of its size.

Your worth extends beyond your vulnerabilities. Your journey to confront shame is a process you're undertaking, not who you are. You are a singular being, gifted with unique talents, capabilities, and promise.

Retain this guide as a touchstone for your progress. And always remember, every effort you invest in addressing and healing from shame leads you closer to more meaningful bonds with yourself and others, and to a more centered, joyful self.

THANK YOU!

We're so grateful to have you as part of our community, and we hope you love what you're getting. Get in touch with us if there is anything else we can do for you.

“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom” — Aristotle

Jonathan Riley

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